

The Impossibility of it All

Stress Management

Agenda

- Stress...
- ...Burnout...
- ...RELAXATION!

Common Irrational Beliefs

- We must be loved by everyone and everyone must approve of everything we do.
- We must be thoroughly competent, adequate, intelligent, and high achieving in all aspects of our lives.
- Certain acts are wrong or wicked or villainous, and people who perform them should be punished (preferably by me).

Albert Ellis, Rational-Emotive Therapy

The Stress Epidemic


- Over 2/3 of office visits to physicians are for stress-related illnesses.
- Stress is a major contributing factor to the 6 leading causes of death in the U.S.:
 - *Coronary artery disease, cancer, respiratory disorders, accidental injuries, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide.*
- Over 3/4 of Americans describe their jobs as stressful.

Stress: The Silent Killer

Stress is a state of tension that is created when a person responds to the demands and pressures that come from work, family and other external sources as well as those that are internally generated from self-imposed demands, obligations and self-criticisms.

Human Stress Response


- Sympathetic Nervous System Activity
 - *Prepares the body for action*
- Body Metabolism
 - *Heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, oxygen consumption*
- Blood Flow to Major Muscle Groups
 - *Prepares for fight or flight*
- Muscular Tension
- Blood Clotting

Stress Exhaustion Symptoms  First Advantage®

Physical

- Appetite change
- Headaches
- Tension
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Weight change
- Colds
- Muscle aches
- Digestive upset
- Pounding heart
- Accident prone
- Teeth grinding
- Rash
- Restlessness
- Foot-tapping
- Finger-drumming
- Increased drug, alcohol, tobacco use


From: Structured Exercises in Stress Management, Nancy & Donald Tubesing, Whole Person Press (Duluth MN), Vol 3, pg 109

Stress Exhaustion Symptoms  First Advantage®

Emotional

- Anxiety
- Frustration
- The "blues"
- Mood swings
- Bad temper
- Nightmares
- Crying spells
- Irritability
- No one cares
- Depression
- Nervous laughter
- Worrying
- Easily discouraged
- Little joy


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Stress Exhaustion Symptoms  First Advantage®

Spiritual

- Emptiness
- Loss of meaning
- Doubt
- Unforgiving
- Martyrdom
- Looking for magic
- Loss of direction
- Cynicism
- Apathy
- Needing to "prove" self


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Stress Exhaustion Symptoms  First Advantage®

Mental

- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Dull senses
- Low productivity
- Negative attitude
- Confusion
- Lethargy
- Whirling mind
- No new ideas
- Boredom
- Spacing out
- Negative self-talk


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Stress Exhaustion Symptoms  First Advantage®

Relational

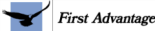
- Isolation
- Intolerance
- Resentment
- Loneliness
- Lashing out
- Hiding
- Calming up
- Lowered sex drive
- Nagging
- Distrust
- Lack of intimacy
- Using people
- Fewer contacts with friends

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General Stress Test  First Advantage®

1. I set realistic goals for myself.
2. I maintain a positive attitude.
3. I trust my own judgment.
4. I manage my time well.
5. I set priorities.
6. I make decisions easily.
7. I seek supportive relationships.
8. I do not worry about too many "what ifs".
9. I balance my work and personal life.
10. I expect some setbacks and failures.


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Change Checklist 

Personal

- Personal injury/illness, handicap
- Pregnancy (yours or partner's)
- Change in religious views/beliefs
- Change in financial status
- Ending a relationship
- Change in roles
- Change in habits
- Change in emotional outlook
- Change in self-concept
- Buying/selling a car
- Aging
- Alcohol
- Exercise
- Drugs
- Nutrition
- Tobacco

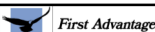
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Change Checklist 

Family

- Marriage
- Family member(s) leaving home
- New family member(s)
- Separation/divorce
- Trouble with in-laws
- Partner stopping/starting a job
- Illness/healing of family member
- Death of close friend or family member
- Parent/child tensions
- Change in recreation patterns


From: "Kicking Your Stress Habits, Donald Tubesing, Whole Person Press (Duluth MN), 1981

Change Checklist 

Work

- Laid off
- Changed work load
- Change in play
- Starting new job
- Promotion/demotion
- Company restructuring/downsizing
- Retirement
- Change in hours
- Change in relationships at work
- Change in job security
- Strike
- Change in financial status


From: "Kicking Your Stress Habits, Donald Tubesing, Whole Person Press (Duluth MN), 1981

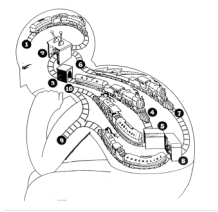
Change Checklist 


Environment

- Natural disaster
- Moving to new:
 - house or apartment
 - neighborhood
 - city or culture
- Christmas
- Vacation
- Remodeling
- War
- Major house cleaning
- Crime against property

From: "Kicking Your Stress Habits, Donald Tubesing, Whole Person Press (Duluth MN), 1981

Burnout 



Work Stress 

A recent global study calls job stress the 20th century epidemic. Another Survey reveals that 40 percent of Americans say their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful. And most experts think the conditions causing today's workplace stress will persist, if not increase.

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Are You A Workaholic?



First Advantage®

Even in today's fast-paced workplace, there's a real difference between the conscientious employee who sometimes burns the midnight oil and the driven individual who functions like a workaholic.

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Are You A Workaholic?



First Advantage®

1. I work many nights & weekends to get the job done right.
2. I believe I make a good impression on my managers by always going beyond what is expected of me.
3. I rarely cancel family events and social dates to meet self-imposed deadlines.
4. I think my long hours at work sometimes hurt the people I care about.
5. I think a busy schedule signals professional success & status.
6. I seldom let work interfere with planned time off.
7. I rarely think about my work outside the job.
8. I often do more than one thing at a time, such as working through lunch or organizing papers during phone calls.
9. I work at home at night and on weekends only occasionally.
10. I seldom over-schedule my days.

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Are You A Workaholic?



First Advantage®

11. I have no difficulty delegating work to others.
12. I do not have to spend long hours at work to gain recognition.
13. I know my work will be perfect if I devote the necessary time to it.
14. I have a good sense of the time required to finish a project and seldom race against the clock.
15. I volunteer to do extra work because I believe I will do the best job.
16. I spend time regularly with my family and friends.
17. I make a list of my work priorities and use it as a guide.
18. I feel I can't reduce my work hours without compromising my career.
19. I seldom become over-committed in my work.
20. I occasionally schedule long weekends away from the office just to unwind.

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Ways To Combat Stress & Burnout



First Advantage®



Relaxation!

The ABC's of Combating Stress



First Advantage®

We can address stressful events by...

- A - altering the situation
- A - avoiding it
- A - accepting it by:
 - B - building our resistance
 - C - changing our perception

James R. Comstock, M.Ed., CEAP

Applying the ABC's



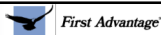
First Advantage®

Situation:

- **Alter:** How can I remove the source of the stress?
- **Avoid:** How can I get away from or prevent the stress?
- **Accept:** How can I live with the stress?
 - *Build: up your resistance?*
 - *Change: yourself or your perceptions?*

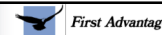
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Sleep - The #1 Stress Complaint



- Avoid stimulants (caffeine or nicotine) or depressants (alcohol or “sleeping pills”) before bedtime.
- Give yourself time to unwind/wind down before retiring -- read a book, watch TV, do a quiet activity.
- Soak in a hot bath for 10-15 minutes before going to bed (also great for sore muscles!)
- Spend some time talking quietly with your spouse, children or a friend about your day.

Stress And Your Diet



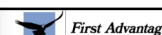
- Drink plenty of water.
- Stay away from high fat meals for lunch and dinner.
- Avoid excessive alcohol intake.
- Keep caffeine intake (coffee, tea and many soft drinks) to a minimum.
- Take time to properly enjoy your food
 - *Coworkers, Family, & Friends*

Steps To A Stress-Free Work-style



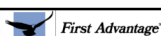
- Examine your goals
 - *And then set your priorities*
- Set reasonable expectations
 - *For yourself as well as for others*
- Interruptions are time wasters
 - *Multiply each interruption times 2 to calculate its “time wasting” value!*
- Remain flexible
 - *Being open minded is its own reward*
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People



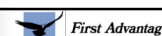
- Be Proactive
 - *You are responsible for your life. Decide what you should do and get on with it.*
- Begin with the end in mind
 - *Think of how you want to be remembered at your funeral. Use this as a basis for your everyday behavior.*
- Put first things first
 - *Devote more time to what’s important, but not necessarily urgent.*
- Think win-win
 - *Have an abundance mentality. Seek solutions which benefit all parties.*

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People



- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
 - *Don’t dive into a conversation. Listen until you understand the other person.*
- Synergize
 - *Find ways to cooperate with everyone. Value the differences between people.*
- Sharpen the saw
 - *Continually exercise and renew four elements of yourself: the physical, mental, emotional/social and spiritual.*

Stress Reducers



- Personal time out
 - *Take a step back & try pretending you are watching a movie of yourself & the stressful situation.*
- Avoid battles with your co-workers
 - *If you think about it, even if you win, you usually lose in the end.*
- Develop some workplace friends
 - *To talk to, to laugh with, & to just blow off some steam.*
- Change the channel
 - *Either “turn off” troubling thoughts or switch to some that are more pleasant and more productive.*

Stress Reducers



First Advantage®

- Maintain your perspective
 - *Work hard, but remind yourself that your worth as a person is not only judged by what you do at work (or how good you are at it).*
- Happiness is not a right
 - *Happiness is the reward we get when things "work out"-- usually because we worked hard to make it happen.*
- Allow yourself to have a less than perfect day
 - *People make mistakes, things happen-- remember that you can plan for the future, but not the outcome, so sometimes its best to just let it go.*

Stress Reducers



First Advantage®

- Deep breathing
 - *Scientifically proven as one of the most effective of all short-term remedies when you are uptight.*
- Progressive muscle relaxation
 - *This technique consists of alternately tensing and then relaxing specific muscle groups (neck, back.)*
- Clearing your head
 - *Take yourself away from the "heat of the battle" for a few seconds to a few minutes, several times a day, to "recharge your batteries."*

Easy Stress Reduction Technique



First Advantage®

- Try this easy technique called "Visualization"
- Take a moment to visualize yourself in a common stressful situation.
- Select one (or more) of the 10 easy stress reducers.
- Pretend you are actually using it/them to successfully eliminate or at least reduce your stress response.
- Imagine yourself moving on to the next task or activity without the "baggage" of the stress response.
- Now, savor this feeling of "heading off" a negative stress reaction.

From: Structured Exercises in Stress Management *, Nancy & Donald Tubesing, Whole Person Press (Duluth MN), Vol 3, pg 109

My Stress Reduction Program



First Advantage®

- 1) This is the problem:
Example: not getting enough exercise
- 2) This is what I can do about it:
Example: change my schedule to exercise 3 hours per week
- 3) This is what I'm doing now that needs to be changed:
Example: when I come home, I get a drink and sit down

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My Stress Reduction Program



First Advantage®

- 4) This is what I could do instead:
Example: play racquetball at noon; take bus to work; join health club and work out at night
- 5) This is what I will do:
Example: take a brisk walk instead of drinking a cocktail
- 6) This is my goal:
Example: four weeks from today I'll be able to walk easily for 30 minutes after work
- 7) This is how I'll reward myself when I reach my goal:
Example: buy new stereo speakers

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My Stress Reduction Program



First Advantage®

- 8) This is how I'll work my plan: (how often? where? when?)
Example: every day after work I'll walk to the park 3 miles from home. I won't have a drink after work, starting today.
- 9) This is the result(s) that I expect:
Example: reduced alcohol consumption, increased aerobic capacity
- 10) This is how I'll evaluation my progress:
Example: pulse checks, logging mileage, daily weigh-in, recording alcohol intake

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The Quieting Response

Technique:

1. Cue: Usually being annoyed or tense.
2. Response: Break into a "sparkle smile." Sparkle (twinkle) with the eyes. The idea is to "get the facial muscles out of the grim posture of a dog going into battle."
3. At the same time you are smiling, give yourself the suggestion of an alert and amused mind and a calm body.

Use the QR at the "scene of stress".

The Quieting Response

Technique:

4. Take an easy deep breath through imaginary holes in the bottom of your feet. This makes use of the diaphragm.
5. Inhale the breath up through the legs and into the stomach to experience a sensation of flowing warmth and heaviness.
6. Exhale the breath back down through the legs and let your jaw, tongue and shoulders go limp, (unclench the teeth) and feel the warmth and heaviness go out of your body.

The Relaxation Response

Four basic necessary components:

1. A quiet environment, the fewer distractions the better;
2. A "Mental Device," such as a value free, single syllable word which is repeated constantly to keep the mind from wandering;
3. A passive attitude. Distracting thoughts will occur but should be disregarded. Do not be concerned with how well you're doing, but let it happen;
4. A comfortable position. Sitting is preferable to lying down to avoid falling asleep.

The Relaxation Response

Procedure:

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position;
2. Close your eyes;
3. Deeply relax all your muscles, (including the stomach which should not be in). Begin at your feet and progress up to your face. Keep them relaxed;
4. Breathe through your nose normally. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word "ONE" silently to yourself. For example, breathe IN...OUT, "ONE"; IN ... OUT, "ONE"; etc. Breathe easily and naturally;

Adapted from Benson, M. The Relaxation Response, WM Morrow & Co., New York (1976).

The Relaxation Response

Procedure:

5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes;
6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, try to ignore them by not dwelling on them and return to repeating "ONE". With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours of any meal, since the digestive processes seem to interfere with the elicitation of the Relaxation Response.

Adapted from Benson, M. The Relaxation Response, WM Morrow & Co., New York (1976).

EAP Services



- Confidential
- No cost to employees
- Professional

Available 24-hours a day,
7 days a week

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