

## AMERICAN STRESS IS SPIKING

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**National Public Radio on March 10, 2022, indicated that the American Psychological Association Survey results had the highest number of people being stressed at any time during the last 15 years.** Over 80% of Americans said inflation and the invasion of Ukraine are significant sources of stress. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said their lives have been permanently changed by the pandemic.

So how do you manage stress?

Much has been written about how to manage stress, and sound advice comes from the Mayo Clinic. Some common factors include: avoiding unhealthy habits of alcohol, tobacco, overeating or under eating; being active and exercising; getting enough sleep; connecting with others; developing or enjoying a hobby; **or turning your attention to anything that requires you to focus on what you're doing rather than what you think you should be doing.**

In order to manage stress we need to find out what triggers our stress. It could be the continuous coverage of devastation such as the Ukraine War and/or severe regional weather. However, knowing the characteristics of a despot and totalitarian government or the uncertain devastation of tornadoes, hurricanes, or forest fires is difficult for an individual to solve so **one can turn such concerns over to God.**

The Coronavirus Pandemic has been a trigger for many because of the concern of getting the virus or the results of family or close friends being infected or possibly losing their lives. However, one can follow the research and expert advice on how to minimize that happening. Likewise one cannot control certain national economic issues about money, the economy, or inflation. However, **one can adjust to and adapt behaviors that could minimize the effects of such conditions.**

The Mayo Clinic also mentions meditation and that to many is a major source to reduce stress. **Meditation can bring peace, a balanced wellbeing, and a sense of overall positive psychological, physical and spiritual health.**

When one cannot eliminate the stressor then being service oriented can be a major activity to minimize the stress. It is difficult to eliminate the stress of the Coronavirus Pandemic but one can help people from feeling isolated through emails, telephone calls, a card or short note or other actions to let them know that someone cares for them (food and/or flowers are always welcomed!) Such behavior can be meditation in action.

A close friend who lost his wife two years ago started memorizing hymns of reassurance in **order to reduce stress. Listening to or performing music,**

**especially religious music, can be a stress reducer for many people.** It is also a powerful meditational experience.

**Praying for others** is another powerful meditation experience because it places oneself with the other's concerns and places both you and them in God's care. So contacting several families each week, letting them know you are praying for them and their extended family, allows one to be in a much greater meditational spirit.

If you have tried methods of reducing stress and still cannot cope you might seriously consider seeking professional counseling assistance. Such professionals can help you identify your stress and assist you in learning personal coping skills.

**Survey research shows that stress is spiking and will always be present. So how do you reduce or manage stress?**