

Lessening Our Stress

Source Sheet compiled by Rabbi Shari Shamah

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Proverbs 12:25	משלי י"ב:כ"ה
If there is anxiety in a person's mind let them quash it, And turn it into joy with a good word.	דַּאֲנָה בְּלִב־אִישׁ יִשְׁחָנָה וְדִבָּר טוֹב יִשְׁמָחָנָה

The rabbis of the Talmud expanded on the verse from Proverbs and tried to figure out how to lessen anxiety. They played on the word (yashhena) from Proverbs and offered another approach with a similar word.

BT Yoma 75a:2	יומא ע"ה א:ב
The Gemara explains another verse in Proverbs: "If there is care in a person's heart, let them quash it [yashhena]" (Proverbs 12:25). Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi dispute the verse's meaning. One said: They should forcefully push it [yashhena] out of their mind. One who worries should banish concerns from their thoughts. And one said: It means one should tell [yeshihena] others their concerns, which will lower his anxiety.	יִשְׁחָנָה", רַבִּי אֲמִי וְרַבִּי אֲסִי, חֵד אָמַר: יִשְׁחָנָה מִדַּעְתּוֹ, וְחֵד אָמַר: יִשְׁחָנָה לְאַחֵרִים.

- How do you push out anxiety?
- Does talking to someone about your feelings and fears help to quell the anxiety?
- What do you think care in a person's heart means?

BT Yoma 75a:2	יבמות ס"ג ב
The Gemara quotes additional statements from the book of Ben Sira: Do not suffer from tomorrow's trouble, that is, do not worry about problems that might arise in the future, as you do not know what a day will bring. Perhaps when tomorrow comes, the individual who was so worried will not be among the living, and he was consequently upset over a world that is not his. Prevent a crowd from inside your house, do not let many people enter, and do not even bring all your friends into your house. Make sure, however, that a crowd seeks your welfare, and that you have many allies. Reveal a secret to only one in a thousand, since most people are unable to keep a secret.	תֵּצֵר צָרַת מָחָר, כִּי לֹא תֵדַע מָה יָלֵד יוֹם. שָׂמָא מָחָר בָּא וְאֵינְנוּ, נִמְצָא מְצֻטָּעַר עַל הָעוֹלָם שְׂאִין שְׁלוֹ. "מִנֵּעַ רַבִּים מִתּוֹךְ בֵּיתְךָ, וְלֹא הַפֵּל תְּבִיא בֵּיתְךָ." "רַבִּים יִהְיוּ דוֹרְשֵׁי שְׁלוֹמְךָ. גָּלָה סוֹד לְאַחַד מֵאַלְפֵי."

In another selection from the Talmud, the rabbis talk about worry and anxiety as being tomorrow's trouble.

- How does this verse feel to you? Do you think the Rabbis of the Talmud understood anxiety in the way we might today?
- How much time do we lose in our lives by worrying about tomorrow's troubles?

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I'll think of it all tomorrow, at Tara. I can stand it then. Tomorrow, I'll think of some way to get him back. After all, tomorrow is another day.

- Scarlett O'hara (Gone with the Wind)

Proverbs 28:14	[Insert Hebrew Title And Author]
Happy is the one who is anxious always, but one who hardens their heart falls into misfortune.	[Insert Source in Hebrew #3] ^With vowels (can use Nakdan to add), without trope

Why is one happy if they are always afraid?

To answer this, we look to the commentators:

Rashi on Proverbs 28:14:14

who is always afraid is concerned with punishment, and therefore distances oneself from sin.

Steinsaltz on Proverbs 28:14

Happy is a person who is always afraid, who is cautious, afraid of making mistakes, and prepares themselves for all kinds of eventualities; but one who inures their heart, who is overly confident in themselves and is never afraid, will fall into unanticipated harm.

- The commentary seems to be saying that we are best served to have some anxiety so that we are mindful of what we're doing. Do you agree or disagree?
- Are you less anxious when you are cautious and prepare yourself for what could happen?

If you ask what the single most important key to longevity is, I would have to say it is avoiding worry, stress and tension. And if you didn't ask me, I'd still have to say it.

- George Burns

In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.

- Fred Rogers

Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.

- Hans Selye

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.

- Albert Einstein

- What do you do to minimize stress?
- What makes you feel happy and free?
- Is stress good for you?
- What coping mechanisms have you integrated into your life to deal with stress?