

# SUSTAIN IN STRESS

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8 TIPS FOR SUCCESS



VALEO

# About Stress

**Stress** is one of the leading contributors to global workers leaving the field. Research by Drs. Lois and Larry Dodds of Heartstream Resources, has shown that global workers tend to have two to three times more ongoing stresses than what is considered the maximum threshold of dangerous levels of stress.

Valeo exists for this very reason: to support you, the global worker, and enable you to thrive!

So what can you do about stress?



# 1

## Take It Seriously

**In your home country you may be tempted to “weather the storm” until it passes. However, life as a global worker tends to have sustained stressors. In other words, the storm never fully passes, so you have to find ways to live sustainably in the storm. What works in your passport country may not work in your country of service.**

**There is also a law of diminishing returns on stress management techniques once you are on the field. It usually takes more intentionality, time, and energy to maintain your status quo of functioning because cross-cultural living “costs” more in mental, emotional, and physical energy for many people.**



# 2

## Have Proportionate Support

*“Supports must be proportionate to stressors.”*

Dr. Lois Dodds

Ever wonder why some people can endure extreme stressors and others seem unable to endure minor ones? Ever wonder how the same person can go from one extreme to the other?

**One secret:** As stressors increase qualitatively and quantitatively, then supports must increase qualitatively and quantitatively. If you find ways to increase your supports in relation to your stressors, there's a good chance you will sustain in faithfulness, contentment, and effectiveness!



# 3

## Practice Flexibility

***“Plans are worthless when the fighting is once begun.”*** - British War Correspondent, 1877

Your **plans** will fail. Take heart; practice flexibility. Remember that flexibility is not a character trait; it is a **skill**. It can be acquired.

Your **expectations** won't be met. Take heart; practice the **skill** of flexibility.

It is not how far off your expectations are from reality that is most important; it is your ability to flex your expectations once you are in your new reality.

Concept from *Expectations and Burnout*  
by: Sue Eenigenburg, Robynn Bliss



# 4

## Rest

**Genesis 2:2-3 (ESV) <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.**

Our bodies, minds, and souls are designed to grow, heal, and strengthen during rest. Rest is what maximizes our efforts and makes them meaningful. Strain without rest only leads to breakdown. One day a week, God has given us the gift of tasting the sweet Shalom of future glory in our present reality. No matter how broken and harried the world is around us, we get to transcend it once a week to enjoy the rest of God, which restores us physically, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.



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# 5

## Cry

The nature of global work is to have a hope of a holistic restored reality. The other reality of global work is that we are drawn to brokenness to fix, to resolve, to make right. The essence of global work is to live between the desperation of the present brokenness and the hope of future wholeness.

Americans tend to believe that we can fill that gap; the rest of humanity tends not to have that illusion. American global workers would do well to cry and lament the brokenness as much as fix it.

*Psalm 102:1 (ESV) Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call!*



# 6

## Meaningfulness As Currency

What motivates global workers? Money, fame, power, status, benefits? Not usually. We have seen global workers who endure tremendous obstacles, stress, and sacrifice for the sake of their work when it is meaningful. We have also seen global workers struggle to maintain in fairly easy roles when they did not see or experience meaning in their role.

This struggle usually sounds like, *“What am I doing here? What good am I doing? Am I wasting the resources of my donors, sending organization, church? Would the work be better off without me here?”*

There are two important factors to interpreting meaning:

1. Objectively, discern and assess if you are properly aligned with your calling, values, gifting, passion and skills with your situation, team, project, opportunities, etc.
2. Subjectively, assign the redemptive meaning to your situation, circumstances, work, experiences, etc. Proactively choose to interpret your work and presence with eternal meaningfulness.





# 7

## Boundaries

Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Pick your primary callings and align your time, energy, money, relationships, and distractions around those priorities. On the field, it takes more of your resources (time, energy, money, mental capacity) to maintain your status quo. Everything will tend to cost you more, so invest wisely.

*Account for your time* in scheduling your top priorities. No matter how important something is, it still has to fit into a container called time.

*Account for your energy*, both physically and emotionally, in all of your to-do's and calendared events. Time is the most commonly scheduled commodity, but most activities are not created equal in costing emotional energy. Some activities, events, or relationships give us emotional energy to varying degrees, and some cost us emotional energy to varying degrees. Tracking your emotional energy the way you track your finances will give you a quick way to know where you are gaining and spending emotional energy "points."

To do lists can be helpful, but for some, creating a "not-to-do" list can be helpful.



# 8

## Spiritual Practices

You will deplete spiritually faster than you will renew when serving cross-culturally. Your spiritual “inputs” or practices must equal or exceed your spiritual “outputs” to sustain long-term in a healthy manner.

**Shalom:** You are called to experience sweetness, freedom, wholeness, redemption, love, hope, etc.

**Suffering:** You are also called to suffer.

These two are not mutually exclusive. They are to be held in tension.

If you live life only pursuing Shalom or only experiencing suffering, you may become spiritually stunted.

Practice both:

- Celebrate / Grieve
- Praise / Lament
- Laugh / Cry
- Receive / Give
- Feast / Fast
- Rest / Work
- Freedom / Servanthood



# What Next?

**Serving cross-culturally, we know that global workers want to live life to the fullest. In order to do that, sometimes you need to talk through your emotional struggles. The problem is you don't have an easy way to do that, which means many feel frustrated and stuck. We believe you shouldn't feel that way while you're doing important work. Valeo understands it's tough serving overseas; in fact, most of our team have been in your shoes, having served or lived overseas.**

**Moving toward the life you desire is as easy as 1-2-3:**

- 1. Complete the Intake form.**
- 2. Your information is reviewed.**
- 3. You're matched with a Care Provider.**

**We want to help you with your stress! Start Now**

[www.valeo.global/start-now](http://www.valeo.global/start-now)

Valeo is a faith-based organization dedicated to enabling global workers to thrive! We exclusively serve those sent cross-culturally by providing preventative and restorative care to strengthen their well-being in life and work. We develop emotional, relational, and spiritual health in our clients through debriefing, counseling, and psychiatric care. Our clients include individual global workers and families and their organizations. Delivery of services occur primarily online anywhere there is an internet connection overseas.

