

## Unavoidable Stress Can Kill You...Here's How to Survive and Thrive in the Toughest Situations

How many times have you seen friends or loved ones contract cancer after a really stressful time in their life or a prolonged period of stress? Is there a connection between the stress and the cancer? The answer is yes. And there's a simple way to prevent it from happening to you. You already know how bad too much stress is for you. We know that it can cause high blood pressure and even heart attacks. The cancer connection comes from the stress beating you down physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It beats you down so far that it keeps your immune system from blocking cancer's attacks. Unfortunately, too many people don't realize that their striving to succeed can kill them in multiple ways. Does that mean you shouldn't strive to succeed? Absolutely not! But this information should affect the way you strive. Here are four steps to achieve success without killing yourself.

1. Relax in God -- This isn't the "let go, let God" mentality that's kept so many Christians from engaging in life. Rather, this is a "get going and let God" frame of mind. It says, "I've got work to do to build the kingdom of God, so I need to be fully engaged in work, ministry, family, etc. But I need to let God determine the outcome." It's much like the Israelites in the Old Testament -- they had to fight the battle, but God determined the outcome of each fight.
2. Trust God -- If you're a believer, God has great promises for you during the tough times. For instance, Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." If we relax in God, we can also trust Him to accomplish what He says He will accomplish -- and we can trust that it is for our ultimate good. So we shouldn't shy away from difficult things. We should engage in them, fully trusting in God.
3. Build some margin into your life -- Rick Warren and Tom Holladay said, "Margin is breathing room. It's keeping a little reserve that you're not using up. It's not going from one meeting to the next to the next with no space in between. Margin is the space between your load and your limit. Hopefully your load is not heavier than your limits. But the truth is that most of us are far more overloaded than we can handle, and there is no margin for error in our lives." Without margin for error, we think of ourselves as more capable than we really are. We're trusting more in ourselves than we are in God. Like good reading material needs some margin space to be legible, our lives need margin to make us more effective.
4. Keep your eye on the right prize -- The bumper sticker is wrong: The one who dies with the most toys doesn't win. Success is too often determined by what you accumulate during your lifetime. That's a very narrow view of success. It's focused on what you can do for yourself. And since you can't take your toys with you when you die, there's not much sense in worrying about them. (Besides, worry is a self-inflicted form of stress. If you struggle with it, see #1 above.) Remember that God gives us wonderful things for two reasons. One of them is to enjoy them. But the main reason is to use them as tools to build the kingdom. We really don't enjoy our things the way God intended if we use them to build our own empire. Paul tells us to run in a way that we may obtain the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24). The prize he speaks of is Jesus Christ and His kingdom. Striving for success can kill you. But these steps will go a long way toward helping you avoid death from stressful situations. God is Peace in the midst of a storm. Resting on Him can spare your life -- and help you succeed. Note: Even if you do all of these things right, overly stressful situations might still result in death. After all, that's a reality we all must face. Following these steps doesn't guarantee survival. But at least death comes while striving for the right prize and with the right motive. Death is an obstacle we shouldn't let deter us from ultimate success.

### About the Author

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