



Beating the Stress and Keeping Your Sanity

As Mom to a special needs child, well adult now, and business owner, I am often asked how I handle the stress and keep my sanity. For me, it comes down to having a sense of humor, a sick sense of humor in my case, but a sense of humor nonetheless. I also have a large and great family who help keep me grounded.

I think handling stress is personal and you need to assess the root cause of stress. In my case, we already know and we also know that this type of stress is ongoing. Anytime someone is handling a chronic illness, stress can rule us instead of the other way around.

My view on stress is rather simplistic and many of you have already heard the saying, "don't stress the small stuff." That's easier said than done in many cases. I have another saying I live by. "I'm not gonna die on that mountain." When I feel stress starting to get to me, I ask myself what is increasing my normal, everyday stress level and then ask myself, "is this the mountain I want to die on?" I also, on occasion, allow myself a pity party. This gives me the chance to cry, scream, and ask the stupid question, "why me?" However, don't make it a habit! It's a pity party, not a life choice!

Here are a few other ways to deal with stress I have found extremely effective:

- * Laughter - As I mentioned above, I have a pretty sick, or lifesaving sense of humor, but laughter is a great stress buster. When you're feeling down, rent a funny movie, read something funny, or even check out funny videos on YouTube. A night out at the local Comedy club might be just what the doctor ordered!



- * Get a pet - my pets give me more than unconditional love. Petting our cat, playing with our dog, or even watching a fish tank is known to relieve stress.



Our cat...CooneyBear



- * Cleaning – Sometimes when my stress level is really elevated, I clean or organize. It makes my husband crazy because when I start, I don't stop until it's just the way I want! Once I am done, I always feel a sense of accomplishment. It's not bad exercise and the clean and organized look makes me feel much better!
- * Find a hobby – My daughter's disability keeps me pretty much home bound. I used to sing at church but can't attend now that she's older. I have found most places have little tolerance for bad behavior from a young adult so we are limited in where we go and what we do. Her seizures are extremely frustrating for her and she can act out in many different and unexpected ways. When I am stressed, I put on my favorite CD or album, yes we still love to listen to albums at my house, but I sing! The louder, the better! When you sing, your breathing is deeper and it helps you calm down. I've even had a nasty headache go away when I'm singing!
- * Exercise – This is not always an option for me, but I have found other ways to work out. As I mentioned above, I clean, work in the yard, whatever I can to get moving! We bought a Wii to get active too! I love the tennis program and am not shabby at baseball either!
- * Breathe easy –If you like candles or scents, find one you love and keep it handy. I love gardenia and have them planted in my yard. I love to sit on my front porch, in my rocking chair and just smell my handiwork. I also have scented candles I burn, and a friend gave me this cool little iron skillet that uses a tea candle to heat up a wonderful gardenia scented wafer. It's really great when I need to relax.

So next time you're stressed, take a deep breath, love a little, laugh a lot, sing, and remember...Don't die on that mountain!

