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**A Sure Way to Fight Stress**

**By Michael G. Rayel, MD**

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I usually put my children to sleep. Routinely, each one takes turn saying prayers before dozing off.

"Dear heavenly Father, thank you for my family and relatives and for all the blessings. Thank you for giving me only good dreams and good thoughts."

As this prayer echoes around the room, it somehow exudes a faint acapella amidst evening tranquility. Since this is about thankfulness for family, blessings, good dreams, and good thoughts, I develop goose bumps. I am amazed on how they came up with it. It's astonishing to know that some kids pray for good thoughts rather than for gold. After all, why would children pray about this seeming unpopular theme?

How many kids do you know who would be thankful for what they have? Most of the kids I know pray for more toys, more money, more food, trips to Disney and McDonald's, new jeans, Nintendo or Game boy. If they don't get new gears and gadgets, they throw tantrums and fits of notoriety.

What makes this prayer so different and yet so special? How can this prayer fight stress?

This prayer is about thankfulness.

Thankfulness is more than just acceptance of things received. Thankfulness is the celebration of life - right now. It is the proclamation of God's bounty as never-ending - that there is more to come. It is the declaration that what is wished for is already achieved.

Thankfulness celebrates not just the good things received, but also the hurts, the pains, the defeats, the losses. By so doing, thankfulness transcends all of them.

This prayer is about peace of mind.

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To be thankful is to be at peace with oneself, others, and God. Peace of mind is long-lasting and is the gateway to eternity. It goes beyond the physical urge of pleasure and greed. Like the early morning mist, it spreads freshness. And like dawn, it provides a glimpse of a new beginning.

This prayer is about having a dream.

We should have good dreams to live life to the fullest. To develop our potential is to live life the way it should be. The essence of life is progress. Life is growth. Life is moving forward to a well-deserved destination. The ultimate dream is to create and have an impact in the world - a legacy. All of us have only one chance in a lifetime to be.

Our society today is alarming. Music, TV shows, and movies celebrate violence, guns, drugs, and sex. Kids and adults emulate tattooed artists in skimpy outfit. With minimal supervision from responsible

adults, some kids become violent and highly sexual. Instead of taking pencil and paper in school, they bring guns. Instead of aiming for success and pursuing the American dream, they aim to dominate and pursue a rival gang. Instead of aiming to get a fulfilling job and finishing a higher degree, they aim to get "high."

Sadly enough, some parents don't develop children who are dreamers, but rather they develop kids who become nightmares to society. Verily, children who are deprived of dreams are deprived of their future.

This prayer is about having good thoughts.

By constantly focusing on good thoughts, we leave no room for uncertainty, anger, insecurity, distrust, jealousy, and envy. By dwelling on good thoughts, negative, destructive, and depressing thoughts have no chance to grow.

Good thoughts translate upsets and defeats to challenges, and transform problems and hassles as opportunities to grow. While good dream is the desired destination, having good thoughts is the necessary tool to achieve it.

One time, I was moved by a quadriplegic boy. He just received an award and finished at the top of his class. Before the graduating class, he thanked God for his disability. He prayed:

"Dear God. Thank you for what I am. If I had strong muscles and legs like the others, I could have been playing Nintendo and running around aimlessly. I would have missed the opportunity to read the Bible daily. I would not have been able to talk to you every minute of the day."

This boy has a lot to be stressed about. But instead of childish and unproductive self-pity, he dared to dream, he pursued good thoughts, he was thankful for his disability, and most importantly, he communed with God.

Let us follow this boy's formula if we want life to be more meaningful and less stressful. Pray constantly

for prayer is our sole access to the Great Source of unending peace and happiness. Praise Him regardless of our predicament. Very soon, we will receive endless bliss.

Copyright Michael G. Rayel, MD Dr. Rayel, author of First Aid to Mental Illness (Finalist, Reader's Preference Choice Award 2002), has pioneered the CARE approach as a first aid for mental health. As an expert and an award-winning author, Dr. Rayel has appeared on radio and prominent newspapers. His books are available at [www.drrayel.com](http://www.drrayel.com) and major online bookstores.

### **Combating the Effects of Stress**

**By Trevor Dumbleton**

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The effects of stress are many and varied and, it is now known, they are almost all entirely bad. Stress weakens the system, tears down the body and mind, and causes long-term health problems that have been documented in numerous studies and reports. Thus, stress is ultimately a bad thing that should be avoided. By keeping stress away, you can help ensure a lifetime of health and keep yourself from overloading your body and mind.

Of all the effects of stress, first and foremost is the "fight or flight" response that it brings to your body. As soon as stress hits, the body starts churning out the hormones that set your body on edge and ready it to either fight or run. Obviously, this is pretty pointless when the stress is how you are going to get your report into the boss on time, but it is still there. Your mind only knows that it is under the gun and threatened and it has the same response for workplace stress as it does for a tiger coming at you. The human body and mind is still designed with physical danger in mind and any stress is taken to be a physical threat. Thus, the body begins churning out these hormones as though you were about to be set upon by a pack of wolves.

What does the fight or flight response do? First, it sharpens the awareness and confuses the mind. Of all the effects of stress, this seems the most contradictory. However, it is also true. The body pumps in adrenaline, which heightens mental sharpness, and noradrenaline, which causes the mind to be confused. This is a bad thing because your mind is simultaneously receiving messages to stand up and fight while it receives messages to get the heck away from there. Thus, the mind is clouded with indecision and this will not help you focus on what you need to get done.

This response to stress also causes the heart to speed up in order to pump more blood. This rise in blood pressure allows the body to react stronger and more quickly in order to either fight or escape. Unfortunately, the stress of everyday life is not of the same sort as that of a person out in the wilderness and it tends to stick around longer than the threat of physical attack. Thus, what should be a short rise in blood pressure is actually dragged out over a long period of time, making the heart work way too hard for long periods. This causes a rise in blood pressure which can result in increased risk of stroke or heart attack in the long term.

Also, the effects of stress include the body's tendency to break down white blood cells when it is

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stressed. Unfortunately, white blood cells are used to fight disease and breaking them down causes immune system depletion and makes people more vulnerable to disease. Thus, if you do not slow down, your body will be slowed down for you with a cold or a bout of the flu. This explains why many people tend to become ill when they are under pressure for long periods of time.

Finally, the body bumps up the production of platelets in order to help seal wounds one might receive from a physical attack. However, you are not going to receive wounds working in the office late — paper cuts excepted — and thus these platelets are not really doing anything productive. However, what platelets will do is stick to the sides of your blood vessels and cause blockages. This means an increased risk for stroke or heart attack in the long term if you are stressed too much or too often. Of all

the effects of stress, this can be the most dangerous; especially in older folks who are more susceptible to heart attack and stroke.

The effects of stress are many, but they are almost universally dangerous. Thus, you need to manage your stress in order to keep your body healthy for a long time. So take care of yourself by keeping your mind uncluttered with stress and one of the more dire effects of stress will not happen to you.

Trevor Dumbleton is the owner of <http://www.LowerYourStress.com/> a categorized resource directory for everything to do with stress.



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