

Tom Billings: Advice from a Stress-pert

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We are living in stressful times. The flood in June. The terrorist attacks in September. Worries about anthrax, smallpox and whatever bio-terror may be next. The economy is in recession. Folks have been laid off from work. Plus there are the of daily stresses unique to our personal situations: commuting, an irritating coworker, a demanding boss, health problems, aging parents, a troubled marriage, a rebellious child ... the list of stressors could fill this page.

Once upon a time, I was a counselor with the UBA Center for Counseling. My doctoral work was in understanding and managing stress. (I guess that makes me a stress-pert.) Let me suggest some things I do when my life gets stressful (and it does).

Take care of yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually. All three aspects of our lives are interconnected. For example, when we get down emotionally it may affect us physically. We may have trouble sleeping or concentrating. Or, when you are physically exhausted, you may not handle a minor emotional problem very well. Simple things like eating right and getting plenty of exercise can help us manage our stress better.

Practicing the classical spiritual disciplines helps cultivate my spiritual side. I recommend Richard Foster's book [Celebration of Discipline](#).

Elijah was depleted after his confrontation with the prophets of Baal. He wanted God to let him die. God led him to a stream, provided food and water, and let him rest. Later Elijah had an encounter with the "still small voice" of God. Consequently, the burned out prophet was rejuvenated and returned to faithful service.

Look at your situation from a different point of view. Sometimes we just need to step back from our situation and put it in perspective. The economy is repressed and your income is down, but hang in there. From a broader historical perspective the economy has always bounced back.

Let's go back to Elijah. He thought he was the only one left serving God. Stress has a way of distorting our perception. From God's vantage point, there were hundreds who also served him.

Build a support system. Those who have someone to confide in and lean upon in stressful times are more likely to manage stress well. Family and friends can be a great help in times of stress. Interestingly, in Elijah's situation God also sent angels to comfort him.

These things may help, but sometimes they are not enough. No matter what you do, things just don't seem to get any better. The feelings of depression won't go away. The marriage has gone from bad to worse. Your anger is out of control. This is where a trained Christian counselor can help.

The counselors in the UBA Center for Counseling are caring, competent, Christian clinicians whose ministry is to help you resolve issues in your life so you can become a mature follower of Christ. Read through this edition of *UBA Today* and learn more about our Center for Counseling.