

STUDY THREE WORKSHEET

© Rosemary Bardsley 2009, 2014

#1 Dealing with stress: Psalm 18

Many of the Psalms were written in times of external stress. Read Psalm 18. Make a list of David's descriptions or titles of God, as he cried out to him with confidence in his time of need.

#2 Self-management instructions; Read Ephesians 4:25 to 5:5:2.

What self-management instructions does it give us that will help us to respond to external stressors?

#3 Manage your Relationships

Use the four quadrant system to identify which of your relationships you want to give most time to because they are important to you.

1 Important and urgent

2 Important but not urgent

3 Urgent, but not important

4 Not urgent and not important

#4A-F Building margin

A. Accessibility overload

Think carefully about the following ways to reduce your accessibility overload. Tick those you think would work for you.

Turn off your home phone and mobile phone when you are eating meals or spending time with your family.

Turn off your home phone and mobile phone when you are spending time praying or reading the Word of God.

Tell the other people in the house that you are not available to take phone calls or to answer the door for a specified time.

Consider whether or not you really need to have call waiting, voice mail or an answering machine or service. If people really need to speak to you they will ring back, and everyone will save money.

Deal with your emails promptly and efficiently; delete or file as appropriate; don't waste time writing lengthy answers. Block nuisance senders.

Always interrupt and politely terminate telemarketers.

Identify and utilise a quiet place away from people who know you, where you can either work [eg. at a library] or relax [out of town] without interruption.

Schedule regular time out with just God and you [in addition to your daily prayer and reading.] Some suggest a full day at least twice a year. Mark it in your diary.

B. Information and education overload

Consider the suggestions below for reducing your reading/education overload. Tick those which could help you.

Put 'No junk mail' on your letter box, or, only read the junk mail that could actually mean a saving for you, e.g. if you shop only at one supermarket, only keep that brochure. Toss the rest without reading.

Keep all the magazines, missionary letters, etc that come to your home in a two to three month period. Then decide which ones you really want to keep getting. Cancel those you don't.

Toss unsolicited mail; or, better, write 'Return to sender' on it without opening it and put in an Australia Post box.

Limit your time surfing the net. Only do so for information you really need. Know what you are looking for. If you find what you want add it to your favourites so you don't have to waste time finding it again.

Get your Christian friends or pastor to recommend a short list of good books that have stood the test of time, are theologically trustworthy and will contribute to your spiritual understanding and growth.

Keep your paperwork in order. Handle each bit of paper only once – read it, then file it or toss it. Don't allow your desk to be a surrogate filing system.

Allow yourself the freedom not to know everything.

C. Media overload

Which of the following would overcome media overload for you?

Decide not to get cable TV

Decide to limit the number of hours you watch TV each week, or each day, and deliberately plan what you intend to watch.

Limit the number of TVs in your house.

Set time apart each week to play with your children, meet with your friends, spend time with your wife/husband, instead of watching TV or listening to music.

Make a list of five things you can do when you are lonely or bored, that don't involve TV, radio, stereo, computer, etc. [Do this here now].

Plan entertainment that you create rather than consume – play a sport rather than watch it; make music rather than listen to it; visit a real person, rather than watching actors.

Decide to fast from TV or music or videos or radio or internet for a week. If you can't you might actually be addicted and need serious help.

Identify which kinds of movies and music is not good and deliberately decide not to view or listen to those kinds. Turn the equipment off, or change channels, if they come on unexpectedly.

D. Activity and commitment overload

Work through this list of suggestions for taking control of your activity/commitment load. Tick those that you believe would help you gain some margin.

Make a list of all the things you are regularly committed to that you wish you could get out of, but can't. [Not including your regular work/job.]

About your above list ask 'Why can't I get out of it?' Is it because:

- 1] you know it is expected of you.
- 2] you expect it of yourself
- 3] someone has threatened that something will happen if you don't do it [e.g. lose God's blessing]
- 4] someone has promised [or implied] you may receive something if you do it [e.g. blessing]

You need to decide to what degree you will be controlled by the expectations, threats or promises of others.

You need to be willing to run the risk of disappointing people when you fail to live up to their expectations of you.

You need to be willing to run the risk of being criticized for not living up to the expectations or perceptions people have of how much 'a good Christian' will be involved in the work of the church.

Identify which of your activities/commitments you really want to continue because you know that you are utilising your abilities and gifts and are really contributing to the ministry of God's kingdom.

E. Hurry overload

Task #1:

List the aspects of your life that involve hurry, speed, 'instant' fulfilment of needs, or 'can't wait':

Identify possible reasons for this 'hurry' in your life. [E.g. impatience, threats, fear of failure, fear of disappointing someone, nervousness, sleeping-in, too much to do, ADHD or similar]

Task #2:

Consider implementing some of the following to reduce the hurry factor in your life. Tick those you plan to implement.

Practice breathing slowly and deeply

Live for a day or a week without a watch

Stop using an alarm clock. Go to bed early enough for your body to get enough sleep by the time you need to be awake.

Factor margin into your time scheduling.

For example, if you know you have to leave for a function by 6.30 to get there on time, plan to be ready to leave by 6:15, then if unexpected things happen you have 15 minutes margin and won't need to get stressed or hurry. Do the same thing with projects. If you have to lead a Bible study on Tuesday morning, don't plan to work on it Monday night – instead plan to have it finished with at least a half day of margin. This is particularly important for parents; you simply cannot schedule children's needs. A dirty nappy at the last moment can wreck a schedule.

Decide not to be dictated to by the 'hurry' or 'instant' culture in which we live.

Eliminate activities that act against your relationships and your spirituality

Schedule unhurried time with family and friends.

Schedule regular unhurried time with God

Chose not to be dominated by technology.

F. Emotions

Tick which of the following suggestions for restoring your emotional bank that you could reasonably implement.

When you are feeling emotionally empty go and talk to a caring friend who has the capacity to listen and respond with understanding and encouragement.

Factor regular time with that friend into your normal schedule.

Be sure to maintain close communication with the people closest to you. Be honest about your feelings. Seek their help and encouragement. Let them know when you need a hug or a touch.

If you have no close relatives or friends to hug, invest in a pet you can cuddle or pat.

Restore broken relationships. Practice forgiveness. Bitterness and revenge sap the emotions. Offer apologies where needed. Fear and guilt also sap the emotions.

Do things for other people out of love and compassion.

Take immediate time out to rest and relax, even if just for fifteen minutes, when you feel acutely overwhelmed.

Live in hope and confidence in God's promises. Base your life on the objective facts of his Word, not on your subjective feelings.

Verbally express thankfulness and gratitude to both God and others.

Pass God's grace on to others. Treat people better than they deserve.