

# Relationship Rehab Show

## **FREE DOWNLOAD: Episode #29**

### **Self-Care Tips for Stressful Times**

I suppose stress has always been present for people down through the ages. Certainly, finding food for the caveman must have been stressful. Living during wartime must be enormously stressful. I can't think of anything more stressful than caring for a critically ill child. Yet the fast pace of our current culture with most households needing both parents to work fulltime has made "stress" one of the most common complaints of our time.

The following are a few tips and a great exercise that I have found helpful when I'm in a stressed state.

1. Stop and Breathe. No matter how urgent the current situation is, you will cope with it better if you take 10 minutes to just stop and take deep breaths.
2. Everything's better with a cup of tea. Make it chamomile or lavender herb tea. After it steeps, sit down and sip it slowly while doing nothing else for 15 minutes.
3. If my mind is in turmoil about a decision that needs to be made, I find it helpful to deliberately force my brain to do something different...such as to clean out a messy drawer, or read a chapter in a novel, or work on my latest quilt...even if it's only for a few minutes. When your mind is in turmoil you are incapable of making a good decision. Giving your brain a break until you can think about the issue with greater distance, helps a clear decision to come forward.
4. If you're desperate and courageous enough, eliminate caffeine and sugar!
5. Spend Time in Nature:
  - a. Stand on your lawn or the sand at the beach for 10-15 minutes...bare-footed. There's something "grounding" about connecting with the energy of the earth. Do this daily if you can.
  - b. A quote: "A study of 20,000 participants led by Matthew White of the European Center for Environment and Human Health and the University of Exeter found that people who spent 2 hours in one week

in a green space (national park or a dog park) were substantially more likely to report better health and psychological wellbeing than they had after spending no time in a green space the prior week.”

Symptoms were 29% less for PTSD sufferers, and 21% less for inner city kids after experiencing a river rafting trip. They credit the lessening of their stress to the sense of awe felt in those surroundings...being aware of something bigger and grander than themselves.

6. Journal your feelings. Here’s a great outline that works like magic. It’s called Taking Out the Trash.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Write down all the reasons you are angry until you can’t think of anything else.
  - b. Write down all the reasons you are sad until you can’t think of anything else.
  - c. Ask yourself, “What am I afraid of or worried about?” Repeat the question until you run out of answers.
  - d. “What do I wish was different?” Again, repeat until you can’t think of anything else.
  - e. Finally, write down everything you are glad about or grateful for.

This wonderful exercise is a simple way to drain your brain of everything that is taking up space and using up energy. If done this with several clients who walked into an appointment obviously stressed. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being “highly stressed, jumping out of my skin,” and 1 being “totally relaxed,” every client with whom I’ve done this exercise went from a 7 or 8 stress level down to a 2 or 3.

Be sure that you don’t add any judgments or internal lectures about how you feel. The secret to this exercise’s success is to unload feelings without any criticisms or commentary. Just state the feeling and move on.

This is also a powerful exercise to do with your child who is upset about anything. It creates a pattern of emotional safety with you and teaches a child how to “vent” their feelings effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> **"Taking Out the Trash"** is part of the *Adventures in Marriage* curriculum, by Richard Albertson. (Used with Permission)

Stress is recognized as one of the causes of illness and premature death. Learning to manage stress in simple, effective ways will help you make healthy decisions with greater clarity, improve your mental and physical health, and ultimately prolong your life!

You have my encouragement and support!

*Nancy Landrum*

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