



Q & A

Q: I've got so much going on: school, sports, work, friends, and that doesn't even count time with my family. How do I manage it all?

A: All of these things are great, but sometimes they're overwhelming, right? First, never be too busy to pray—often times it's the first thing we cut from our schedule. Prayer is time spent with God, and even when we're busy, it's the one thing we really need. Second, make a plan. This helps us get a handle on our long "to do" lists. Lastly, ask for help! People that try to go it alone are often the most stressed. God, your family, your priest and your friends are all sources of support you can and should turn to.

Q: I'm stressed because I put things off until the very last minute. Why do I keep doing that?

A: Many people make themselves a victim of procrastination. To relieve the stress, we turn to things that entertain us: music, TV, surfing the net—anything to keep us from thinking about something we'd rather not do. The problem is, our "break" isn't really restful because we're just avoiding the problem. Later on, we'll have to face up to whatever it is we're putting off, and with not as much time to do it. Sounds familiar—and stressful—I bet. Ask God for help and then face up to the fear of tackling the hard things first and you'll find yourself much less stressed.

• Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management for Teens by Earl Hipp, Free Spirit Pub., 2008.

Books:

- Teens Health: http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html
- Coping with Stress: <http://christianteens.about.com/od/advice/tp/copewithstress.htm>
- The Health Center: <http://www.thehealthcenter.info/teen-stress/causes-of-stress.html>
- Faithvalues/8c3044.html
- Christianity Today: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/lyft/hottopics/>
- Christianity Today: Ignite Your Faith: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/lyft/hottopics/fai>

Online Resources:

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
 DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES
 83 ST. BASIL ROAD, GARRISON, NY 10524
 PHONE: 646-519-6180 • FAX: 646-519-6191
 WEB: WWW.YOUTH.GOARCH.ORG



If you or someone you know is having difficulty dealing with stress, speak to a caring friend, a trusted adult, or your parish priest to help you set goals about the issues at hand.

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www.facebook.com/GOYAministry



GET THE FACTS

Stress is normal. The real definition of stress is the effect on us from any change in our environment. Since changes happen all the time, stress is normal and unavoidable. We run into problems when we have too much stress or stress we don't deal with.

Stress can hurt...and kill. Many scientists think that the majority of all illnesses and accidents can trace their causes to stress. Excessive stress not only lowers our immunities, but makes it hard to concentrate and make good decisions.

Stress is treatable. There are many things we can do to combat the effects of stress on our health and better prepare us for future stresses. Being aware of the sources of our stress and reducing them are some of the best things we can do to stay happy and healthy.

NAVIGATING THROUGH YOUR TEEN YEARS: MANAGING STRESS

KNOW THE SIGNS

Since stress is ALWAYS around us—we're all stressed to different degrees. If we have more stress than we can handle, there are a variety of things that often happen. Any of these symptoms might be a sign that we're not dealing well with stress:

- **Headaches:** Having headaches regularly, especially tension headaches, is often linked to being overly stressed.
- **Getting sick often:** The more stressed out we are, the worse our body is at fighting off everyday illnesses.
- **Problems sleeping:** Stress can make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep, or might make our time sleeping less restful.
- **Anxiety:** This is often defined as feeling fear but not knowing exactly what we're afraid of.

- **Fuzzy Thinking:** When we're stressed, our bodies respond with adrenaline, the "fight or flight" hormone that prepares us for combat or a quick getaway. While this is helpful in an emergency, when triggered by long term stress, it can make it hard to think through things or cause you to think less clearly.
- **Feelings of Frustration:** If you're faced with many demands at once, the result for many people is increased frustration and irritability.

THE CHURCH SPEAKS

You may think that the Church only teaches us things about God, prayer, and purely spiritual things, but there's so much more! Actually, one of the things that sets Orthodox Christianity apart is our belief that we can begin to experience the blessings of God's Kingdom—Heaven—in this life. We don't have to wait until we die! God not only wants us to live a good life, but a great life (John 10:10).

- Fr. Meletios Webber says that stress is basically our body's reaction to thoughts. When we experience thoughts as scary or threatening, we experience lots of stress. Try envisioning stressful thoughts as puppies: your thoughts might be annoying, jumping and yapping in your head all of the time, but in the end, they are only harmless and easily ignored!
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged us not to be "anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself" (Matthew 6:34). Too often, we try to tackle way too much. One of the best ways to combat stress is to limit how much we try to deal with at any one time.
- The passage, "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" is an invitation that comes to us from Jesus Himself (Matthew 11:28). He offers to bear our burdens and gives us the real opportunity to break free from stress through Him. When we're in church, when we pray, when we just sit in silence in front of our icons—that is where we find the "still waters" He promises us (Psalm 23).