



A Place of Grace & Healing

How to Stress Best *by Sarah Heller, Counselor*

Sarah's journey as a new mother brings her through times of stress -- eustress to be exact. Eustress comes with many of life's challenges.



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You can learn more about Sarah and all of our counselors on our website.

INSIDE:

Why Gratitude

3 Tips for the Holidays

Thank You

The Healing Power of Music

Last month, my husband and I adopted an infant. She's beautiful, cuddly and so much fun. We already love her in ridiculously large amounts.

Yet, even though we love her dearly, adding her into our household has also brought some less than desirable changes.

Nothing we have experienced is outside the norm for a new parent, but the life we live now is very different than the life we had grown accustomed to living pre-baby. We don't really sleep anymore, the dishes don't get done as frequently, and we often feel like we are scrambling against the clock to get to appointments on time. We sometimes get frustrated when she cries – especially when it's 3 a.m. – and diaper blowouts always seem to occur at the most inopportune moments.

I'd never take back our decision to adopt. But that doesn't mean that the changes to our lifestyle aren't stressful.

Stress viewed as necessary for greater life satisfaction is termed eustress. *Eustress* differs from *distress* in one key way: the mindset and perception of the person experiencing it.

If the event causing the stress is seen as positive or helpful, the stress is eustress. If the opposite is true and the event causing the stress is seen as overwhelming or defeating, the stress is distress.

Besides having a baby, other examples of eustress include purchasing a home, planning a wedding, getting married,

riding a roller coaster, and playing sports.

To the body, stress is stress and the response of the nervous system is the same whether we are anxious about giving a speech or coming face-to-face with a bear while hiking in the woods.

No matter the precursor, if the body senses a threat, it kicks into fight-or-flight mode. These processes are meant to be protective and help us overcome immediate danger by acting on instinct.

However, prolonged time in fight-or-flight mode can cause cumulative problems such as disorders of the immune or hormonal systems. This is why people who experience chronic stress often have more issues with their health.

While our bodies can't tell the difference between "good" and "bad" stress, given a little time, our brains can. When we choose to calm

ourselves and use our rational mind, or when we see our overall situation as positive, different levels of chemicals are released that help balance us out.

Not all eustress is derived from major life events, but that is the kind of eustress I am focusing on here. New adventures bring new challenges, often accompanied by mixed emotions. To help yourself adjust well, consider the following pointers:

Grieve the losses

Any life change inevitably involves sacrifice. Getting married. . .*(continued on back)*



3 Tips for the Holidays

Thanksgiving and Christmas can be filled with stress and eustress. The good and the bad are stuffed into and wrapped up in these holidays. Here are 3 quick tips to help bring out more of the true beauty these holidays can hold.

1) **Be realistic.** We can start to create unrealistic expectations as we want our time with family and friends to go perfectly. When going into any event, know there might be some bumps along the way. If you expect your event to be perfect, you can be setting yourself up for being let down.

2) **Throw guilt out the window.** Along with letting go of expectations of perfection, do not put pressure on yourself to be perfectly happy all of the time either. Take a holiday from over-analyzing and over-stressing. Take a breath. Relax.

3) **Just say no.** Do not overbook yourself. You might feel bad saying no to a close friend or a family member, but do not take on more events or responsibilities than you can handle. Know your limits so you can be the best you can be and enjoy your time.

And of course, always remember the reason for the season!



Your responses of support to our newsletters have raised \$8,225 so far this year.

Your gifts can make it possible for 205 of our neighbors to receive financial support and afford the healing they need and desire.

Thank you!

The Healing Power of Music

Over 175 people came and enjoyed toe-tapping music at the our free concert at Calvary Church at Village Green. Thank you to everyone who came and gave!

You all deserve a big round of applause! Thank you to everyone who came and supported the ministry of Valley at our Celebration of Music event!

Together you raised over \$4,500. We have always said that this event can bring healing in two ways. Music, and specifically praise music, can be healing to our souls, and the funds raised by this event can bring healing for those in need of counseling but cannot afford it.

You are supporting the healing of deep hurts and serious wounds. You are providing a place for spiritual and emotional growth. You are giving thousands of people a chance to move from who they think they are to who they truly are in Christ.



...means letting go of the single lifestyle. Having a baby means giving up a certain level of sleep and productivity. Getting a promotion may mean less time with your family.

Change in itself can be hard, and letting go of a particular type of freedom doesn't make changing any easier. Each stage of life has its own sweetness, and saying goodbye to happy times can be difficult.

You're not alone! *Many* others have experienced sadness after getting married or having a child, graduating college or getting a job. Human nature doesn't generally prefer sacrificing what is known for that which is unknown. It's okay to grieve.

Think positively about your situation

While grieving what has been lost can be helpful for a time, it is important to think positively about your current situation, too. Positive thinking can help banish some of the fears that may come in tandem with major life changes. Thoughts we may have include:

Am I good enough? Do I have what it takes? This is too hard. Is this really what I want? I can't do this. My new responsibilities are driving me crazy. What have I gotten myself into?

Remember the reason you chose to make the change in the first place, and focus on what can be gained by continuing on your current path. Replacement thoughts could include:

This will be worth it in the end. I'm giving the most I'm able with the energy and time I have. I'm feeling overwhelmed right now, but I can't wait to see how this all plays out. Even though this is hard, it's good. God is working in this. What can I learn from this situation?

Thinking in this way helps put your situation in perspective and focuses your energy outward to a greater purpose rather than inward to only yourself.

Have confidence in yourself

Having confidence in yourself makes the difficulties that life changes present seem surmountable. Rather than believing that you are not good enough or you don't have what it takes, choose to believe that you *do* have strengths that can help you through difficult times.

As Hanoch McCarty is quoted as saying, **"It's not who you are that holds you back, it's who you think you're not."** And as Vincent Van Gogh said, **"If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced."**

As Christians, we have an everlasting confidence-booster at our disposal – Jesus! When we are weak, He is strong. We humans we are fallen and broken, but we gain supernatural strength through Christ. As the apostle Paul relates in Philippians 4, no matter our circumstances, through Christ we can do all things.

Commune with others

Inescapably, in difficult times or in smooth, you will find that you can't do everything all on your own. We live in community for a reason, especially within the universal Church as a whole. The body of Christ is meant to serve, encourage, and sustain one another. As one of its members, this includes you!

Others that have experienced a similar life change may be able to offer you advice, assist you with the difficulties you are having, or simply be there to listen and understand what you're going through. When the going gets tough, you may be surprised to learn that others take joy in walking alongside you to a place of health. You don't have to carry your burdens alone.

The way our bodies process stress depends on how we view it. Major life changes usually pan out a little differently than we expected. All wild roses have a thorn here and there.

However, if we are able to grieve our losses, think positively about the long-term outcome of our situation, have confidence that we can with Christ's help have strength to do all things, and commune with others in good times and in bad, we have a much better chance of synthesizing our stress in beneficial ways.

Then perhaps we will understand the meaning of Jesus' words in John 10:10 – *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

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