

7 Steps to Replace Stress with Peace and Joy

1. Let's rethink stress and find ways to turn stress around and even discover joy starting with these ideas

- Eustress is a positive form of stress that benefits us. For example, the stress of thirst motivates us to get a drink. Ask yourself how you can use the stress as a motivator.
- Reframing stress is when we choose to replace negative thoughts about stress to positive ones, with discovering a benefit or turning it into a challenge or opportunity to change, or identifying a lesson to learn. It starts with gratitude of thanking God for the challenge and opportunity to overcome and trust Him. Look at it from a different perspective, from God's perspective, as noted in James 1:1-5 that begins with the words 'Count it all joy when you face trials.'
- Examining the evidence of possible outcomes of various choices. Find a possibility of a positive outcome to set as a goal. Identify steps to reach the goal.

2. Replace stress with joy

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

To help guide you in replacing stress:

- Simplify things, with a joy focus. Remember, God does not put lots of conditions on us.
- Keep life simple and know your life priorities.
- Remember the joy you get in following your dreams.

Suggestions on how to replace stress:

- Replace negative words people have said and cling to God's words and encouraging words. Read Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 29:11 s reminders God has plans for our good.
- Replace pain and anger by forgiving yourself and those who hurt you. Letting go replaces the anger with peace.
- List ways to calm yourself when something triggers anger.
- Rethink your choices. Let go of tasks that are not part of your responsibility and embrace what is your choice and responsibility to do.
- Listen to God and let the Holy Spirit direct you. That can replace worry with hope.
- Replace looking at the moment to viewing the future. Consider how each choice can equip you or bring you closer to a dream
- Replace your reaction to people, especially ones who want to control you. Realize they are like little children wanting their way, so choose the mature response to not argue, and make choices that are for the best for both of you. Love them through words and actions, and pray for God to work on their insecurities that cause them to need control.

3. Let time work for you to replace overload or drudgery with sprinkles of joy in your days

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, Ephesians 5:16

This means to plan days that will be more fun. Be mindful and prayerful as you make plans.

- Simplify days with less commitments.
- Build in short time cushions to stretch, relax, or hug someone.
- Don't over charge the time. Each activity or appointment added to a calendar is a time charge.
- Prioritize what's needed, what really matters, and say 'no' to what doesn't match up to needs, dreams, or what matters most.
- Be sure your day includes good connections with God and loved ones and then add in what is needed from work to cooking and cleaning.
- Learn to say 'no' graciously. Leave time to say 'yes' to what does fit.
 - I'm sorry, but my family needs me.
 - God has already called me to invest my time in something else.
 - I don't have time, but if you help me with some of my commitments I'll have time.

4. Replace busyness with mindfulness that brings peace and joy

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Philippians 4:4

Be thankful in whatever you do, and know the gratitude lifts your heart and brings you closer to God. Plan for joy with simple guidelines

- Invest in loved ones, including good friends who listen and empathize in healthy ways.
- Look at your calendar and see what you have scheduled for loved ones. Schedule future time for them.
- Reappraise your work to remember the joyful outcomes of what you do and how you are making a difference.
- Whether you are cleaning your home to make it a more relaxed place and eliminating germs, or doing a repetitive task that produces a good outcome, think of those results.

Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless—like chasing the wind. Ecclesiastes 6:9

Be mindful of what brings you joy, and replace negatives with smile inducers

Keep a list of what makes you smile and incorporate them into daily life. Here are a few ideas:

- Reflect on a compliment
- Completion of a task
- Jokes and humorous anecdotes
- Favorite movies
- Reading
- A walk, in nature
- Music you enjoy
- A two-minute break
- Expressing gratitude for what you have
- Nearby place in nature
- An outing with a loved one or good friend

5. Build a support system that shares joys and struggles, as that inspires hope

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Colossians 4:5

- Stay connected to people who listen, empathize, and share laughter.
- Meet others and add more such connections.
- Make a list of support people.
- Remember to treat supporters well and listen to them too, to build strong bonds.

Find them among

- Relatives
- Neighbors
- Coworkers
- Fellow ministry workers
- Church members
- Online friends you can trust
- Volunteer organization

Stay in touch even simply with an encouraging text message.
Be kind and bless your people!

6. Sprinkle Joy into lives, as blessing others also blesses you

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35

- Spend time encouraging others and smile to lift their days.
- Ask God to use you to bless someone each day.
- Keep a list of simple things you can do to sprinkle joy into lives.
- Thank people for their time and the joy they bring you.

7. Replace unhealthy choices with healthier ones

You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:20

You'll be more joyful when you feel good, so take time to exercise, eat well, and sleep well.

- List healthy foods you like and buy those instead of high sugar foods and others that don't fuel your body.
- Start moving around more: walking, dancing, or join a gym and be consistent. Thank God as you exercise and listen prayerfully to God.
- Read the Bible and journal about what you read. List your blessings. This fuels your spirit.
- In relationships, replace the negative time by sprinkling in joy and choose to invest time in healthy relationships. Yes, you may need to be a caregiver or live with some people who have mental/emotional challenges, but balance that with positives in your life.