

There's no such thing as stress in the work place!

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH . . . BEING TOUGH ISN'T ALWAYS ENOUGH

by Dr. Wayne Dyer

Stress does not exist in the world! There is no such thing as stress happening to you! Some situations in life are **not** more stressful than others! There is no such thing as an anxiety attack!

You are probably asking, "How can he say that stress does not exist in the world when so many people are uptight and full of tension?" The answer is deceptively simple, and also very important to you, if you are going to send stress, tension or anxiety (or whatever you choose to label it) out of your life forever. Stress does not exist in the world, but you are quite capable of thinking stressful thoughts. Keep this distinction in mind. There is no stress, only stressful thinking. Your job is to learn how to think more effectively in all of life's circumstances, and to stop blaming the world for being stressful. The world is just the way it is, regardless of what your opinion about it is. Your boss or green committee chairman is exactly who he is, regardless of what you decide to think about him. Your club or company policies are already in place, and what you think about them may cause you to be full of stress, not the policies themselves.

While there is no stress in the world, the results of thinking stressfully are evident everywhere. Many people are jumpy, tense, ulcer-ridden, nervous, twitchy, fearful, "uptight," and loaded with high blood pressure and other physical manifestations of stressful thinking. Once you place the responsibility for any stress that you are experiencing totally on yourself, you will be on your way to eliminating the painful and often destructive results of that thinking.

Take an example of two situations which many people tend to view as stressful, such as speaking before a large group of people and confronting your superior on the job. The crowded room contains no stress, it is simply a room full of people. Yet if you are the person who is going to speak before them, your mind might start working in ways which will produce stressful reactions. "What if they don't like me?", or, "What if I make a fool of myself, or forget what I'm supposed to say?" These kinds of internal sentences produce anxiety and stressful reactions. Similarly, the example of confronting your superior about a disagreement you have is stressful if you play the same kind of damaging tricks on yourself. Your boss is intimidating because you choose to view him that way, not because he possesses any distressing ingredients. In reality, people and things are just the way they are, and if you have stress in your life, it is because you choose to judge people and things stressfully.

With those ideas in mind, it is important for you to believe strongly that you can eliminate stress

completely from your life if you decide to go to work on it. You can't go to work on the world, only yourself. If you buy the notion that stress comes from stressful thinking, and that it exists only in you, not in life's circumstances, then you can take some specific steps toward not only understanding your stress, but ridding yourself of its devastating effects forever.

Understanding Your Stressful Thinking

Whenever you read an article about stress you will inevitably come to the section which talks about the most stress-producing situations, with rating points for evaluating your chances of having stress. You'll read that moving to a new location is worth a lot of stress points, as is going through a divorce, changing jobs, a death in the family, financial difficulties, or an automobile accident. The emphasis on this kind of writing is on situational stress and that to avoid stress one should obviously avoid these kinds of circumstances and activities. But this is not how stress works at all, and many people go through these kinds of life circumstances regularly and simply refuse to think in stressful ways.

In the composite below, I have listed the real causes of stress. The emphasis on these sources of stress is in looking at your own thinking and behavior, rather than blaming the setting (e.g., the golf course) or the activity for producing the stress.

Typical Attitudes and Behaviors That Create Stress

Being in an unresolved relationship. When you are always thinking about your relationship and wondering whether you are in the right place, or if you should bring the relationship to an end, or if your partner is leaving you, this kind of thinking generally takes precedence over everything else, and you will not be able to eliminate the stress until some resolution is forthcoming. Resolve it one way or the other and you will minimize the stress.

Worry and fretting behavior. When your mind is consumed about everything in the future, particularly those things over which you have no control, then you are setting yourself a stress trap. You can train yourself to become a non-worrier, just like you trained yourself to fret.

Impatience. When you are always expecting everyone else to get things done quickly, and to always do them your way, then you are using your body as a stress apparatus. By being impatient with others, you generally put the same standards on yourself, and you never allow yourself any peace because of your fussy and irascible personality.

An inability to relax. If you are always on the go, running from one chore to another and never giving yourself time for yourself, then you are setting up the same stress reaction for which business executives are so well known. You are the executive of your life, and if you run it on a hurry-up mentality, always flitting about and never able to quiet your mind and relax your body, you are building up that deadly stress momentum. Give yourself some time to enjoy your life and relax, just because you feel like taking it easy and for no other reason.

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A LAYMAN'S VIEW OF STRESS

By Monroe S. Miller

Most people unfamiliar with our business are surprised to learn that we work in what **can** be stressful conditions and situations. Golf courses appear to be calm, peaceful, and beautiful corners of the world, and it taxes a Superintendent's credibility when he talks of the stress and pressure and worry he has to deal with during the summer months. Most do not realize and cannot relate to the problems inflicted by the weather, disease pressure and cultural problems. They are unfamiliar with the demands of the game and the players and how they can be contrary to sound agronomics. Few recognize how closely economic limitations impact on the product we turn out and the frustration of wanting and needing to do more and not being able to, because of money. Hard work and long hours too often are not noticed. And so on, ad infinitum. But regardless of others' impressions, the fact remains that we do work in difficult situations and that stress can and has taken its toll among our colleagues.

I guess my interest in stress has been obvious. The GRASSROOTS has treated the subject a couple of different times in past issues. A two part article appears in this and in the next issue. And it's a condition that, quite frankly, I've learned to deal with in the golf course setting.

I saw stress in our rural community at a young age. Farmers are subject to some of the same uncontrollable situations we are — weather, insects, diseases, etc. Beyond that they confront interest rates, land costs, declining prices and sometimes worse. In fact, haven't you heard the old farm saying that, in reality, defines modern day stress — "I am in over five buckles deep and I don't own any six bucklers; and I have the sinking feeling I'm going to lose more than my boots!" I've felt myself and seen in other students the stress of college — life at a large University can be very trying as one struggles with classes, grades and competition.

But one never sees or feels stress like that which exists in military action. Many of the violations I saw as a Military Policeman on an Army base 20 miles north of Saigon were the result of stress — combat stress. Normally solid young men found themselves in varying degrees of trouble, too often as a result of the mental stress of war. I think of that frequently when fretting over some problem. It provides a reference point that quickly puts my small problems in proper perspective.

I do not profess any expertise in dealing with this problem. I'm merely sharing with you some things that have worked for me in handling the stress found in our profession. Pieces with medical and psychological advice will be left to people with proper credentials. But I hope there is some appeal to and interest in a layman's success with anything, even something as complicated as stress.

Medical science is finally zeroing in on how stress can make one physically ill. It has been

known for years that a wave of deaths follows a recession by three years. A second one comes in five to seven years. These are explained by the fact that heart disease takes a few years to catch up with you. Kidney failure deaths also lag. Death by stroke follows a recession by two to four years. Prime risk factors like high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels follow stressful conditions. And, when humans can least afford to, they turn to booze and tobacco and the concomitant risks they bring start to show up. Prolonged mental stress leads to more suicides, more traffic accidents and even high infant mortality.

And even though the evidence is still circumstantial, there is a belief building among some medical researchers that stress can weaken the body's immune system, which protects us from disease. Stress hormones may be involved. Although the whole complicated system is still in early stages of study, it is a fact that stress can induce physical ailments and disease. Beyond statistics and beyond medical research, that mind affects body is pretty well accepted by people in our age. I love Woody Allen's line in his movie of a couple of years ago — **Manhattan**: "I can't express anger; I grow a tumor instead!"

Recognizing that stress exists in our profession and realizing that it has a deleterious effect on our well being requires that each of us, in his own way, manage the stress that surrounds him. The first step I learned in handling mental pressures was to accept that there are really only two things to worry about: 1) what you can change, and 2) what you can't change. If you cannot change a situation, it must be accepted and made the best of. When Madison received 12 inches of snow in mid-November and I didn't have snowmold fungicides applied to some of my fairways, I didn't get all bent out of shape. There was nothing I could do about that much snow and no amount of grumbling was going to change it. Ten years ago I'd have worked myself right into a nervous sweat, but the situation wouldn't have changed a bit. All that came from the nervousness was a stomach ache, a headache, and fatigue accompanied by some sleepless nights. The fact is that we are confronted, by Nature itself, with many situations we have no control over and cannot change. I've quit worrying about them, accept them, hope for and make the best of them. I've relieved myself of a lot of unnecessary stress.

Fortunately, we face many potentially devastating situations that we **can** change. In these instances I form a plan of attack and usually write it down as a list on a piece of paper. Then I get to it. Cases like those do a curious and constructive thing to me. I find myself more energized than overwhelmed by the stress I know I can overcome by controlling and changing the situation. It works to motivate me and that in turn motivates my employees to more serious action. Rather than fuming to excess, steps or goals on my list are crossed off. It eliminates a lot of frustration and discouragement — progress is being made. Little time is spent brooding and most time is spent executing what usually ends up a successful

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Being explosive and angry. People who are always yelling, demanding and upset are prime candidates for stress. While it is certainly more advantageous to express your feelings rather than keep them bottled up inside, if you consistently choose anger and behave in an explosive fashion, then you are choosing the accompanying stress that goes with it.

Perfectionism. People who believe there is only one way to do something, and who demand perfection from themselves and others, are higher on the stress list than those who can tolerate errors and imperfections. When you set up a standard of perfection for yourself, or any other human being, you will almost be disappointed. No one can grow without failing, sometimes, because learning is plainly impossible without failure. Consequently, perfectionists experience a great deal of stress, since they are unable to handle failure. Those who choose perfection generally choose a safe route. They are inflexible and, of course, not at peace with themselves. Winston Churchill once said: "The maxim that nothing avails but perfection may be spelled P-A-R-A-L-Y-S-I-S." Paralysis, I might add, spells S-T-R-E-S-S.

Placing too heavy an emphasis on money. There are some people who have dollar personalities. They talk about things and even people in terms of how much they cost, or what they are worth. They always want to place a dollar figure on everything under discussion. This kind of neurotic pursuit of money, and continual discussion of financial matters, keeps the pressure on the person, and that kind of pressure results in excessive stress on the body. There is much to be said for stopping to smell the roses and appreciating the things which don't have price tags on them.

Excessive competition. When you are always looking over your shoulder to see how other people are doing before you can evaluate your own happiness, you are using excessive competition to guide you in your life. How others do things or what is going on in their lives is really not very relevant to your own happiness, unless you

want to evaluate your own state of mind based on how you stack up against them. Healthy competition is fine. However, when you allow your performance compared to others to determine your own inner peace, you are handing the controls of your life over to someone else. And that is a stress builder!

Feeling unimportant or uninvolved in life. Just as too much hurrying and impatience can create stress, so, too, can indolence and inactivity. If you are not at peace with yourself about what you are doing in life, and if you feel like someone who has no purpose, then you are adding a great deal of stress in your life. If you have no power in your life, it is because you have taught people to treat you in a powerless way. If you want a voice, then you must speak up and insist upon being heard, or you will always have that innercontempt which will keep you in a lifelong stressful state.

Rigid and inflexible thinking. If you find it very difficult to accept another opinion, to change, or admit you are wrong, then you are putting a tremendous burden on yourself by way of stress and inter-

nal tension. Rigid people are always looking for something to be upset about, and they find themselves in arguments and even fights a great deal of the time. This kind of argumentation, rigidity, and one-way attitude puts you into a condition of stress.

No humor or enthusiasm. Laughter and a light-hearted approach to life are tremendous stress reducers. Having a sense of humor is an attitude that can be cultivated, and those people who do enjoy life and laugh out loud regularly, are far less prone to suffer from the adverse effects of stress.

All of the above attitudes and personality variables contribute heavily to a condition of stress and regular bouts of anxiety. These are the real causes of stress and they come from the choices that you make to be the kind of person you are. Forget about all of the excuses you have for being stressful, such as a tough job, a bad tempered boss, financial problems, and the like, and begin to examine your attitudes and behaviors toward these conditions.



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solution. Identification of stressful situations and vigorous measures changing them gives me a powerful sense of control of my own fate — this emotion overwhelms any stress.

It may seem too obvious to mention, but it is essential in composing a list with a plan of attack, to arrange tasks to be done in some order of **priority**. There is no sense in changing ballwasher water and soap when the golf course needs every available man for hand watering. I love the story that former Minnesota Viking defensive end Carl Eller told about Coach Bud Grant. Eller recalled buying his first pair of lavish, custom-made boots. He was proud of those boots, and when he noticed Grant staring at them on the team bus, he began to recite the whole story of how he'd bought them. "I went into how I picked the boot maker, all the different grades of leather you look at, and why I had decided to get multi-colored boots — because I only had one pair like this and I wanted to be able to wear them with a lot of different outfits," Eller remembers. After Eller finished his elaborate explanation, Grant looked at him out of his ice-blue eyes and asked, "Are they any good in the snow?" That is keeping your priorities straight and I am willing to bet Bud Grant feels little stress in his life because he's able to put first things first!

Another suggestion with a well established positive effect is to, in some way, share your frustration or trouble over a situation. I do, and it works. It may be talking a golf course problem through with a key employee. It may be sharing a personnel problem with my wife. Occasionally I take Mark Twain's suggestion: "When angry, count to four; when very angry, swear!" The point is to get whatever is bothering me out of my system; when I do, the stress seems to go with it. Along these same lines comes something I noticed helpful over the years. I work hard to maintain a comfortable and smooth-running work situation on the golf course. I like to keep all of us on the golf course staff geared up and working toward a well-defined objective. This leads to a less stressful work environment for all of us.

Everyone knows what is expected and surprises are not a part of their work life. I am not implying an easy or a soft or a laid back environment, where anything goes and everything is OK. Make no mistake — I have full rein. But there is nothing wrong with an attitude where all understand what is expected.

Age and experience on the job just naturally help perspective and in turn reduce the stress of that job. But also with age comes a better grasp of reality and a decreasing tendency to let job stress get you down. This isn't always true, but it has been for me. Also, with experience comes more clear action plans. It is true that with more experience comes fewer panic situations. I am better able to foresee and head off problems, and this reduces stresses.

Another trick I've learned to reduce stress is to participate in some **physical** opportunity. I don't jog or play racketball or any other vogue activity. I find by working **physically**, on the golf course, maybe with shovel in hand or on a machine, stress leaves me. Sometimes I'll walk to a golf course

destination, rather than driving a vehicle. Frequently I go for early morning walks. Lots of different things work — paramount is the physical nature of the activity. A good sweat doesn't hurt. I've thought that maybe part of the reason physical activities help is that they are very relaxing in nature.

I am asked a hundred times each season if I play golf. My reply is no, much to nearly everyone's surprise. This has less to do with my lack of skill and more to do with a need to get away from the work place and do something — **anything** — **unrelated** to golf courses. Very few other people recreate where they work and I cannot see any reason for me to do that. Pleasurable and enjoyable activity away from my golf course certainly helps in reducing stress.

The frustrating thing about stress is that there is no single, guaranteed method for control. But the few thoughts in the preceding paragraphs have worked for me. The stress management I have learned really works; my hope in sharing is that they might work for you, too.

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