

Stresses into Blessings

All of us experience stress of one kind or another. It seems an inevitable part of life and sometimes even less avoidable around the holidays. Some stresses may be large, others are small, and some are even brought by happy events. What we want to try to do is turn our stresses into growth and challenges into blessings.

Perspective is a skill needed to cope with stresses. Think about the small, medium, and large challenges you have faced, what you learned from them, and how you might be better as a result of them. It can be recent challenges or stresses from your past. These may be anything from a traffic accident to enduring a difficult family situation to the loss of the loved one- anything that has been a challenge in your life. Challenges become blessings when we can see the benefits they've created like; greater patience, better compassion, and increased appreciation for simple blessings.

A family scientist named Reuben Hill observed that people who suffered from very similar challenges manifest very different levels of stress. He proposed the idea that it's not the events themselves that led to stress but instead the events together with our resources and interpretation of the event. This combination determined how much stress was experienced rather than just the event alone. This is good news! We can rally resources and change the meaning of problems by the way we think about them. Think about the resources you have... is it a network of caring friends, savings account, faith, creativity, other skills? Having previous experience with challenges can teach us skills and attitudes to help deal with new challenges more effectively.

Think about the challenges you personally have faced that have become blessings from this 'new' perspective. They often "invite", often force, us to grow. We can choose to be better for it or bitter because of it. If we can think about stress in positive ways, we can turn most challenges into blessings. Remember, "challenging blessings" can help us draw closer to other people, express more kindness, and learn to value the simple things in life. All of which are especially important moving into the holiday season.