

## Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle

Remember a time when life was slower? When you could watch snow falling, smell honeysuckle, or chat with an acquaintance without feeling rushed? Remember the “gone fishing” sign? Jesus knew the importance of getting away for a silence break. Seems like we can hardly get away with that today. Why?

For many reasons, productivity and exhaustion have become status symbols and a sign of self-worth. As a result, we are experiencing record levels of stress and stress related fallout. It can make us sick or worsen just about any health condition. Research shows that chronic stress makes us engage in numbing behaviors like eating too many comfort foods, contributing to the obesity epidemic in our culture, drinking, gaming and overuse of the internet. Stress increases the rate at which our cells grow old, making us more prone to age related diseases. The good news is, stress can be managed.

By recalling Jesus’ example, we are reminded of the importance to slow down, decompress and live in the moment. Practicing good habits keeps stress to a minimum and helps us to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

## Change How You Think About Slow

- “Slow” has a connotation of meaning lazy, stupid, unproductive, and boring. Although people yearn to put on the brakes, they feel guilt, shame and are afraid to do so.
- Stop and ask yourself if you’re doing whatever you’re doing too fast. If you are, then slow it down.
- Find your own personal brake to shift into a slower gear such as cooking, reading, gardening, painting, fishing, or listening to music.

## Say NO

- Set boundaries-don’t do what belongs to someone else. If you can’t say no, then say, “I’ll think about it.”

## Savor Special Moments

- It’s difficult to envision slowing down without falling behind, but ironically small breaks help in the long run.
- Smell the flowers, feel the breeze on your face, look up at the clouds or think about nothing.
- Focus on moments worth savoring. Guard them from intruding demands.

## Practice Mindfulness

- Infuse mindfulness into your workday.
- Take time for lunch.
- Be realistic about how much you can do in one day.

## Breathe!

- Slow, deep breathing re-oxygenates the body which slows down the heartbeat and stabilizes blood pressure.

## Adjust Your Calendar

- Pick the least important activity on your schedule for next week and drop it.
- Build in some fun and opportunities to laugh.
- Minimize contact with people who are chronically negative and drain your energy.
- Block off two hours in your week and don’t plan anything in advance. This will guarantee you time to slow down.



## Healthy Lifestyle Checklist

### Practice Gratitude

- This cultivates a positive attitude and puts the brakes on the fight-or-flight response.
- Write down all the things for which you are grateful.

### Set Limits on Technology

- Your phone and computer need to leave you alone sometimes-otherwise you remain in a state of hyper-vigilance.
- Research shows that people who reduced checking their email from 15 or more times a day down to 3-5 times, found their overall tension and stress levels went down dramatically.

### Walk it Off

- Step outside and take a refreshing walk.
- Research shows that walking reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, supports bone health, improves cognitive function, and enhances mental well-being.

## Stress Management Program

In response to a growing need to address stress-related factors in the lives of clergy and religious, the Saint John Vianney Center offers a Stress Management Program. We come to your diocese/religious community to discuss how stress is manifesting itself in your lives and to help you restore a healthier lifestyle in mind, body and spirit. **Contact us for more information.**

# Ten Tips for a Healthy Lifestyle

1. Pray, meditate, practice relaxation or mindfulness.
2. Allow yourself to shift into a slower pace.
3. Savor precious moments-bird watch, smell the roses.
4. Be realistic about how much you can do in one day.
5. Stay connected with family and friends.
6. Spend more time with people who are positive and supportive.
7. Move! Incorporate walking and exercise into your day.
8. Monitor use of technology and set time limits.
9. Get enough sleep and maintain a regular sleep schedule.
10. Build in fun and the opportunity to laugh.



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## How to Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle

“Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while”

MARK 6:31