

# CORE STRENGTH

FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE  
CONFERENCE

2017







**Keith and Sarah Condie** have just begun a new role together, as Co-directors of the new Institute for Mental Health & Pastoral Care with Anglican Deaconess Ministries. Together they hope to be able to support churches in Sydney and beyond in providing excellent, biblically and theologically informed pastoral care that alleviates distress and promotes well-being, especially to those suffering from mental illness.

Keith and Sarah have been married for 35 years and have three adult children.



**Andrea Musulin** is the Director of the WA Child Protection Society and Project Coordinator of the Safeguarding program for the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth. Before taking on these roles she spent 30 years with WA Police, where she specialised in the areas of child protection and domestic violence. A large part of Andrea's career has been spent developing programs designed to protect children.

As a Christian wife of one, mother of six and grandmother of three, Andrea brings a wealth of knowledge and an undying commitment to children's protection.

# CORE STRENGTH

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By Keith and Sarah Condie

## INTRODUCTION

(1) A privilege

(2) Tune in!

(3) Our topic

(4) More than talk

(5) Where we are headed

# **1. UNDERSTANDING STRESS**

## **1.1. *Stress is a response to change***

## **1.2. *The physiology of stress***

The autonomic nervous system – further divided into two parts:

- the sympathetic nervous system
- the parasympathetic nervous system

Sympathetic = 'fight or flight'

Parasympathetic = 'rest and digest' (or 'feed and breed')

## **1.3. *External and internal stressors***

External stressors – something outside of us, e.g. work demands, relationship stresses, caring for children or aged parents

Internal stressors – come from inside us and determine how we manage external stressors, e.g. our thoughts and attitudes

A key internal stressor: our ability to anticipate future trouble

#### **1.4. The particular stressors of Christian ministry**

- *Role overload*
- *Role conflict*
- *Role ambiguity*
- *Lack of clear boundaries between work and non-work*
- *Isolation*
- *High effort, but little or no feedback*
- *A strong sense of responsibility*
- *Churches often attract people with challenging and complex pastoral needs*
- *Empathy and compassion fatigue*

**Questions for reflection:**

*How does stress affect you the most?*

*Where would you place yourself on the following lines:*

Not at all prone to stress

VERY prone to stress

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Not at all stressed

Totally stressed out

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*How do you think your ministry life affects your stress level? Why?*

## **1.5. Our individual response to stress**

Our personality

- Perfectionist
- People pleaser
- Need to be in control
- 'It'll be OK, mate'
- Strong man

Emotional bonfires

### **Questions for reflection:**

*Think about a recent occasion when you felt very stressed. Write down briefly what happened, what you were feeling, and what thoughts were running through your head.*

*Do you think you are prone to perfectionism or people pleasing, or some other personality trait? How do these traits affect you? How do they affect the people around you?*

*Have you experienced any emotional bonfires recently? Can you explain what happened and why?*

A special word to those who are leading teams

### **1.6. Acute vs chronic stress**

Kate Middleton's swimming pool

Our stress baseline

Normalisation



### **Questions for reflection:**

*Draw a stick-figure person. Imagine you are standing in a swimming pool and the water level represents your stress level. Where is the water level now? Draw a line on the figure to show your stress baseline.*

*What kind of things can you remember that caused stress 'waves' for you over the past few weeks?*

*Can you recall times when you have come close to crisis point? What did/does that feel like?*

*Have you, or anyone else noticed any effects of stress on you (physically or emotionally) in recent times?*

### **1.7. Burnout - the response to prolonged stress**

Three key symptoms:

- Emotional exhaustion
- Cynicism and detachment from the job or people involved
- A sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment

Burnout and depression

- Burnout - particularly work related
- Depression - related to all of life

## 2. MANAGING STRESS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE/CORE STRENGTH

### 2.1 *Some maths!*

$$\frac{\text{Stress}}{\text{Resilience}} = \text{Degree of stress-related damage}$$

### 2.2 *The importance of self-awareness*

### 2.3 *Building resilience through the various dimensions of human functioning*

#### (a) *Physical*

The reality of our embodied state

The 'trinity' of good physical health:

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise

Relaxation

The need for tension-reducing behaviours (TRB's)

**Question for reflection:**

*What do you do to reduce tension in your life? When you need something to take you away from the stresses of life, what do you turn to?*

Being in the moment

Progressive muscle relaxation

Breathing exercises

Short breaks

'Sabbath'

*(b) Emotional*

Appropriate boundaries

A healthy mindset

Being tuned in to our senses

Having fun

(c) *Social*

Marriage

Friendship

Reflective practices

(d) *Spiritual*

Psychological research and the importance of the spiritual dimension

The reality of spiritual warfare

Combating the godlessness of workaholism

Five 'postures' of Christian living:

- Resting
- Calling
- Walking

"Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart – they do no wrong but follow his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed." (Psalm 119:1-4)

- Striving
- Delighting

## **2.4 The value of routines and habits**

### 3. BEING HONEST AND SEEKING HELP

Our responsibility to take action

Triage your present level of coping

Clergy Assistance Program (CAP)

My action plan

#### **Questions for reflection:**

*Which parts of section two above challenged your present practice?  
Make a list of areas in your life where you would like to make changes.*

*Write down three concrete steps you are going to take in response to this seminar.*

*Write down who you will speak to about the steps you intend to take.*

## CONCLUSION



## FURTHER READING

**Christopher Ash, *Zeal Without Burnout***

A very helpful short book that gives a strong theological framework for sustainable ministry

**Kate Middleton, *Refuel***

An excellent overview of stress and its implications for Christian life and ministry

**Albert N. Martin, *You Lift Me Up: Overcoming Ministry Challenges***

A thoughtful theological reflection on avoiding ministerial backsliding and burnout

**Peter Brain, *Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry***

A classic work that is full of practical wisdom for staying fresh in ministry

**Kirsten Birkett, *Resilience: A Spiritual Project***

A short booklet that examines secular research on resilience, and then shows that living the faithful Christian life provides exactly the sort of resources that enable the effective management of stress

**David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture***

A theologically-grounded and accessible book on how Christian men can live at a sustainable pace

**Cameron Lee & Kurt Fredrickson, *That Their Work Will Be a Joy: Understanding and Coping with the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry***

Five principles to enable ministry to remain more of a joy than a burden, written by two men with years of pastoral and teaching experience

**Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman & Donald G. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving***

Five key themes for sustainable ministry that arose from a five-year research study

**Rod J.K. Wilson, *How do I Help a Hurting Friend?***

This book has a very helpful chapter on burnout

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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By Andrea Musulin

# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS**

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By Andrea Musulin

# **USING THE PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS PROGRAM TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

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# 1800RESPECT

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC  
FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE

[1800RESPECT.org.au](http://1800RESPECT.org.au)

## 1800RESPECT

The national domestic and family violence and sexual assault counselling helpline, information and support service. 1800RESPECT is available 24/7.

You can call 1800 737 732 or use the online counselling service to contact a counsellor.

For more information go to [1800RESPECT.org.au](http://1800RESPECT.org.au)



## DAISY MOBILE APP

Daisy is an app that connects women around Australia to services.

Daisy can link you up with a service phone number, be used to search the internet for more information and let you know what to expect when contacting a service.

Family members and friends can use Daisy to gather information and support a loved one's decision making.



**WOMEN'S**  
LEGAL SERVICE NSW

**Men's  
Referral  
Service**

1800 065 973  
(03) 9428 2899



## MEN'S REFERRAL SERVICE (MRS)

MRS provides anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to men to help them take action to stop using violent and controlling behaviour.

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