

Take care of your stress, take care of yourself...

I'm getting ready for a well-deserved vacation and all the work is piling up. Is that news? No. It's part of the normal preparation for taking time off from the work-a-day world. But as I consider climbing aboard the plane, what *is* worth noting is what we will hear as the airline personnel prepare us for that journey in that slender sliver of a pressurized cabin.

"Buckle your seatbelts, there are three exits..." and do you remember what they say about the oxygen masks that fall from the overhead consoles in case of emergency? "Extend the mask toward you and place it over your nose and mouth, breathing in the oxygen. Yes. But this is what always catches my attention: "If you are traveling with a child or someone else who can't take care of himself, ***place the mask on yourself first, and then*** turn to help your companion."

It's pretty clear, and not only in airplanes: ***We have to take care of ourselves first, in order to be able take care of others.***

Somehow in the rush and busy-ness of our lives we often forget that truth. Taking care of ourselves is relegated to the back burner as we attempt to take care of the others in our lives first: whether that is our family, our work, our homes, or our community, or even those parts of ourselves that appear more important, like finances or social obligations.

By taking care of ourselves first, we are better able to care for others, more efficient in our work and our homes, and more compassionate in our communities. Taking care of ourselves helps us to see more clearly what is truly important in our lives and perhaps even better ways to take care of those others. Sometimes that means giving up some of the busy-ness and rushing, maybe even some of the fireworks, for a little more peace and tranquility.

"How?" you might ask.

Taking care of the stress in our lives often helps us to breathe easier, literally as well as figuratively. And there are many ways to do that. One way is the class that's coming up. Others could be any way that you can consistently and dependably use to sit back and really see what's important; how to prioritize; what to let go of, and most importantly, how to let go.

When we learn to work more skillfully with the stress in our lives, we can start to see what and who is really important to us. It's a little like going on that plane: we get far enough away to see the big picture, to gain some perspective on the little things in our everyday life; we become more able to see the forest and not just the trees. Taking care of the stress is taking care of *ourselves*. And we do it for everyone in our lives.

Have a great summer...

