

## About Pat

Stress seems almost like an inevitable part of life. We're busy. It's hard to juggle work, relationships, kids, extended family, finances, chores...and take care of yourself too. I'm not immune. In my 27 years as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, counseling people about let go of worry and stress, I've had to work at it too. Having a lot going on in your life is a very modern, very human dilemma. It's a challenge. But that's why I find it so much fun.



## How it started

From the moment my twins were born, they were active. They were out of their cribs at 9 months, and on every piece of furniture at 12. We had everything in the house strapped down, but I still had to watch them every second.

I went to a new mom's group, where you bring your baby, so all the moms and the new babies can bond. My twins were so active that after the first meeting the group leader asked me if I could bring just one at a time and leave the other home.

"You're kidding!" I said. "Of course I'm going to bring them. That's why I joined!" I never did get to know the 8 other moms, who sat in the play area talking while their children quietly shoveled sand into buckets. I was too busy trying to keep up with my kids...who were climbing up the side of the swingset.

And I was working, and helping my mom with health issues, recovering from a surgery, and trying to keep groceries in the refrigerator and some kind of order in the house. No wonder my brain was spinning!

## My turning point

It all caught up with me one night. The kids were finally asleep, and I was exhausted. My husband and I were on the porch looking at the stars. I thought about my still full to-do list. "I can't keep doing this," I said. "It's too much." He handed me a cup of steaming hot tea.

"Well," he said, "you could lower your standards."

I could feel myself tense up. How could I do less? What could I drop?

"There's nothing I can stop!" I said with some frustration.

This is where the stress shows up, for me and for other people too -- we set these standards for ourselves that seem so reasonable in a way. But they turn out to be constricting, even impossible. Then everyday life starts to feel like the inside of a pressure cooker.

"I see the problem," he said. "Let's see...you have great kids, a beautiful house, good health, fantastic weather, a pretty good husband..."

I had to laugh. There was something about that moment – the calm way he said it, the fresh air, the blissful quiet of sleeping kids. I knew he was right. Sure, I had a lot on my plate. But the biggest difficulty came from what I expected from myself, and from the crazy thinking that labels every problem as a personal shortcoming and every success as “not enough.”

### **A new approach**

I decided to make a change. I got clear about the lifestyle I wanted, and made a commitment to work toward it. It seemed impossible at first, but everything seems impossible until someone does it. I learned the power of small actions, and that even the tiniest action creates a ripple that reaches far beyond where you imagine. I created time for myself, every day. Because time isn't something you manage, or stretch, or pack like an overstuffed suitcase. It's one of our most precious resources, and I learned to use it well. I learned that if you know how to approach a busy day, you can be more productive and still have more time than you do now. Probably the biggest shifts was in my thoughts. I learn to stop criticizing yourself and start encouraging, to stop interpreting what other people do and start and respond in a respectful and compassionate way, then everything shifts. Your work. Your relationships. Your peace of mind.

### **Let's chat**

My kids are 17 now, and they're still active. I've been married for 20 years. I still have to deal with life's ups and downs. But it doesn't throw me off – at least not for long. Since then I've helped hundreds of adults and teens get things done, find time for the people and things that really matter, and live a more spacious life. With the lessons I learned personally, along with a PhD in Sociology, an MA in Clinical Psychology, and lot of advanced training as a counselor and teacher, there's a good chance I can help you make those shifts. [You can find out more about my credentials here.](#) If you'd like to let go of stress, to feel more space in your busy days (and still get done what you need to do), I invite you to schedule a complimentary 10 minute phone session, and we can talk about what's going on that isn't working, and see if we're a good fit to help you make the small changes to shift it. You can call (510) 277-0456 to set up a time, or just use the red button on the sidebar.

*Pat*