



HIGH STRESS AND WORKAHOLISM

By Alma S. Baron, Ph.D.
Professor of Management

University of Wisconsin — Madison

According to Dr. Hans Seyle, the professor from Canada who pioneered the work in stress, stress is a G.A.S.! What Seyle and others in the field mean is that the negative stress you or I feel in our daily round is measured by our GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME, or how we adjust to excessive aggravations in our lives; for everyone has stress and some of it isn't bad.

For example, the energy required for me to write this article, or for you to meet with your Boards of Directors requires stress to even operate; and this stress is good: it arms us with ability to cope with situations; it heightens our perceptions so that we can meet unusual occurrences; it permits us to act as intelligent human beings prepared and ready for what each day may bring. When the coping mechanism gets out of control, however, is when stress begins to have a negative effect.

It is generally agreed that the truly healthy and successful person is one who, when confronted with a powerful stressor in work, for example, has other support systems on which to draw for reassurance. Superintendents have been designated frequently as workaholics. The very nature of managing a golf course places high demands on behavior which is acceptable to a variety of publics despite adverse conditions which another professional might gripe about to colleagues but which a manager, always in the public eye, may not dare do. If managers have other outlets which support him or her away from the workplace, the stress may be held in proper perspective; if indeed managers seek all their successes in the world of work, they may be in for trouble.

Take this non-scientific but generally accepted quiz to see how you fare as a workaholic.

1. Do you seem to communicate better with your co-workers than with your spouse (or best friend)?
2. Are you always punctual for appointments?
3. Are you better able to relax on your day off in the a.m. or the p.m.?
4. Are you most comfortable when you are productive than idle?
5. Do you carefully organize your hobbies?
6. Are you usually annoyed when your spouse (or friend) keeps you waiting.
7. Are most of your recreational activities with work associates?
8. Does your spouse (or friend) think of you as an easygoing person?
9. If you play tennis do you occasionally see (or want to see) your boss's face on the ball before a smash?
10. Do you tend to substitute your work for interpersonal contacts; that is, is work sometimes a way of avoiding close relationships?
11. Even under pressure, do you usually take the extra time to make sure you have all the facts before making a decision?
12. Do you usually plan every step of the itinerary of a trip in advance and tend to become uncomfortable if plans go awry?
13. Do you enjoy small talk at a reception or cocktail party?
14. Are most of your friends in the same line of work?
15. Do you take work to bed with you when you are home sick?
16. Is most of your reading work related?
17. Do you work late more frequently than your peers?

18. Do you talk "shop" over cocktails on social occasions?
19. Do you wake up in the night worrying about business problems?
20. Do your dreams tend to center on work-related problems?
21. Do you play as hard as you work?
22. Do you tend to become restless on vacation?

The true workaholic will probably answer nearly all of the questions in this way:

(1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes (4) Yes (5) Yes (6) Yes (7) Yes (8) No (9) Yes (10) Yes (11) Yes (12) Yes (13) No (14) Yes (15) Yes (16) Yes (17) Yes (18) Yes (19) Yes (20) Yes (21) Yes (22) Yes

Well adjusted people may give many of the same answers as "workaholics"; the difference lies in the number of "yes" answers. If you answer more than 18 yeses, you may be heading towards true "workaholicism" which can be a danger signal.

It is generally agreed that coping successfully with today's frenetic pace is dependent on a variety of personality and behavioral tendencies. Let me list them for you:

1. The healthy individual knows himself or herself at all levels and works to understand and accept his or her own strengths and weaknesses. He or she analyzes these strengths and weaknesses and recognizes personality traits which cannot be changed and capitalizes on those skills, social and professional, which enhance the Superintendent's position.
2. The healthy individual is one who has developed a lot of interests outside of the world of work. He or she has a variety of satisfactions in life and has a lot of irons in many fires and these interests relating to family, recreation, other business are actively pursued.
3. The healthy individual has a variety of reactions to conditions which he or she finds stressful. For example, if the President of the Board makes an inappropriate request, the Golf Course Manager doesn't always develop a headache, or get depressed when confronted with a minor threat. The person rolls with the punches and bounces back quickly from stressful situations.
4. The healthy individual acknowledges that others have different sets of values, attitudes and opinions and accepts these as a fact of life.
5. The healthy individual is active and productive not only at work but in other similar situations in the community and in family live.

The popular saying in Ecclesiastes which goes like this: "There is a time for everything and to everything there is a season" is indeed a saying to live with. If people can hold a proper perspective in all areas of life, home, family, work, friendships then the supporting mechanisms provided in these different areas will go a long way towards making our G.A.S. reactions healthy and production.

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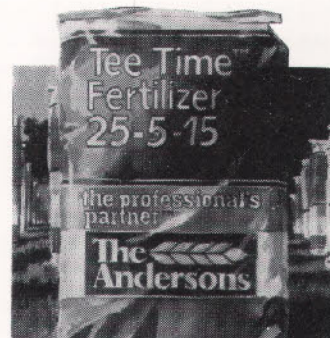
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