



### Stress-Reducing Belief #3: I Will Live by the Serenity Prayer

Hi there, Pam Coburn-Litvak here. There's a common saying among mental health professionals: while we often can't control the stress we face in life, we can control our response.

While this belief has a solid scientific foundation, we also find it in a prayer written by Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1930s. It was later printed and distributed to soldiers on the battlefields of World War II.

Living by the Serenity prayer is the third stress-absorbing belief in our list. You may not have heard it in its entirety:

**"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace. Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will."**

So, what do you and I control when faced with a crisis?

We control our compassion for others. We choose whether we will act selfishly or unselfishly.

We control our conduct. We choose whether we will self-medicate, blame, or wallow in self-pity or try to contribute in ways that will help. As psychiatrist Victor Frankl wrote in the classic book, *Man's Search for Meaning*: "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

We also control the confidence we place in God to work.<sup>1</sup> In his runaway best seller, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren writes: "When you think about a problem over and over in your mind, that's called worry. When you think about God's word over and over in your mind, that's meditation. If you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate... The more you meditate on God's Word, the less you will have to worry about."<sup>2</sup>

The bible records a story where God's people came to an impossible situation. They were in the desert with an army bearing down on them from behind, and a surging sea in front of them.

Moses called out for God's help, and God told them to do something kind of crazy – start walking into the sea. And you probably know the results. As they walked, God opened the sea before them.

You may be struggling with a severe problem you have tried everything to resolve, and it's only gotten worse. God may simply be asking you to go to work and do your best job and leave the rest to Him.

And if you will do that, if you will put all your energy into those things you can change, you will often be amazed with what God will do with what you've turned over to Him for His supervision.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>2</sup> Warren, R. (2002). *Purpose Driven Life*. Zondervan. p.90