



Radical Relaxation

Releasing the Stress You Were Never Meant to Carry

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Stress is a slow poison we were never designed to consume. But many of us are afraid to admit we're overwhelmed. When stress is the foundation of the hustle culture food pyramid, choosing to de-stress is radically countercultural. In *Radical Relaxation*, Tracie Braylock guides you in the sacred work of holistically healing your stress and reclaiming the life God created you for.

What Can You Do About the Stress You're Experiencing?

Increasing your awareness and understanding of when and how stress affects you can help you put an end to it.

If you don't enjoy public speaking, your neck and shoulders may get tense before you have to do a presentation at work, indicating a stress response. If you experience abdominal pain after eating a high-fat meal, your body may be exhibiting a stress response in an attempt to communicate its reaction to what you've eaten. Do you scroll through social media or TV mindlessly when you're experiencing stress? Do you overeat or attempt to numb the stress in other ways? There are always clues, subtle or overt, that are trying to guide you away from your stressors. Recognizing when and how you experience stress will open your awareness to them.

Major causes of stress are feelings of hopelessness, disempowerment, and frustration. These particular emotions can arise when we are continuously exposed to problems and challenges that seem insurmountable, like moral dilemmas and social injustices. And if you're not careful, you can get sucked into a continuous cycle of despair.

Sometimes, however, there's nothing you can do about the thing that's causing you a stress reaction. You can't get out of your car and move the overturned truck blocking your path and preventing you from getting to work on time. So you have to release what you can't change. It can be difficult to admit that we're unable to control, effectively change, or improve every situation we face. But the reality is we can't. Releasing ourselves of the responsibility to do so and letting go of our expectations for things to be a certain way can help us get rid of stress.

You get to choose how you'll respond to stress and things out of your control. You can reduce the stress response, reframe your view of the stressor, and take control of your internal environment. You can take a moment to pray for the driver and others who are potentially going to be late to their destinations. You can call in to work and explain what's happening so they're aware of your situation instead of pushing on the horn trying to scare others out of your way. You can turn on some music and praise God that you weren't involved in the accident.

David, who faced many stressful events including political turmoil, enemies, and personal failures, often turned to God for comfort and guidance. In 2 Samuel 22:7 David says, "In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears." We, too, can respond by turning to God with our stress, failures, turmoil, and the things that are simply out of our control.

Because when you respond to stress in ways that aren't helpful, you begin to develop a defeatist attitude, regularly filled with worry and negativity. And this can make it very difficult to practically handle stress. Taking steps to transform these attitudes can radically alter what previously felt insurmountable. Approaching each situation as a challenge, instead of a threat, eliminates the stress response and gives you a greater ability to focus, have clarity about what's taking place, and remain in control. So, when you're tempted to allow stressful events to dictate your attitude, know that there's always a way of escape, even off of the stress cycle.

—adapted from chapter three, "Signs and Symptoms of Stress"



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Tracie Braylock (MSN, BSN, RN) is a holistic nurse educator, writer, and wellness consultant. As a former operating room nurse, she advocates for mind, body, spirit well-being, holistic wellness experiences, and liberating relaxation. Her work has been featured in the American Holistic Nurses Association *New Beginnings* magazine, Proverbs 31 Ministries, and Hallmark Mahogany. Tracie teaches workshops, leads retreats, and lectures on issues related to nursing, writing, self-care, and healing lifestyles. She lives in Ohio with her family.

Relaxation as a Radical Act of Faith

What experiences opened your eyes to the importance of radical relaxation?

Tracie Braylock: I'm a former operating room nurse who has seen many people have operations for conditions that were initially preventable. Many of these conditions turned into chronic illnesses because of prolonged inflammation caused by a stressed mind, body, or spirit. I have bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing, and I have been a nurse for almost twenty years. The relaxation response is rarely, if ever, a part of the conversation. I wrote this book because the relaxation response needs to be a bigger part of the conversation. I want to shift the focus from the problem of stress to the solution of relaxation and give people the tools they need to heal and prevent stress, and the subsequent conditions that follow.

A lot of books focus on stress and offer solutions. How is *Radical Relaxation* different?

Tracie: *Radical Relaxation* combines biblical truth with scientific research to offer the reader a practical guide for understanding stress and relaxation. The book takes a holistic—mind, body, spirit—approach that will help the reader make lasting lifestyle adjustments as they work towards eliminating stress and increasing relaxation in their lives. The relaxation we as believers are striving for is not self-serving. Our desire and practice of relaxation displays the reliance we must have on God and his promises and the healing and restoration that results from our relationship with him.

What do you hope readers take away from *Radical Relaxation*?

Tracie:

- You don't have to continue suffering with the slow poison of stress.
- Take your focus off the problem of stress and turn to the solution, relaxation.
- The relaxation response is a God-designed bodily function. As a believer, engaging your relaxation response can be a radical act of faith, requiring you to trust God and believe in his promises more than your circumstances or what you're seeing and experiencing in the physical world. Doing so will help you exist in a state of peace regardless of what's going on in the world and cultivate an internal environment where healing is more likely to occur.
- You are the interconnection of your mind, body, and spirit, each influencing and being influenced by the other. Taking a holistic approach ensures that parts of you won't be neglected and all of you is being cared for.
- Use a variety of integrative practices to help you heal and relax.





BIO



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In a world that often demands more from us than we can give, managing stress isn't just beneficial—it's essential. *Radical Relaxation* provides a roadmap for navigating this high-pressure environment with grace and resilience. Through embracing the principles of holistic wellness, intentional relaxation, and biblical wisdom you have the power to transform your life. The insights and practices shared illuminate a path to not only cope with stress but to thrive beyond it.

My story began on the other side of the operating room doors . . .

I watched those double doors close again, something I'd experienced thousands of times. But that day, I'd had enough. One too many patients had arrived to the operating room to have surgery for a condition that was preventable. And at that moment, I knew I had to work differently. I could no longer wait and react to the sicknesses of my patients. I had to begin helping them care for themselves way before surgery was ever necessary.

I had no idea at the time that this experience would spark my own entrepreneurial journey. When you see the fragility of life day after day, you know that utilizing the time you have to do work you love is priceless. Being sick requires lots of time, energy, and resources, and it takes you away from the work you share in this world. So, not only did I want to help others optimize their health and well-being, I wanted to pursue a path that enabled me to do joy-infused work every day.

Today I'm a holistic nurse, writer, and creative who believes you care for your craft by caring for yourself.

We creatives have the world at our fingertips. I can create and connect instantly with other beings all around the globe. It's a gift I don't take for granted.

With every word I write, and lesson I teach, I hope the underlying message is clear—you are masterfully made, you are limitless, and you uniquely reflect your Creator in this world in a way that only you can.

I'm here to remind you to optimize your well-being so you can continuously express your you-ness—building, creating, and making the impact in this world that only you can.

Learn more about Tracie Braylock at traciebraylock.com.



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