

Past Tense: 365 Daily Tools for Putting Stress behind You---for Good!

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Whether it's a demanding work load, an exasperating relationship, or simply getting dinner on the table, there are tools available to ease the pressure. Shawn Kilgarlin and her husband and business partner, Ron Kilgarlin, have composed a year's worth of stress-reducing recommendations in their encouraging new book, *Past Tense: 365 Daily Tools for Putting Stress Behind You—For Good!*

With the goal of helping people manage their response to the unavoidable stresses of modern life, this book offers answers drawn from the Kilgarlins' personal life as well as from science and history, and with some from a position of faith.

Past Tense is a daybook, with a new page for each topic. Readers are likely to dip into the book at different spots, depending on the issues they face at a given time. Teenagers may check out the sections on peer pressure, school, and addiction. Midlife mothers may be more drawn to pages devoted to marriage and family. Examples are rich and original, like when the complex process of wine-making is compared to the measured, step-by-step approach needed to reach personal goals.

The Kilgarlins maintain a friendly, accessible tone without resorting to platitudes. Each idea is supported with a variety of quotations, examples from history, and cultural references. A case in point is the essay on "The Virtue of Truth," which includes an astute comparison of two well-known stories about lying: Aesop's "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" and the tale of George Washington and the ill-fated cherry tree. The young truth-teller, the authors note, goes on to great success, while Aesop's mischievous boy is shunned by his village. "When we're honest, life is a lot less stressful," they conclude.

Past Tense is not as faith-based as Shawn's earlier work, *God's Love Letters: Overcoming Adversity*, but her Christian background is evident in the use of biblical quotes and references. Suggestions about prayer and repentance may not appeal to all readers, but it's easy enough to turn the page and move on if one is looking for a different perspective.

The book's title and the restful sunset featured on its cover are suggestive of the blissfully stress-free life we all strive for. *Past Tense* is more about coping with the stress that does exist, rather than on eliminating it. In addition to the daily readings, several refrigerator-worthy checklists are provided—"10 Steps to Patience" and "One Dozen Reasons to Exercise," for example—to remind readers of her stress-busting advice as they go about their daily lives.

There's a wealth of material here, including practical tools like instructions for progressive relaxation and even nutritional recommendations. Readers facing nagging questions about how to deal with various forms of stress could gain new perspective from *Past Tense*.

SHEILA M. TRASK (July 3, 2013)

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