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Surviving vs. Thriving...The Keys to Stress Management

I have a huge project due next week...there's a tennis match I have to play at tonight and the marching band is playing at the football game at the same time...musical practice is this Saturday...dance class is also rescheduled for this Saturday...I need to practice my piano and clarinet for my lesson...PowerSchool just updated a new grade--looks like a C...ugh another project...great...here's to another late night spent with my trusty computer!

Stress. I'm biting my nails again, snapping at my family, and oh no...is that a pimple I see? I know I'm not alone, but as a freshman in high school, I am faced with a mound of stressors and it feels like each one is demanding my precious--and limited--time and energy. Do I divide it up and give a little to each one; or do I my put my energies into just a few activities? My parents have always encouraged me to be involved in my school, church and community, but last year we started talking about over-commitment and when to say no. This year, as I can barely read all of the events on my calendar, those conversations are playing around more and more in my head and I don't know how to resolve the conflict. With the Rotary Four-Way Test, however, I am confident that I have found the tool that will help me to decide whether or not to stay involved in so many different activities.

The first test question that I must ask myself is, "Is it the *truth*?" For me that means reviewing my schedule and honestly determining if I am overbooked. From the myriad of little dots on my calendar, it is absolutely true! I can barely balance my schedule anymore and I can't continue to stress myself out like this.

The second question, "Is it *fair* to all concerned?" is perhaps the most important one in the list for several reasons. First, it is not fair when I overload myself and cannot give my entire focus and dedication to a cause. My half-hearted commitment or missed practice time means that

others must bring me up-to-speed or change their initial plans. Also, it's not fair to me or my family when I am stressed, cranky or worn-out from over-involvement. Fairness is dedicating my time to the activities that I love the most and to those that give me a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment.

The next question, "Will it build *goodwill* and *better friendships*?" is a little tricky because most of my friends are in the same boat as I am. We are super-involved and in some strange way, we are united as a result. If I drop out of ROCS, the Spring musical or even tennis, I would probably lose the connection that I have with those friends; but, on the other hand, I might be able to build stronger relationships with the people who are closest to me. Concentrating on only a few hobbies might also allow me to spread greater goodwill to my dearest friends. I would have the time to talk and be there for a friend who's having a tough time and needs some support.

The final question, "Will it be *beneficial* to all concerned?" is easy for me to answer! By limiting my involvements, the activities that gain my entire focus and those that lose my partial involvement would both definitely benefit. Neither would have to worry about me missing important information, because I would be there to hear it all. It would also be beneficial for me, because I could limit my stress by focusing on a few activities that are really important to me.

I know that the Rotary Club's Four-Way process of narrowing down my focus and weeding out extra activities will not be easy, however, I am convinced that by cutting back I will be less stressed, better able to support my friends when they need me, and able to enjoy life and time spent with my family. I concur with the great Maya Angelou when she stated, "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."