

Day 5: Stress Relief from Relationships

Other people can cause stress and we can also feel stressed being around specific people or too many people. That can be part of our personality (introverts avoid crowds and like small intimate groups better) or because the person's actions or words increase stress.

One of the best strategies to avoid stress with interpersonal relationships is to be a good listener and work to understand one another.

Identify the cause

Dig into your emotions and stress to ask yourself why a person causes you stress. That's the beginning of making changes.

- Identify the stress and the cause
- Consider what will relieve the stress (see chart below for ideas)
- Make a plan to lessen your stress and implement it

Set a great tone when you meet up

- Be kind and compliment the person.
- Show interest in the person speaking.
- Support an idea with which you agree.
- Ask how they are doing.

Respond Well

- Remain calm and neutral to avoid being drawn into an argument.
- Avoid replaying the conversations. Instead, replay scriptures and positive words of other people.
- Remember that no one can read your mind, so you may need to clarify false impressions with a simple statement, such as "Thanks for sharing that. In reality, I..."

Unhealthy actions	Underlying reasons	Healthy responses
Dumping their problems on you/blaming you	They may be overwhelmed, avoiding responsibility	Say, thanks for sharing your situation. I'll pray for you." Avoid making it your problem
Frequent criticism, judgmental tones (disrespect)	Jealousy, desire to control, displaced emotions	Jealousy, desire to control, displaced emotions
Bringing up your past sins	Puts you down, diverts from current issues	Ask person to stay on the current issue otherwise leave.
Assuming they know what's best for you	They like to fix and control people	Say, "I appreciate your concern. I'll pray and make my own decision."
Accusations/bullying	May be hurt, trying to switch blame, or try to get their way	Ignore or thank them for their opinions.

Couples

With couples, stress can come from different perspectives and personalities. This can include finance, ideas for vacations, and more.

- Most people are not happy with compromise where no one gets their needs met. It's better to go beneath the service to discover the real needs.
- Listen to one another and seek to find out the real desire. Does the wife want to go out to eat because she's tired and does not want to cook or cleanup? Does the husband want to stay home after a long day, and just relax or watch a game? Pause and pray. Let the one who has an offer speak up. For example, the husband can share, "I can stop and pick up your favorite meal on my way home. I'll even clean up." Or the wife can say, "I could order delivery and we can relax together before the game starts. Then I may take a hot bath and go to bed."
- Communicate well. This may mean scheduling a monthly time to meet, plan, and pray together. Go over schedules, problems, and plan activities to do together.

Actively listen

- Be yourself
- Acknowledge the speaker's opinions and thoughts shared
- Communicate in their language and their love language
- Look the person in the eye, nod at appropriate times
- Listen to your own voice and tone. Adjust your speaking tone if you are whiny, complaining, or being unkind.
- Ask questions to clarify or open-ended questions to keep the conversation going.

Set boundaries to prevent stress

- Avoid giving an automatic "yes," when someone asks for help.
- Ask for details of what is expected if you agree.
- State that you will pray about any request or activity first.
- Admit if you have too much on your plate and cannot take on more.
- Let people know times you are available to talk and times you cannot talk.
- Turn off your phone when you need to have time alone or for family.