

Consider a One Minute Vacation to Manage Stress

Paula is a mother of three school aged children and a nurse in a busy practice of internal medicine. Her afternoons are filled with drop offs and pickups to after school activities, shopping and other errands; homework, dinner preparation and a host of other household chores leave little personal time. Stressful?

Conrad listens attentively to news of Iraq where his oldest daughter is on a tour of duty. After work, he stops by to visit his widowed mother who is showing signs of early dementia; he shares a cup of tea and completes a few small chores. Stressful?

Stephanie is a first year teacher and is eager to be a success. She has high hopes for the class and wants to help her students love to learn. As with most first time teachers, she is finding the demands of classroom management, paperwork and lesson planning difficult to balance. Stressful?

Stress is a natural experience for Paula, Conrad and Stephanie who are all attempting to manage multiple and demanding responsibilities. When we experience stress from an overloaded schedule or in response to circumstances over which we have no control, our cortisol levels are likely to increase. Many people find feeling stressed as a stress inducer itself resulting in a cycle of escalating and needlessly high levels of anxiety. Since too much stress can take a serious toll on physical and emotional well being, it makes sense to learn strategies that will to moderate stress.

Paula, Conrad and Stephanie have all learned to use the One Minute Vacations (OMV) to help moderate needless anxiety and keep their levels of stress within manageable levels. To take One Minute Vacation choose a place that you associate with feeling at ease and relaxed. Many people opt for a nature setting e.g., the beach, sitting by a stream, a garden. It really does not matter what you choose, what does matter is that you associate it with a feeling of reduced stress and relaxation.

Now, close your eyes and in your imagination go to the OMV place you have chosen, think of its sights, sounds and smells. Breathe deeply and slowly as you imagine taking off your shoes and wiggling your toes and stretching as you feel the breezes. Would you like to lay down on the warm grass or sand? If so, imagine doing it.

The more you practice taking One Minute Vacations, the more effective you will find it as a strategy to help moderate stress. A One Minute Vacation will not solve the problems we face in our daily lives but it will help us to use our energy for the things that matter – try it.