



**Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States**

**The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
August 2017**

Psychological Stress

A priest's wife struggles daily trying to do too many things for too many people for far too long. She is a priest's wife, a mother, a servant, and may be a working woman. This would put a priest's wife under too many psychological stresses. She may end up with psychological, physical, and spiritual exhaustion. She feels unable to lead her life as she desires because she is depleted in a daily swirl of charges and demands. Continuous exposure to stress carries the risk to negatively affect one's spiritual, psychological, and physical balance. This in turn hinders one's eternal salvation.

A priest's wife must, then, detect as early as possible the **warning signs indicating exposure to psychological and physical stress**. Among which are the following:

- (1) Overwhelming feeling that caring about one's home, and service is a waste of energy and time.
- (2) Continuous feelings of being exhausted, tired, and drained.
- (3) Repeated complaints of headache, muscle aches, and many other symptoms with unknown causes.
- (4) Tendency to isolation and preference to avoid people and get away from them.
- (5) Feeling that no one appreciates the offered sacrifices.
- (6) Feeling lonely and helpless
- (7) Feelings of despair and despondency towards life in general.

Healthy ways to deal with stress:

(1) **Identifying the sources of stress in one's life.** Many times, these sources are hidden not in the stressful events themselves but in one's ways of thinking, attitudes, and habits which make them hard to detect.

(2) **Identifying unhealthy ways to adapt to stresses.** Among them are excessive eating, excessive working, getting involved in more activities, excessive sleeping, excessive using of social media, displacing feelings of frustrations and anger on others, procrastination, isolation, ...etc.

(3) **Getting rid of unnecessary stress.** This can be achieved by being trained to say "NO" when needed, limiting the amount of time spent with stressful people, avoiding excessive watching of news channels that convey more tension, filtering the to do list and drop unnecessary tasks that put extra burden on one's schedule.

(4) **Healthy expression of emotions instead of repressing them.** Repression of negative feelings leads to their accumulation and increase the feelings of psychological tension.

(5) **Flexibility and readiness to compromise and accept alternatives.** This would help to reduce the intensity of tension one is exposed to.

(6) **Good time management** achieving good balance between domestic duties, service, work, and entertainment.

(7) **Reframing problems** through adopting a more faithful and positive view. A crisis is, in fact, an opportunity for one's development on all levels.

(8) **Adopting a more comprehensive view.** Focusing on problems on the level of current moment leads one to feel frustration and despair.

(9) **Modifying one's personal standards and expectations.** Perfectionism puts a lot of avoidable stresses on one's shoulder. He can avoid

them by changing the unrealistic standards he puts for himself and for others with moderate achievable standards.

(10) Life of gratitude, through meditation on God's graces and benevolences in one's life, helps one to be comforted and relaxed.

(11) Accepting unchangeable things and adapting to them. One must employ his energy in choosing spiritually and psychologically sound reactions instead of depleting it in vain trials to change others.

(12) Learn to forgive others helps one to get rid of many stresses put on him out of his unforgiveness.

(13) Developing a good supportive network formed of entrusted people like for example the confessor father or entrusted friends to whom one resorts in stressful times to help him pass them peacefully.

(14) Practicing sports and getting enough healthy diet and sleep

(15) Dedicating certain daily time for meditation, relaxation, and entertainment.

Of course, all the above-mentioned ways to deal with stress would not bring their fruits unless supported with the following:

(1) Spirit of prayer with faith, "*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray*" (James 5:13)

(2) Complete surrender to God's will, "*Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator*" (1Peter 4:19)

(3) Holding on hope with patience, "*But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance*" (Romans 8:25)