



## How Stress Led Me to the Emergency Room *Three Steps to a Stress-Free Day* By Nicole Cleveland

It was exactly one year ago that my body was at the point of exhaustion. The cares of the world had overtaken me; my mind was overwhelmed and my body was completely worn down.

There's an instrument in our vehicles called a temperature gauge. When the little mark goes to the far right, that means it's overheating. This is an indicator that the vehicle needs water or antifreeze. Well, that's what my body and mind was trying to tell me last year.

On this particular morning I got up as normal, but this was no normal day. My heart was racing, beating three times its normal rate, but I ignored it. I had things to do and people to see. Choosing to ignore these warnings signs, I proceeded with my day.

Then, around 11:00 that morning the racing began again. This time there was no way I could ignore it. My breath was being snatched; I could barely breathe. *The enemy wanted to kill me.* I thought my heart would literally come out of my chest, that's how fast it was beating.

After rushing to the hospital, the doctors ran a series of tests. The ultimate diagnosis was stress. Duh! I could have told you that – stress can kill you. The doctors said I needed to be out of work for two full weeks to manage the stress I was experiencing in my life.

'Two weeks?' I said. 'I have things to do. I got people to see, I got work, I have the magazine. I got so many things going on my life and I do not have time for this,' but my body told me differently.

### **Deuteronomy 30:19-20**

*This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and*

*death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.*

Thank God I had enough time on the books to cover my absence with pay, but what about the woman who doesn't have the sick time available on the books? What about the woman who will be out of her home if she's out of work? There are kids to feed, rent to pay, mortgages to meet and bills to manage.

So, what do you do?

Take care of yourself. If you don't, nobody will.

Here are some steps that can contribute to living a stress-free life on a daily basis:

### **3 Stress Free Steps**

- 1) Each day wake up a bit earlier than the other members in your household. Become one with you and God. Pray, meditate and breathe. Be on the same accord as your spirit; your spirit is always focused on peace.
- 2) Create a no-stress list. Buy some index cards, in color, of course. Date them, if you can. For instance, my first index card would be yellow and it would be called "My No Stress List" with the date noted. Then the list:
  - i) Go to church
  - ii) Pick up kids
  - iii) Drop kids off
  - iv) Go to Bible study
  - v) Pay water bill at 12:00 p.m. (Give yourself specifics!)
  - vi) Do something nice.

Make it plain; write it down. Put the one for this particular day in your pocketbook. Take it to work with you. Have it on your desk or your computer at work. You need to see it because if you don't you won't remember it.

As you complete your no-stress list, check off what you've accomplished and put a happy face right beside it. We all need to be praised for what we do. Most times the praise will only come from you. So, draw that happy face around something that you've accomplished and give yourself that pat of accomplishment on the back.

- 3) Do something nice for someone each day. It doesn't have to be monetary. It could be calling a sick and shut-in, it could be helping someone at the store, it could be telling a young person that you believe in them. When you do something nice for someone else, it just feels good.

Implementing these steps will allow you to take care of yourself and begin to eliminate stress in your day. Look for other ways where you can lighten the load. Take care of you - there's only one you.

#### **About the Writer**

*Nicole Cleveland is founder of Breathe Again Magazine Online. She is on a mission to empower, encourage and motivate women by posting real life articles of women overcoming adversity. Visit [www.breatheagainmagazine.com](http://www.breatheagainmagazine.com) or contact Nicole at [editor@breatheagainmagazine.com](mailto:editor@breatheagainmagazine.com)*

