

Classic Guidelines for Dealing with Workplace Stress and Temptation

Workplace Faith Booklet #3

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*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven".
Matthew 5:13-16 NKJV*

Perhaps the greatest and most common problem in the workplace is job-related stress. Some classic guidelines for dealing with some of the sources of stress are outlined below – deepening faith, cultivating contentedness, signs of humility, combating anger and dealing with lust. The benefits of practising God's presence are also given. They appeared originally in Holy Living, by Jeremy Taylor, 1650.

Meal and coffee breaks at work are good times for prayer and encouraging one another day after day, in order to better deal with stress.

[Of related interest: "Being Salt and Light in the Workplace: A Manual of Classic Guidelines and Prayers"; "Classic Prayers and Guidance for Bible Study" and "Classic Prayers for the Employed" several of which deal with stress and temptation– all at www.ccri.ca]

Classic Guidelines for Dealing with Workplace Stress and Temptation

The Means and Instruments to obtain Faith are,

- 1. A humble, willing, and docile mind, or desire to be instructed in the way of God; for persuasion enters like a sunbeam, gently and without violence and open but the window, and draw the curtain and the Sun of righteousness will enlighten your darkness.*
- 2. Remove all prejudice and love to everything, which may be contradicted by faith. 'How can ye believe (said Christ) that receive praise one of another?' An unchaste man cannot easily be brought to believe that, without purity, he shall never see God. He that loves riches can hardly believe the doctrine of poverty and renunciation of the world; and alms and martyrdom, and the doctrine of the cross, is folly to him that loves his ease and pleasures. He that hath within him any principle contrary to the doctrines of faith cannot easily become a disciple.*
- 3. Prayer, which is instrumental to everything, hath a particular promise in this thing. 'He that lacks wisdom, let him ask it of God:' and, 'If you give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him!'*
- 4. The consideration of the divine omnipotence and infinite wisdom, and our own ignorance, are great instruments of curing all doubting and silencing the murmurs of infidelity.*
- 5. Avoid all curiosity of inquiry into particulars and circumstances and mysteries, for true faith is full of ingenuity and hearty simplicity, free from suspicion, wise and confident, trusting upon generals, without watching and prying into unnecessary or indiscernible particulars. No man carries his bed into his field, to watch how his corn grows, but believes upon the general order of Providence and nature; and at harvest finds himself not deceived.*
- 6. In time of temptation be not busy to dispute, but rely upon the conclusion, and throw yourself upon God; and contend not with him but in prayer and*

in the presence, and with the help of a prudent untempted guide; and be sure to esteem all changes of belief which offer themselves in the time of your greatest weakness contrary to be temptations, and reject them accordingly.

7. *It is a prudent course that, in our health and best advantages, we lay up particular arguments and instruments of persuasion and confidence, to be brought forth and used in the great day of expense; and that especially in such things in which we use to be most tempted, and in which we are least confident, and which are most necessary, and which commonly the devil uses to assault us withal in the days of our visitation.*
8. *The wisdom of the church of God is very remarkable in appointing festivals or holy days, whose solemnity and offices have no other special business but to record the article of the day; such as Trinity Sunday, Ascension, Easter, Christmas day; and to those persons who can only believe, not prove or dispute, there is no better instrument to cause the remembrance and plain notion, and to endear the affection and hearty assent to the article than the proclaiming and recommending it by the festivity and joy of a holy day.*

To encourage a contented spirit.

1. *Consider that the universal providence of God hath so ordered it, that the good things of nature and fortune are divided, that we may know how to bear our own and relieve each other's wants and imperfections.*
2. *Consider how many excellent personages in all ages have suffered as great or greater calamities than this which now tempts thee to impatience.*
3. *There are many accidents which are esteemed great calamities, and yet we have reason enough to bear them well and unconcernedly; for they neither touch our bodies nor our soul - or health and our virtue remain entire, our life and our reputation. It may be I am slighted, or I have received ill language; but my head aches not for it, neither hath it broken my thigh, nor taken away my virtue, unless I lose my charity or my patience.*
4. *Consider that sad accidents and a state of affliction is a school of virtue; it reduces our spirits to soberness, and our counsels to moderation; it corrects levity, and interrupts the confidence of sinning. 'It is good for me (said David) that I have been afflicted, for thereby I have learned thy law.'*

5. *Consider that afflictions are oftentimes the occasions of great temporal advantages; and we must not look upon them as they sit down heavily upon us, but as they serve some of God's ends, and the purposes of universal Providence.*
6. *For it is but reasonable to bear that accident patiently which God sends, since impatience does but entangle us, like the fluttering of a bird in a net, but cannot at all ease our trouble, or prevent the accident: it must be run through, and therefore it were better we compose ourselves to a patient than to a troubled and miserable suffering.*
7. *But, however, if you will not otherwise be cured, time at last will do it alone; and then consider, do you mean to mourn always, or but for a time?*
8. *Lastly, of those things which are reckoned amongst evils, some are better than their contraries; and to a good man the very worst is tolerable.*

Signs of Humility.

1. *The humble man trusts not to his own discretion, but in matters of concernment relies rather upon the judgment of his friends, counsellors, or spiritual guides.*
2. *He does not pertinaciously pursue the choice of his own will, but in all things lets God choose for him, and his superiors, in those things which concern them.*
3. *He does not murmur against commands.*
4. *He is not inquisitive into the reasonableness of indifferent and innocent commands, but believes their command to be reasonable enough in such cases to exact his obedience.*
5. *He lives according to a rule, and with compliance to public customs, without any affectation or singularity.*
6. *He is meek and indifferent in all accidents and chances.*
7. *He patiently bears injuries.*
8. *He is always unsatisfied in his own conduct, resolutions, and counsels.*
9. *He is a great lover of good men, and a praiser of wise men, and a censurer of no man.*
10. *He is modest in his speech, and reserved in his laughter.*
11. *He fears when he hears himself commended, lest God make another judgment concerning his actions than men do.*
12. *He gives no part of saucy answers when he is reproved, whether justly or unjustly.*

13. *He loves to sit down in private, and, if he may, he refuses the temptation of offices and new honours.*
14. *He is ingenuous, free, and open in his actions and discourses.*
15. *He mends his fault, and gives thanks when he is admonished.*
16. *He is ready to do good offices to the murderers of his fame, to his slanderers, backbiters, and detractors, as Christ washed the feet of Judas.*
17. *And is contented to be suspected of indiscretion, so before God he may really be innocent, and not offensive to his neighbour, nor wanting to his just and prudent interest.*

Remedies against Anger, by way of consideration.

1. *Consider that anger is a professed enemy to counsel; it is a direct storm in which no man can be heard to speak or call from without; for if you counsel gently, you are despised; if you urge it and be vehement, you provoke it more. Be careful, therefore, to lay up beforehand a great stock of reason and prudent consideration... . Anger is not to be suppressed but by something that is as inward as itself, and more habitual. To which purpose add, that,*
2. *Of all passions it endeavours most to make reason useless.*
3. *That it is a universal poison of an infinite object; ... but anger is troubled at everything, and every man, and every accident, and, therefore, unless it be suppressed it will make a man's condition restless.*
4. *If it proceeds from a great cause it turns to fury; if from a small cause it is peevishness; and so is always either terrible or ridiculous.*
5. *It makes a man's body monstrous, deformed, and contemptible, the voice horrid, the eyes cruel, the face pale or fiery, the gait fierce, the speech clamorous and loud.*
6. *It is neither manly nor ingenuous. It proceeds from softness of spirit and pusillanimity, which makes that women are more angry than men, sick persons more than the healthful, old men more than young, unprosperous and calamitous people than the blessed and fortunate.*
8. *It is a passion fitter for flies and insects than for persons professing nobleness and bounty.*
9. *It is troublesome not only to those that suffer it, but to them that behold it;*
...

10. *It makes marriage to be a necessary and unavoidable trouble; friendships and societies and familiarities to be intolerable.*

11. *It multiplies the evils of drunkenness, and makes the levities of wine to run into madness.*

12. *It makes innocent jesting to be the beginning of tragedies.*

13. *It turns friendship into hatred; it makes a man lose himself and his reason and his argument, in disputation. It turns the desires of knowledge into an itch of wrangling. It adds insolency to power. It turns justice into cruelty, and judgment into oppression. It changes discipline into tediousness and hatred of liberal institution. It makes a prosperous man to be envied and the unfortunate to be unpitied. It is a confluence of all the irregular passions; there is in it envy and sorrow, fear and scorn, pride and prejudice, rashness and inconsideration, rejoicing in evil and a desire to inflict it, self-love, impatience, and curiosity. And, lastly, though it be very troublesome to others, yet it is most troublesome to him that hath it.*

In the use of these arguments, and the former exercises, be diligent to observe lest, in your desires to suppress anger, you be passionate and angry at yourself for being angry; But placidly and quietly set upon the mortification of it, and attempt it first for a day, resolving that day not at all to be angry, and to be watchful and observant, for a day is no great trouble; but, then, after one day's watchfulness it will be as easy to watch two days as at first it was to watch one day, and so you may increase till it becomes easy and habitual.

Remedies against Uncleanness.

1. *When a temptation of lust assaults thee, do not resist it by heaping up arguments against it and disputing with it; considering its offers and its dangers, but fly from it; that is, think not at all of it, lay aside all consideration concerning it, and turn away from it by any severe and laudable thought of business. Saint Jerome very wittingly reproves the Gentile superstition, who pictured the virgin-deities armed with a shield and lance, as if chastity could not be defended without war and direct contention. No, this enemy is to be treated otherwise. If you hear it speak, though but to dispute with it, it ruins you; and the very arguments you go about to answer, leave a relish upon the tongue. ...*

2. *Avoid idleness, and fill up all the spaces of thy time with severes and useful employment; for lust usually creeps in at those emptinesses where the soul is unemployed, and the body is at ease. For no easy, healthful, and idle person was ever chaste, if he could be tempted. But of all employments bodily labour is most useful, and of greatest benefit for the driving away the devil.*
3. *Give no entertainment to the beginnings, the first motions and secret whispers of the spirit of impurity: for if you totally suppress it, it dies; if you permit the furnace to breathe its smoke and flame out at any vent, it will rage to the consumption of the whole.*
4. *Corporal mortification, and hard usages of our body, hath, by all ages of the church, been accounted a good instrument, and of some profit against the spirit of fornication. A spare diet, and a thin course table, seldom refreshment, frequent fasts, not violent, and interrupted with returns to ordinary feeding, but constantly little, unpleasant, of wholesome but sparing nourishment: for by such cutting off the provisions of vectorial, we shall weaken the strengths of our enemy. ...*
4. *Fly from all occasions, temptations, loosenesses of company, balls and revellings, indecent mixtures of wanton dancings, idle talk, private society with strange women, starings upon a beauteous face, the company of women that are singers, amorous gestures, garish and wanton dresses, feasts and liberty, banquets and perfumes, wine and strong drink, which are made to persecute chastity; some of these being the very prologues to lust, and the most innocent of them being but like condited or pickled mushrooms, which if carefully corrected and seldom tasted may be harmless, but can never do good... .*
5. *He that will secure his chastity must first cure his pride and his rage. For oftentimes lust is the punishment of a proud man, to tame the vanity of his pride by the shame and affronts of unchastity; and the same intemperate heat that makes anger does enkindle lust.*
6. *If thou beest assaulted with an unclean spirit, trust not thyself alone; but run forth into company whose reverence and modesty may suppress, or whose society may divert thy thoughts...*
7. *Use frequent and earnest prayers to the King of purities, that first of virgins, the eternal God, who is of an essential purity, that he would be pleased to reprove and cast out the unclean spirit. For beside the blessings of prayer by way of reward, it hath a natural virtue to restrain this vice: because a prayer against it is an unwillingness to act it; and so long as we heartily*

pray against it our desires are secured, and then this devil hath no power. This was St. Paul's other remedy: 'For this cause I besought the Lord thrice.' ...

8. *Hither bring in succor from consideration of the Divine presence and of his holy angels, mediation of death, and the passions of Christ upon the cross, imitation of his purities, and of the Virgin Mary, his unspotted and holy mother, and of such eminent saints, who, in their generations, were burning and shining lights, unmingled with such uncleannesses, which defile the soul, and who now follow the Lamb, withersoever he goes.*
9. *These remedies are of universal efficacy, in all cases extraordinary and violent; but in ordinary and common, the remedy which God hath provided, that is, honourable marriage, hath a natural efficacy, besides a virtue by Divine blessing, to cure the inconveniences which otherwise might afflict persons temperate and sober.*

The Benefits of Practising God's Presence*

1. *Practising God's presence produces a confidence in God, fearlessness toward enemies, patience in trouble, and hope of aid, since God is so near in all our circumstances. Though his rod of discipline may strike us, His staff supports us. He turns misery into mercy and trouble into advantage by showing us His presence in a new way.*
2. *Practising God's presence produces joy in God, as we are more apt to delight in persons we know best. Every mutual conversation and togetherness becomes an endearment. If we walk with God in all His ways as He walks with us in all ours, we find perpetual reasons to "be joyful in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4). This reminds me of a saying of Saint Anthony: "There is one way of overcoming our spiritual enemies – spiritual mirth and a perpetual bearing of God in our minds."*
3. *Practising God's presence produces desire for God's strength, the same desire that a weak man has for a defender, a sick man for a doctor, and a child for a father.*
4. *Practising God's presence produces a spiritual humility, awareness of our great needs and His unfathomable mercies.*

* Reworded by Marvin D. Hinton, *The Search for Holy Living*,
Barbour: Uhrichsville, 1999, pp. 148-9.