

Stress & Burnout

STRESS

It is impossible to live in a world without stress. It is natural but can be managed to what is felt or interpreted. Stress is a response your body makes to any demand placed upon it. When we think of stress, we often think negatively but there is also good stress.

* **Good Stress** (eustress) is associated with feelings of joy, fulfillment, and achievement.

* **Bad Stress** (distress) may involve prolonged and frequent transactions that takes place between you and your environment.

These outside events impinge on your belief system, your brain interprets what is happening and tells your body how to respond. Many people will "fight or flight" when this occurs. Adrenalin is pumped into the bloodstream, blood is diverted from various organs to the brain and muscles, pupils dilate, hands and feet perspire, breathing and heart rate increases, etc. The body is on alarm response.

There are many reasons for stress:

- The disparity between idealistic expectations and reality.
- Lack of clear defined boundaries-tasks that never get done, workaholic, "I have to do everything" mentality.
- Peter Principle-feeling inadequate in leading an army of volunteers.
- Conflict in being a leader, trying to please everyone.
- Trying to be a "servant" to everyone.
- Time management problems.
- Problems with self-esteem.
- Multiplicity of roles.
- Inability to produce a "win-win" conflict resolution.
- Clergy being basically insecure, lonely and too serious.

Contributors to Stress:

* Bio-ecological factors related to poor diet-too much caffeine, refined white sugar, processed flour, salt and poor exercise habits.

* Vocational factors include career uncertainty, role ambiguity, role conflicts, role overload and many more listed above.

* Psychological factors relate principally to the great life stressors-loss of loved one, divorce, personal injury or illness, financial difficulties, etc.

* Spiritual factors that cause stress include temptations of all kinds, pornography, sexual fantasies or sexual inappropriateness, despair if your church isn't growing, jealousy of the success of others and any other way you feel the devil can get to you.

Possibilities from Chronic Stress:

- * Heart problems, high blood pressure, stroke, rapid heartbeat.
- * Headaches, ulcers, backaches, jaw pain, arthritis, allergies, colds.
- * Nervous tics, anxiety, hives, diarrhea, sexual problems, eating problems, insomnia.
- * Immune system problems, cancer, mental lapses, infections.

BURNOUT

Burnout is emotional exhaustion. Burnout can cause you to give up on something to which you have been passionately committed. Burnout can cause you to:

- Leave your church too soon.
- Quit doing what God has called you to do.
- Give up on your dreams.
- Change your attitude and personality.
- Damage your most important relationships.
- Be lead to moral failure and sexual sin.

Burnout is not usually found in lazy people. Men and women who suffer burnout are usually purposeful, committed, unselfish and somewhat idealistic servants of God. Burnout often hits people who believe, commit and serve with all their heart, in the area toward which they believe God has directed their commitment and involvement.

Burnout can lead to depression, discouragement, isolation, chronic fatigue, paranoia, becoming critical and judgmental of others, martyr complex, rejection, messiah complex and a lack of inspiration in your teaching or preaching.

Symptoms of Burnout:

Fatigue... frequent illnesses... sleep problems... disillusionment with work... cynicism toward people and church... sense of helplessness and hopelessness... feeling of powerless to change events... anger toward the "system"...depression and isolation... detachment from others... absenteeism... harshness in dealing with colleagues... reduced commitment to work.

Causes of Burnout:

Burnout is not a part of God's divine plan for your life. It happens when you get things out of order or because you are misused or abused by others. Here are some reasons why burnout occurs:

- Working too long and hard without a break.
- Reaching a goal after long hard work and not having a vision or purpose to go forward from there. (Very typical after a church building program).
- Feeling you are betrayed by those you are serving.
- Feeling betrayed by those under whom you are serving.

- Having done all you can in a position or place but not letting go or moving forward.
- Feeling used or not cared for.
- Sin, un-confessed and un-repented.
- Wrong priorities in the use of time and energy. (Becoming a workaholic).
- Violating the weekly "Sabbath" principle. Being on duty 24/7.
- Disappointment and disillusionment with a leader you have faithfully served.
- Failure of a project or ministry in which you have invested of yourself very heavily.
- Frustration with others.
- Unfulfilled expectations of success, recognition or reward.
- Lack of focus. Energies and activities scattered in too many directions.
- Trying to do the job you are not called, gifted or properly trained to do.
- Working for the wrong motives.
- In over your head without adequate support.
- Occupying a position rather than fulfilling the call.

Prevention:

Is it possible not to experience burnout? We can develop actions to improve our attitude to prevent burnout. Here are a few:

- Be aware of the potential problem with burnout. Face the realities of the stressors and pressures of being "called" into the ministry.
- Accept your limitations. Jesus was the only Messiah! We are all limited in what we can and must do. God will help you whenever you need it.
- Use common sense. Think about what you are doing and how it might affect your family and those around you. How are you managing financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually? Are things getting better or worse?
- Balance the important elements of your life. Relationships are important to you. You are not what you do but who you are! Get a life that allows you to have a personality, friendships, have hobbies, have the ability to pay your bills and have a little fun!!! These are more important than position, projects and possessions.
- Practice the "Sabbath" principle. Delegate responsibility to others so that you can have a day off. Even Jesus needed rest! God created a principle of working six days and resting one.
- Deal with disappointments, offenses and betrayal of others quickly! Forgive from the heart. No one can allow anger and frustration to linger and grow. It will only lead to destruction.
- Get into the aspect of ministry that you are "called" and "gifted" to do. You are unique- don't try to copy others!

Stress & Burnout Differences:

- * Burnout is a defense characterized by discouragement. Stress is characterized by over engagement.
- * In Burnout, the emotions become overactive. In stress, the physical damage is primary.
- * The exhaustion of burnout affects motivation and drive. The exhaustion of stress affects the physical energy.

- * Burnout is demoralization. Stress can best be understood as a loss of fuel and energy.
- * The depression of burnout is caused by grief engendered by the loss of ideals and hope. The depression of stress is produced by the body's need to protect itself and conserve energy.
- * Burnout produces a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. Stress produces paranoia, depersonalization, detachment, panic, phobias and anxiety type disorders.
- * Burnout may never kill you but your life may not seem worth living, but stress can kill you prematurely and you won't have enough time to finish what you have started.
- * Stress contributes to 90% of all diseases! Half of all visits to doctors are stress related. Anxiety reduction may be the largest single business in the western world.
- * Doctors, lawyers and clergy have the most problems with drug abuse, alcoholism and suicide.

If you have a problem with stress and burnout, please get the help you need! Life is too short!!! I firmly believe you are "called" for such a time as this but you must guard against not fulfilling your call. Satan is working overtime to discourage and hinder our ministers.

Too many pastors are leaving the ministry and too many churches are closing their doors. Let Pastoral Care Inc. help you.

Copyright © 2020 Pastoral Care Inc. All Rights Reserved. All material is intended for individual use only. Any other use, such as distribution, promoting one's ministry or adding to websites, is prohibited unless written permission granted by Pastoral Care Inc.