

# This Holistic Life

with Tracie Braylock

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## HOW STRESS IMPACTS YOUR BODY - UNDERSTANDING THE INFLAMMATION CONNECTION

Welcome back to This Holistic Life, the podcast where faith, science, and holistic wisdom come together to help you thrive in every season. I'm Tracie Braylock, your host and holistic nurse educator, here to support you with practical tools, honest conversations, and gentle encouragement.

In today's episode, we're taking a closer look at stress - and how it affects your body from the inside out. We'll explore how stress fuels inflammation, how inflammation contributes to chronic disease, and most importantly, how you can begin to interrupt that cycle with simple, powerful relaxation practices.

This isn't about panicking over your stress levels - this is about understanding what's happening in your body so you can respond with compassion and care.

### The Stress-Inflammation Connection

Let's start with a truth you've probably already felt in your own body: stress doesn't just live in your mind - it lives in your cells.

When you're under stress, your body releases hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. Over time, these hormones can begin to disrupt your body systems.

One of the biggest ways this shows up is through inflammation. Stress triggers an inflammatory response in the body. Over time, this persistent, low-grade inflammation begins to damage tissues, weaken your immune system, and throw your internal balance out of alignment.

## **Inflammation and Chronic Disease**

Now, let's talk about what happens when stress-driven inflammation sticks around. Research has shown that chronic inflammation plays a major role in the development and worsening of serious health conditions, including:

- Heart Disease – Inflammation can damage the lining of your blood vessels and contribute to high blood pressure and plaque buildup.
- Type 2 Diabetes – Chronic inflammation affects insulin sensitivity and blood sugar regulation.
- Anxiety & Depression – Inflammatory chemicals can disrupt neurotransmitter function and impair brain health.
- Arthritis – Stress and inflammation worsen joint pain and stiffness.
- Cancer – While not the sole cause, chronic inflammation is known to increase the risk of several types of cancer.

This is why relaxation isn't just a luxury—it's essential. It helps your body return to a state of healing, balance, and restoration.

## **When Stress Becomes the Default - Challenging What We've Normalized**

One of the reasons stress is so hard to deal with is because it's been deeply normalized in our culture. We live in a world that celebrates overworking, overcommitting, and constantly pushing ourselves to the limit. Stress has become our default response to life - and most people don't even realize it anymore.

We treat stress like a badge of honor. We say things like 'I'm just so busy' or 'I'll rest when I can' as if exhaustion is proof that we're doing life right. But the truth is, when stress becomes the norm, our bodies pay the price.

Living in a constant state of stress may feel normal - but it's not natural. Your body was not designed to stay in survival mode. It was created for rhythm, restoration, and peace.

That's why we have to challenge what's been normalized. We have to interrupt the patterns. We have to intentionally choose to relax, to rest, to breathe, to pause, and to prioritize our own healing and well-being.

Relaxation won't just happen in a world that's constantly pulling you in the opposite direction. You have to create it. Protect it. And allow it to be part of your everyday life.

Relaxation isn't a reward - it's a requirement.

### **Don't Stress About Your Stress**

Now before you start feeling even more stressed after hearing all that, I want to tell you something important:

Don't stress about your stress.

Seriously. You're human. You've been carrying a lot. And the last thing you need is to feel ashamed or overwhelmed by it.

Instead of panicking, I want to invite you to acknowledge your stress. Name it. Notice how it shows up in your body and your mood. And then—respond with care.

### **Practical Stress Relief Strategies**

Here are some practical ways you can begin relieving stress today - small, doable things that help your body feel safe and supported again:

- **Deep Breathing** – Inhale slowly through your nose, hold for a few seconds, and exhale. Do this a few times to calm your nervous system.
- **Use Essential Oils** – Oils like lavender, bergamot, and frankincense can help soothe the mind and body. Diffuse them, apply them to pressure points, or inhale directly.

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation** – Gently tense and release different muscle groups in your body, one at a time.
- **Gentle Movement** – Go for a walk, stretch your body, sway to music—movement helps release stress hormones.
- **Prayer or Meditation** – Center yourself in God’s presence. Cast your cares on Him because He cares for you.
- **Journaling** – Write down your thoughts, worries, and prayers. Getting them out of your head and onto paper brings clarity and peace.
- **Sunlight & Nature** – Step outside, feel the sun on your skin, and breathe in fresh air. Even a few minutes can change your entire mood.
- **Talk It Out** – Don’t carry stress alone. Call a trusted friend, talk to a therapist, or ask someone to pray with you.
- **Rest Intentionally** – Turn off your notifications. Set boundaries. Get quality sleep. Your body can’t heal when it’s constantly on alert.

### **An Invitation to Begin Again**

You don’t need to fix everything today. But you can begin.

Start with one deep breath. One small change. One compassionate moment of rest.

Your body is not your enemy—it’s trying to protect you. And with a little support, it can begin to heal.

You are not weak for feeling stressed. You are human. And you deserve peace, support, and relief.

## **Final Thoughts**

If today's episode spoke to your heart, I invite you to keep going. Keep exploring how stress is showing up in your life, and take small steps to return to balance and harmony.

And if you want even more support on this journey, my new book *Radical Relaxation: Releasing the Stress You Were Never Meant to Carry* is filled with faith-based encouragement, holistic strategies, and practical tools to help you release stress and reclaim your peace.

You can find it at [traciebraylock.com](https://traciebraylock.com) or wherever books are sold.

Be sure to subscribe, leave a review, and share this episode with a friend who could use a little peace today.

Until next time, take a deep breath, be kind to yourself, and remember to relax often and enjoy your journey.