

Stress workshop offers helpful hints

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — When asked how a new school year tends to affect his stress level, Eric Whitney promptly rolled his eyes.

"Oh wow, it's way higher. All the homework, essays and AP classes — and, I play football," said Eric, 16, who attends St. Lawrence Parish in Greece and is a junior-to-be at Greece Olympia High School.

To find better ways of balancing his activities while maintaining peace of mind, Eric attended a workshop on stress led by Kathy Dennis-Anderson, who owns a professional success-training business. The workshop took place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Rochester Aug. 10 during the Diocesan Youth Convention.

Dennis-Anderson began the one-hour session by telling teens that awareness of stress is vital in learning to fend it off. She instructed participants to close their eyes, then imagine themselves slowly climbing onto a rooftop and walking to the edge. Among the reactions reported by teens were goose bumps, a churning stomach and clenched fists. Dennis-Anderson pointed out that many of these same feelings can be triggered in normal, everyday circumstances — and yet, many times we're not fully conscious of these stress signals.

"If we are under constant stress and we're not aware, we can't do anything about it," she said.

She later issued a 20-question survey designed to gauge individuals' stress levels. Among the questions: Do I try to complete as much as possible in the least amount of time? Am I in the habit of doing



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Dan Rosenberg (right) of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Irondequoit closes his eyes Aug. 10 during a stress-workshop exercise at the Diocesan Youth Convention.

more than one thing at a time? Do I miss most of my deadlines at school? Do I feel vaguely guilty if I relax or do nothing during leisure time? Do I always have to win at games in order to enjoy myself? Do I talk quickly and finish other people's sentences? Do my friends and relatives consider me to be a driven person? Do I speed through yellow lights? Do I constantly seek the respect and admiration of others? Do I frequently get angry or irritable?

Dennis-Anderson said scores reflecting extremely low stress levels aren't necessary good; people in this category may be underachievers and "need to light a fire under

themselves." However, the consensus among Aug. 10 workshop attendees was that high stress is the greater problem.

Dennis-Anderson acknowledged that stressful activities and situations are often inevitable, but that they can be offset by engaging in relaxing activities. "God is all about balance. He doesn't want us stressed, he gives us free will to

Youth

make choices," she said, suggesting that teens take time out for listening to music, playing and laughing. She also emphasized that quiet prayer and reflection should be a major priority: "The biggest way to fend off stress is through Jesus, and that takes centering."

Eric reported that despite his many activities, his "stress-test" score was relatively low. He attributes this to taking frequent jogs to ease stress, and also maintaining good awareness. "You've got to realize that you've got to take time for yourself, but not forget your responsibilities," he said.

Dan DeBoover, 18, said he also maintains a mild stress level. Dan, who staffed Dennis-Anderson's workshop as a Diocesan Youth Committee representative, noted that one good approach is to be realistic about the time available to complete daily goals, such as homework.

"There's only so much time in one day," said Dan, from St. Theresa/St. Mary parishes in Stanley and Rushville. "If I run out of time, then there's nothing else I could have done."

Kids' Chronicle

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1. Cross, 2. Heaven, 3. Revelation, 4. Isaiah, 5. Seven,
6. Testaments, 7. Israel, 8. Ark, 9. Nazareth

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