



IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE...

By Susan Vogt

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Stress seems to be the word of the day. Everywhere I go I hear people lamenting the hectic pace of their lives and the everyday hassles that add up to stress. I count myself among its victims. Strategies for coping with stress range from time management, nutrition, and holistic health, to prayer and humor. In this article, however, I'd like to share a technique for dealing with stress that I happened upon by accident. It falls in the humor category and I call it "Well, it could have been worse..."

Instance #1 – I lost my wallet. What a pain! Just as I was starting to wallow in self pity and annoyance about stopping credit cards, my husband says, "At least it wasn't your whole purse with the checkbook, keys, and calendar. It could have been a lot worse." Eventually the wallet was turned in to the police department. No money in it but at least the kid's pictures and my driver's license were intact. A blessing.

Instance #2 – On one vacation our five year old daughter got car sick and started to throw-up in the car. We couldn't stop. We were on an eight-lane expressway outside New York City. Talk about mess! Soon the other kids were starting to complain of feeling ill too. As I started to moan and feel like Job, the phrase came back to me – "It could have been worse." Fortunately, we were traveling in a van that had enough room so that the vomit didn't touch the other people. Fortunately, I could reach her suitcase and get clean clothes. Fortunately, we were close to our destination – the home of good friends who would understand, and so on.

Instance #3 – The perennial car repair saga. It is a law of nature that just when the week is scheduled so tightly that it takes a data base to keep track of six people's schedules and how everyone will get to their various destinations, the car will get temperamental. Again, feelings of discouragement and irritation well up in me. If we could only afford a new car, if mechanics could only find the problem the first time, how much will this latest unexpected repair cost?

Then I say to my husband, "Well, it could have been worse. At least now we have a second car so we can take the car to the shop and still have a way to limp around. Remember what a problem it was when we only had one car. Fortunately, we live on a bus line. Fortunately, we have legs to walk on and the weather's nice."

I've found that many stresses can be tamed this way especially if said with a twinkle in the eye and at times a bit of good humored exaggeration. It could have been a lot worse – we could have had a freak accident in which we smash into each other on the highway, total both cars and ourselves, the kids are orphaned and there's no insurance. Try it. It might make you feel better.