

5

Minute Vacations



by
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with Hope Anew

“What do you need?” It was a Sunday morning and this was the question our pastor asked just before going on stage to give the message. This was the question that broke the dam that had been welling up in my wife, Sarah, for the last year and a half.

With that question, the tears turned on and didn't stop. My wife, who had up to that point not been a crier, wept all the way home, went to bed where she cried herself to sleep and slept for the next 22 hours. She woke up, cried more and went back to sleep for another 17 hours. She had a physical and emotional breakdown.

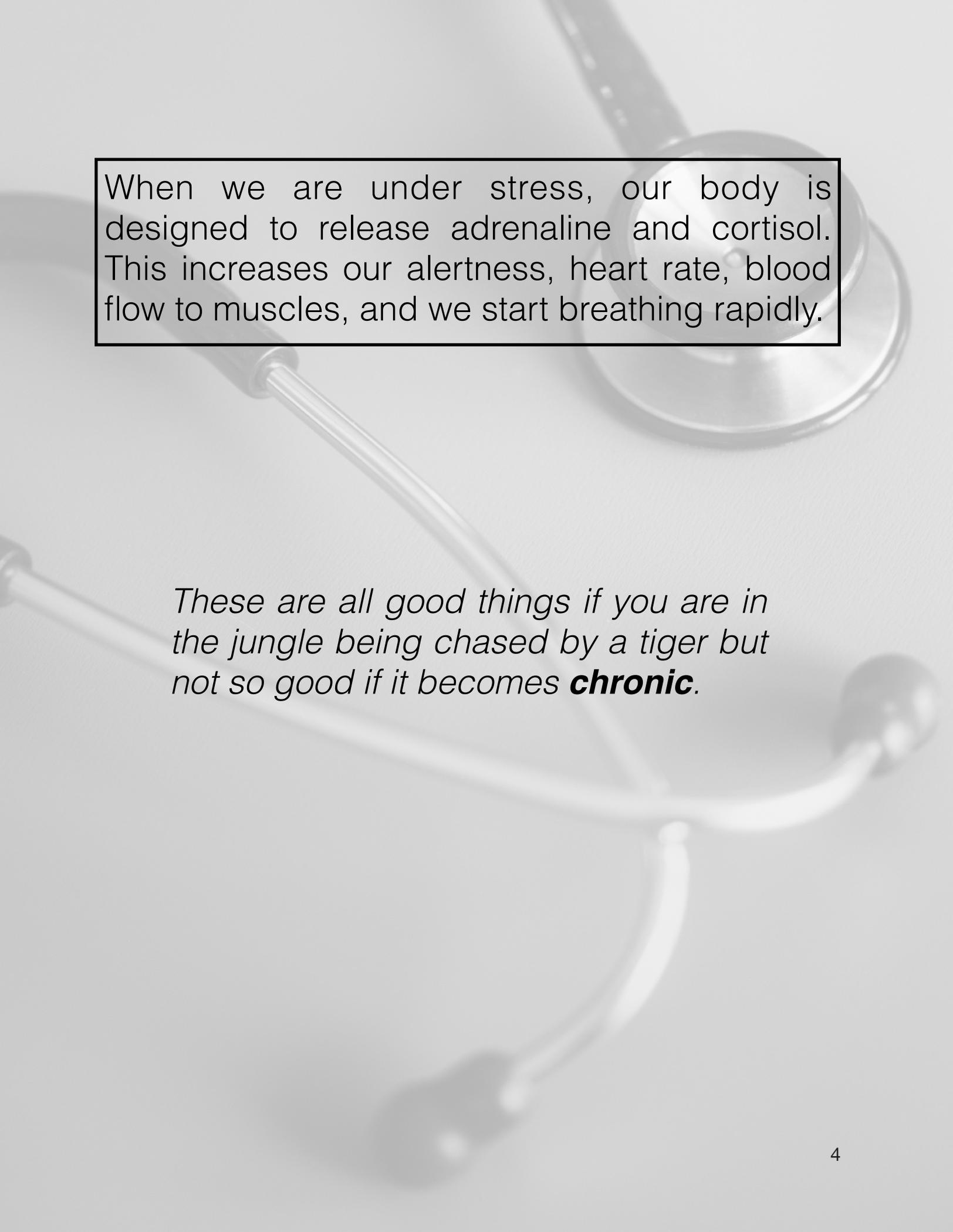
You see a year and a half before that, our youngest son was born. He was allergic to literally all food, except sweet potato. He was non-verbal, and had a limited emotional range. We had just moved to Texas and had no friends, no family and were at a new church. Sarah was only getting 2-3 hours of sleep a day if you added all the 15 minute increments of sleep together.

Sarah was a strong woman, but I don't care how strong you are, you can only do that for so long.

We all

need

rest...



When we are under stress, our body is designed to release adrenaline and cortisol. This increases our alertness, heart rate, blood flow to muscles, and we start breathing rapidly.

*These are all good things if you are in the jungle being chased by a tiger but not so good if it becomes **chronic**.*

It's like this... As weight lifters lift weights, they are applying stress to their muscles to build more muscle but then they take a break after working that muscle group so it can rest. Constant stress will have a negative effect on those muscles.



Similarly, when we experience some levels of stress, it can be a good thing.

But chronic stress? Not so much.

Chronic stress negatively impacts every one of our body systems and leads to ongoing health issues.

So what do we do? We need to actively take regular breaks...We need a vacation!

I know what's going on right now...Many of you just scoffed internally when I said that and you are thinking to yourself, *"Wouldn't that be nice but I would need to go on vacation every day."*

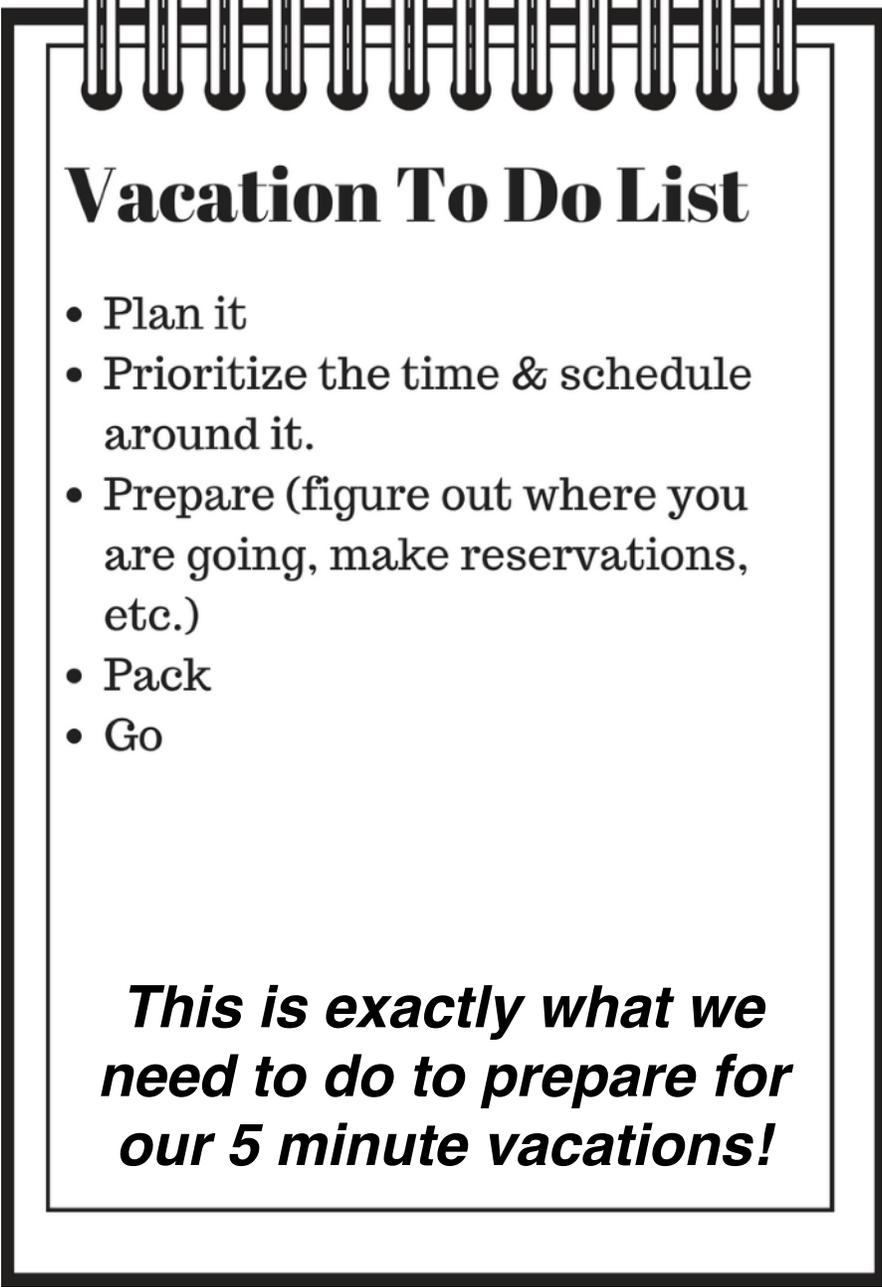
My answer to that is, **"Yes, yes you do need to take a vacation every day."** Every day plan a 5 minute vacation.

Not just a break but a vacation and here's why.

If you plan to take a break, it just won't happen. Something will come up and your break will get pushed back. You will get stuck in the routine of I'll take a break after I finish this and it will get completely forgotten.



If we were to go away on a long vacation, how would we get ready?

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a black cover and a white page. The spiral binding is at the top. The page contains the text for a vacation to-do list.

Vacation To Do List

- Plan it
- Prioritize the time & schedule around it.
- Prepare (figure out where you are going, make reservations, etc.)
- Pack
- Go

This is exactly what we need to do to prepare for our 5 minute vacations!

First, we need to plan it and prioritize the time, scheduling around it.

Some of you are still saying, *“I can’t take 5 minutes a day for myself.”*

This is exactly what Sarah would have said.

Let me ask you, *“Do you have time for a physical or emotional breakdown? Do you have time for adrenal fatigue? Do you have time for one of the myriad of other health issues that will occur when your body experiences chronic stress?”*

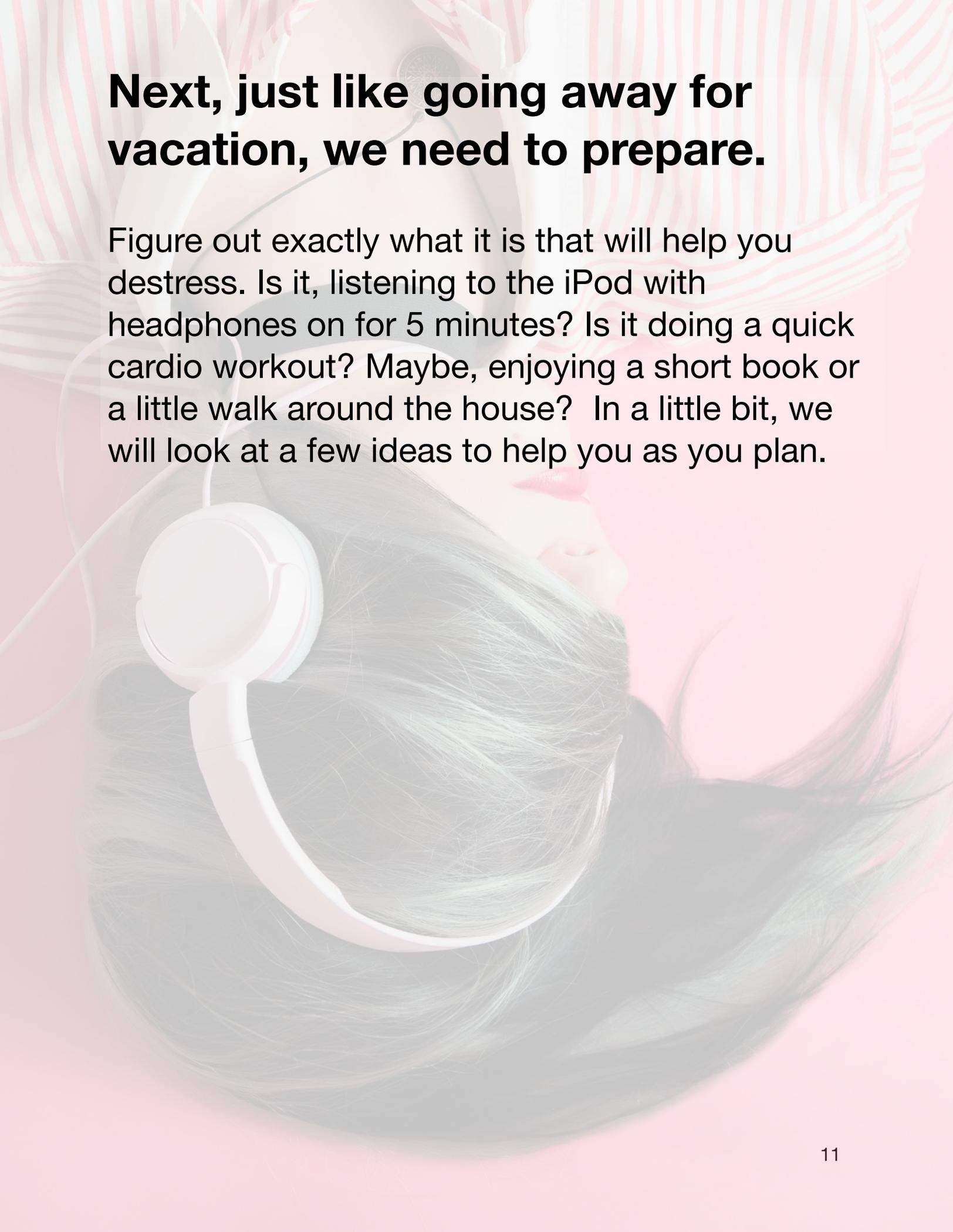
Sometimes we as parents need to settle for less than ideal for our child, in order to maintain our mental health. Notice, I am not saying to do something that will harm the child or put the child at risk but the child may have to live for a little while in less than ideal circumstances.

For example, our son had only bonded with Sarah and would cry if anyone else took care of him...including me. This made it difficult for Sarah to take a break. Now the reality was, that when I did take care of him, he was loved, he was cared for. He may not have liked being away from his Mom but even with her, he was already crying, and in pain... My taking him didn't change that.

We need to plan that 5 minute vacation every day, even if it means there is a child crying in the background.



Prioritize that time, don't let other appointments, jobs or housework encroach on it.



Next, just like going away for vacation, we need to prepare.

Figure out exactly what it is that will help you destress. Is it, listening to the iPod with headphones on for 5 minutes? Is it doing a quick cardio workout? Maybe, enjoying a short book or a little walk around the house? In a little bit, we will look at a few ideas to help you as you plan.

We wouldn't go to the Bahamas on vacation without packing what we would need. We would pack things like clothes, deodorant, and a swimsuit.



Although we could probably just go buy those things when we get there, we usually want to spend as much time as possible actually enjoying the vacation.

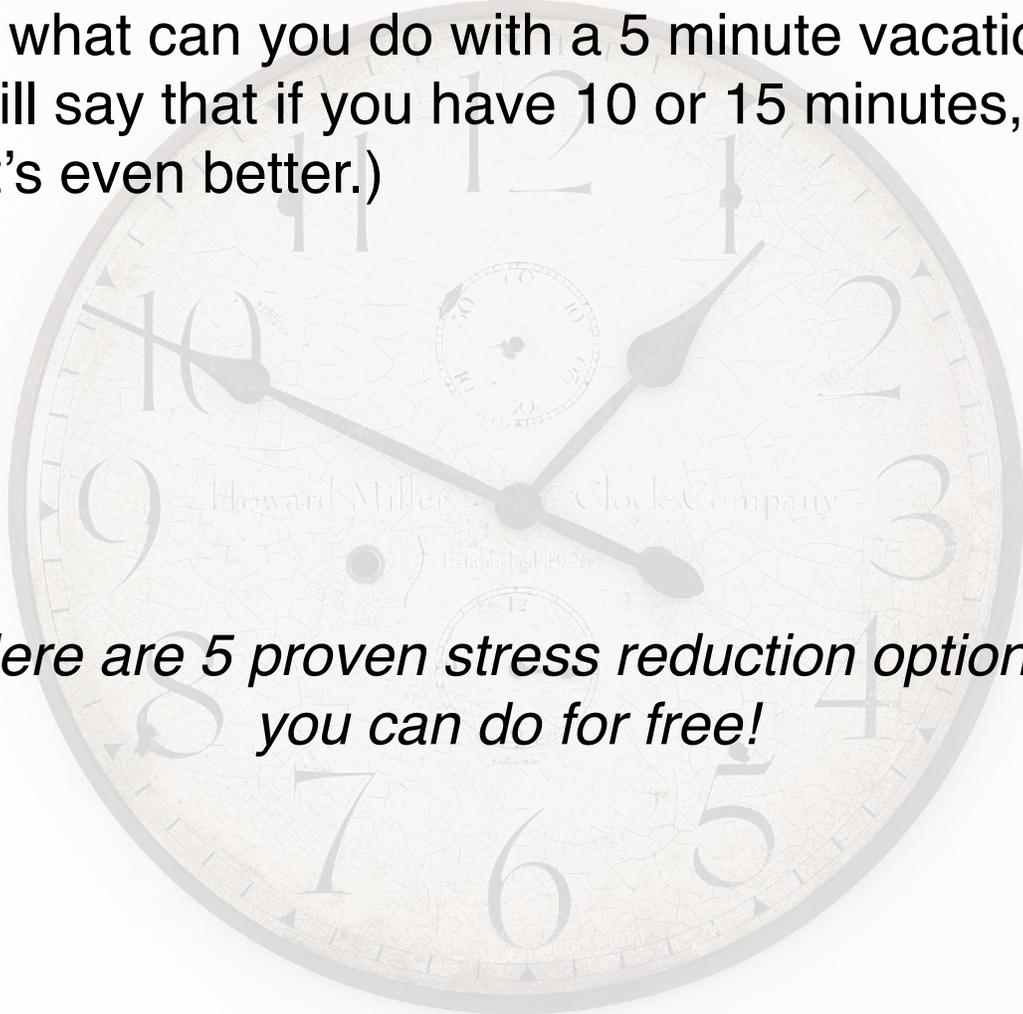
It is similar with taking a 5 minute vacation every day. You don't want to spend half of your time, getting everything ready.

Figure out what types of things you will enjoy the most and have those items readily available in a “5 minute vacations basket or container”.

**Actually take the time.
Don't push it back because
something else came up.**

As with a longer vacation, the last moments of preparation may be a little stressful. As I prepare to leave on a longer vacation, the day or two before leaving I have often asked myself if it was really worth it. However, I have never regretted taking the vacation once I left.

Actually take the time, and don't let surrounding stressors steal the time away from you and your health.



5 Ideas For 5 Minute Vacations

So, what can you do with a 5 minute vacation?
(I will say that if you have 10 or 15 minutes,
that's even better.)

*Here are 5 proven stress reduction options
you can do for free!*

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Stress can cause you to tense certain muscles in your body. Over time, you may become so accustomed to that tension that you stop noticing that your muscles are tight. Sore muscles – especially in the neck and shoulders – can stem from chronic stress. Progressive muscle relaxation lets go of that tension.

It works like this, focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing your muscles, one group at a time. Start with your toes and work your way up to your neck. With practice, you'll increase your awareness of when you're tensing your muscles and you'll learn to let go of that tension.



Visualization

When you can't physically go to your 'happy place,' a quick mental vacation can do wonders for your stress. Visualize one of the most relaxing scenes you can imagine – a beach, sitting by a campfire, your favorite chair in a coffee shop, or any other place you'd love to be.

Close your eyes and spend a few minutes imagining you are there. Engage as many senses as you can by thinking about what you'd see, hear, smell, taste and touch if you were really there. A quick mental vacation can relax your mind and body.



Engage Your Senses

Engaging your senses is another way to refocus your attention and help you let go of worry. The key is to find out which sense is most helpful for you to engage.

Experiment with a variety of activities that engage your senses. Diffuse an essential oil, give yourself a quick hand or foot massage, eat a piece of dark chocolate, or squeeze a stress ball. With practice, you'll learn to recognize which types of sensory activities provide you with the most stress relief.

Laugh

A good laugh stimulates circulation and soothes tension, which relieves some of the physical symptoms of stress. Laughter also increases endorphins released by the brain and produces a relaxed feeling.

Surround yourself with a few items that will make you chuckle. Keep a folder filled with funny cartoons, photos, or jokes. Have links to funny videos saved on your computer. A willingness to laugh at yourself at times, can also serve as a good reminder not to take life so seriously, which can do wonders for your stress level.



Deep Breathing

You likely don't pay much attention to how you breathe. After all, you do it all day long and it's completely automatic. But, becoming more aware of your breathing, and performing a few deep breathing exercises can produce a natural relaxation response. Deep breathing is so powerful that The American Institute of Stress even named it the 'best stress reduction technique' of all.

Deep breathing increases the supply of oxygen to your brain and helps promote a state of calmness. There are many breathing techniques. Choose the right one for you.

With deep breathing being so important, let's take a moment here to just...breathe.

Think about this deep breathing exercise like a square. Start by inhaling through your nose for a four count. During this time you should feel your stomach gently rise. At the top of the square, hold for four. As you come back down the side, exhale through your mouth for four and then at the bottom of the square hold for four before going back around.

Now what?

Tell someone you trust about your plan and ask them to hold you accountable. This plan won't help you if it just sits tucked away on a shelf.

You need this vacation!



Hope Anew exists to guide parents of children impacted by special needs to Christ-centered hope and healing. It is a place where parents can be with “a group who gets it” and work through life’s hard questions together.

To find out more go to: **www.HopeAnew.com**