



By Silver Rose

## *Passionate Self Care VII – DO Sweat the Small Stuff (it will save you in the end)*

This is seventh in my series on Passionate Self Care. Go to <http://silverspeaks.com/blogs/> for related articles.

You may remember a very popular series of books and programs by the late Dr Richard Carlson called *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*. While well intended, it is an approach to life I don't necessarily agree with. Let me tell you why.

As a species, human beings have proven to be extraordinarily well equipped to handle catastrophe. We somehow survive life-challenging illness, war, financial ruin, the deaths of loved ones...the list is endless. BUT get a flat tire on the freeway and we fall apart.

One time I was sitting in a 12-step meeting and a woman was sharing about her financial troubles. She said, "It got so bad I almost had to cancel my cable TV!" She seemed perplexed when the rest of us laughed. To her, that would indeed have been a catastrophe.

One of the ways I am supporting my life partner through his cancer journey is to prepare nutritious meals. For some of you, that would be no big deal. That's because you are cooks, something I am decidedly not.

So I was turning this relatively minor logistic into a big deal and it was causing me a lot of stress. What I finally did was sit down and figure out how to do it more easily. I now keep a list of things I need so that when I go grocery shopping, I don't forget anything (thus avoiding exasperation and extra trips). I plan our meals for the week. When I get onions and garlic, I chop them all at once and keep the ingredients in the fridge to use when I need them again. Simple things but I am here to tell you, when I start to prepare a meal and everything I need is ready to throw into the pan, I grin from ear to ear (and feel smug, let's not forget that particular small joy).

Seemingly these examples support Dr. Carlson's philosophy of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*. Shouldn't my 12-step friend and I simply lighten up? Would that we could. I think our inability to *not* sweat these small things point to something very different. If we don't practice *Passionate Self-Care* by making sure the smaller details of life are taken care of then we very quickly turn life into a catastrophe.

What I have come to understand is that when you have things in your life you have no control over (cancer, not having enough money, etc.) it is perfectly natural to let small things upset you. You can either learn to turn a blind eye or you can set things up so the small things are under control.

One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is to make sure the logistics of your life run as smoothly as possible. Over the years, as I have gotten increasingly better at this, I've noticed that my emotional wellbeing has increased. Here are a few examples designed to get you thinking:

- At night, lay out your clothing for the next day. That way, if what you choose has a rip or needs to be ironed you discover it when you have time to do something about it instead of in the morning when it will only cause you stress.
- Organize everything you need to take with you when you leave and put it by the front door, *especially your keys*.
- Use electronic reminders to help you remember. My new iPhone has an incredible Reminder app that ensures that things don't fall through the cracks. If you have a computer or a smart phone, you have access to similar technology.

**Assignment:** Look into your own life and figure out the things that are causing you the most stress. Use your creative mind to figure out how to head these stressors off at the pass. Write me and let me know some ways you have done this or will in the future.

In the long run, the most important word in the term Passionate Self-Care is *self*. Both the good news and the bad is that it's all up to you.