



TURFGRASS MATTERS

May/June 1998

Volume 70, Number 2

Managing Personal Stress

For those of us that have listened to people who work inside all day or drive around in their vehicles making sales calls say, "You have the best job in the world. All you do is mow grass and soak up the sun in the summer and travel and goof off in the winter." We (golf course superintendents) would probably like to respond with "walk a mile in my shoes." That, however, would not accomplish anything so we smile and keep doing our jobs.

The amount of stress in all of our lives varies. Some people only think of getting their job done, taking care of family and making sure their bills are paid. Others, however, worry about many other things that cause them a lot of stress.

The word STRESS is often used for so many situations that it is hard to understand what a person means when he or she says "I have a lot of stress" or "I'm stressed out." Stress can mean feeling tired or confused. Stress can also mean there is a serious chronic anxiety. The fact that stress can come from many areas of our lives, such as work, home, community, friends and even extended families can make us feel as though we're dealing with a moving target, or worse, that we are the target and the stones are coming from every direction.

Stress is not necessarily harmful. It is a normal reaction, a biological fact of life. The amount of stress we experience within a time period and the way we handle it physically and emotionally determines whether stress becomes harmful.

One way for us to better handle stress is to be able to recognize the stress. Under

stress, our bodies usually experience a fairly standard response, consisting of a number of physiological states. Some of them are: increased blood pressure and pulse rate, a heart-pounding feeling in your chest, dilation of the pupils, dry mouth, increased perspiration, muscle tension, fast-shallow breathing, fatigue and boredom. The first eight can be minor and barely noticeable, yet they each take a small toll. If the stressful situation continues, then the last two-fatigue and a sense of boredom-may occur. Not everyone will experience these states. Some of us have a high natural resistance to stress or our stress response may be less noticeable than others.

We need to be able to recognize these reactions in our body so that we can make "an attitude adjustment." One of the best features of working with your attitude is that it is yours alone. No one and nothing else can determine your attitude. You may not always know how you have formed your attitudes, but they probably have been formed by many factors, such as your experience, your beliefs, and your values. Because your attitude is all your own, it is yours to change as you see fit.

Sometimes when we are feeling deeply worried or depressed about an impending task or situation, we may need support, or we may need some time to think about the reasons for the negative feelings, how they started, whether they are reasonable (sort of a reality check), and how to work around them. However, with many day-to-day tasks, when we are doubtful, lacking confidence, worried, or angry, it can be

very helpful to simply choose to put the negative feeling aside and decide to be optimistic.

We can not control the weather, we can only work with what we get. We can not control what other people do or say about us in our absence, we can only be ourselves and try not to let it cause so much "stress" that we change who we are. We can, however, try to manage our time so that we are better able to deal with what is handed to us. Some of the ways to accomplish this are: Tackle the toughest projects when you have the most energy, group similar tasks that can be done together, use "idle" time to get things done, delegate, take the time to refresh yourself, make lists and keep on your desk only materials needed to accomplish the day's tasks.

You can reduce your general susceptibility to stress by improving habits and

continued on page 3

Published by the
Mid-Atlantic Association of
Golf Course Superintendents

