

Stress and Women in Ministry: Who and What are we talking about?

Dr Helen Rienits talk at Refresh women's Ministry conference 22/08/15, Moore College (conference co-hosted by Archdeacon Kara Hartley & the Priscilla & Aquila Centre, Moore College)

1. What is stress? / What are stressors?

(The more I know about a stressor and its effects on me, and the more experienced I am at managing that stressor, the easier it is for me to set a boundary on that stressor.)

2. Who are 'Women in ministry?'

- a. Those who are employed in our parishes
- b. Those who do volunteer ministries in our parishes
- c. Ministry Wives

3. What special stressors do women in ministry experience?

- a. Women in ministry are perceived as less valuable than men
- b. Women in ministry juggle many roles and commitments
- c. Inadequate training women for ministry
- d. Women in volunteer ministry roles – Mary/Martha complex
- e. Women employed in ministry roles – relationships with employers
- f. Single women in ministry – special needs
- g. Ministry Wives – expectations and marriage in the goldfish bowl

4. What are the effects of increased stress levels?

- a. Physical:
- b. Mental:
- c. Emotional:
- d. Spiritual:

Break and discussion time

Get another cup of coffee if desired and turn seats to sit in small groups of 3-4. Briefly share your answers to the three following questions:

- a. *What is/are your ministry position and role(s)?*
 - b. *What are your major stressors currently?*
 - c. *What signs do you experience when you are nearing stress overload?*
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Management and Prevention of stress in Ministry

- 1. How do you recognise impending stress overload?**
- 2. Why are women in ministry prone to stress overload?**
- 3. What can you do when you perceive you are nearing overload?**
 - a. Define and reduce the stressors
 - b. Engage emergency coping mechanisms
- 4. How can you improve your coping mechanisms?**
 - a. Adequate rest and relaxation time
 - b. Importance of healthy diet
 - c. Exercise – 30mins a day
 - d. Improve the orderliness and routine of your life and surroundings
 - e. Incorporate stress relieving activity into your life
 - f. Improve social supports and interactions
 - g. Practise the spiritual disciplines.
 - h. Practise an attitude of gratitude.
- 5. Special problems for Women in Ministry:**
 - a. The Christian workplace
 - b. Team ministry
 - c. Financial pressures and job security
 - d. Singleness / Marital status
 - e. Time management