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BETTER U



BY DEBORAH HERLAX ENOS

Stress Managed

Wellness Coach Learned New Tricks When Disaster Struck

It was our second Christmas as a married couple. I planned a romantic evening of tree decorating, take-out Thai and the Seahawks game on TV. The news stations predicted a huge wind storm that evening, so I had some candles nearby just in case. Halfway through our Tom Kai Gai, the electricity went out.

My husband, Steve, assured me the electricity would be back on soon. We decided to wait to decorate the tree until after the power came back on. The power wasn't on by morning or even the morning after that. Our power was out along with tens of thousands of others in Sammamish and beyond.

A few days after the storm, we both left for a business trip to southern California. I don't usually get excited about flying, but I was thrilled to get to SeaTac that day. SeaTac had power, and after three days of cold food and a freezing house, I was ready for a steaming cup of coffee and a hot meal. We were gone for almost a week. We picked the kids from their mom's house. I have two step-daughters. Jordan is 13 and Alexandra is 12.

We finally arrived at our home in Sammamish. After grabbing our luggage and walking through the front door, we were hit with a smell that stopped us in our tracks. I can only describe it as corpse meets rotten produce.

Jordan walked down the hall and noticed that the floor was wet. I stepped into my bedroom and saw the hardback book I was reading before we left on the floor. Our bed was an island in a stagnant sea; a third of our home had flooded while we were out of town. The roof had been compromised in the storm and because it hadn't rained in those days after the storm, we didn't have a clue.

Shock and stress were welling up inside of me. I was having a hard time catching my breath. My head throbbed. I could feel the tightness in my jaw muscles as I tried to control my emotions in front of the kids.

Now here's the ironic part of my story — I'm a wellness coach and stress management educator and I realized at the height of my stressful situation that none of my stress management techniques were working! Hmm ... what would I be telling my students right now?

• Breathe! That's right; take some deep cleansing breaths ... "Wow it really stinks in here." Ok, breathing is out, what's next?

- Look at the situation differently. "Ok, let's see, Christmas in a motel with two kids, a dog and a bunch of soggy presents." Next!
- Head for the hills! Get away from a button-pusher or a bad situation. Now that was something I could do.

While waiting for our insurance company to follow through on our policy, we moved eight times in the next six months. Talk about stressful! We lived out of our suitcases, traveling to different friends' homes and hotels. At one point we lived in our office for about a month.

I knew my stress was out of control. I started waking up in the morning with heart palpitations and a sharp pain in my chest. I knew I had to get a grip on the stress that had such a tight grip on me. I asked myself what I was doing to manage my stress and realized that I was just living in it. I had gotten used to feeling terrible.

That was the day I got control over my stress and began taking better care of myself. As I watched the construction crew pounding nails into our new roof, a thought hit home — even an "expert" at stress management can learn a thing or two — including how to learn to take her own advice!

Deborah Herlax Enos is a certified nutritionist and wellness coach who works and will soon be living again in Sammamish. She is the author of the recently released book entitled "Weight a Minute! Transform Your Health in 60 Seconds a Day." Check it out on her Web site deborahenos.com. She can be reached at deborah@deborahenos.com



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