

## Preparation Minimizes Stress

Preparation is stress prevention. Many of my friends and family members may shake their heads when they realize that it was me who wrote this article. By nature I am a laid back person. I like to plan ahead, but everyday life and others' needs often interrupt my plans. In contrast one of my greatest attributes is adaptation. Adaptation is another great stress fighter. Somehow I am learning that adaptation and preparation go hand in hand to minimize stress and crisis situations.

As a counselor and in my own life I find that much stress comes from failure to plan. Actually planning is not good enough in itself. Plans must be put into action. We need to look at the things which routinely cause stress and make life changing decisions to eliminate the problems. Unless we do something pro-active we may find ourselves and our families going around the same mountain week after week. Sometimes these stressors can be avoided by making extra purchases, organizing better, and being prepared for emergencies. Maybe we just need to purchase extra keys or toilet paper!

Emergency preparation may seem like a waste of time and resources. Fortunately I have not had to recently use the cans of tire air which I keep in my trunk. I have not needed the smoke detector or fire extinguisher at home either, but I would not want to suffer the consequences of being without them. I hope to never have to use my CPR training, but I am glad that I have this resource.

Sadly as I look at the events from the recent snows, earthquakes, wars, epidemics, bank failures, and other world news I am concerned that we really are not prepared. I know of some people who did not even have a big container to hold water during some local water breaks in the last few months. Most people only have a few days of food on hand at any one time. Some people allow themselves to totally run out of medication before they attempt to refill their prescriptions. We've become dependant on city water, electric, and an all night Wal-Mart. I appreciate these resources too, but I am becoming keenly aware that dependence is not a good thing.

A few months ago I attended an emergency preparation class. The importance of family emergency plans was discussed along with preparations in case we are at work or in our cars when disaster strikes. We were given a FEMA book which

was titled “Are You Ready.” It listed instructions for making a disaster supply kit as described below:

- Three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Three-day supply of water-one gallon of water per person, per day
- Portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Sanitation and hygiene items (moist towelettes and toilet paper)
- Matches and fireproof container
- Whistle
- Extra clothing (walking shoes)
- Kitchen accessories and cooking utensils, including a manual can opener
- Photocopies of credit and identification cards
- Cash and coins
- Special items, such as prescription medication, eye glasses, contact lens solutions, and hearing aid batteries.
- Items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers
- Other items to meet individual family needs and weather conditions

Visit the FEMA website, [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) for information on long term planning. You may wish to volunteer for the Wheeling –Ohio County Emergency Management Agency, [www.wocema.com](http://www.wocema.com).

I encourage you to do all you can to prepare and prevent unwanted stress in your life. Take simple small steps in planning so that you do not become overwhelmed and end up doing nothing. I frequently help my overwhelmed clients to see that, “Today is ok.” We do not know what tomorrow holds, but tomorrow can be better too with a bit of planning and most importantly prayer.