

The sizzle in summer: **BURNOUT**

Relax. You can get through the year's two hottest, most stressful months by exercising or taking time out to talk to your favorite bartender.

by Jerry Roche,
Editor-in-Chief

■ Bill made a habit of visiting his company's top accounts at least once a month. On one particularly unbearable July day, he was quick to note that the edges along one parking lot weren't up to his usual standards. As he hopped into his pick-up truck to seek out the foreman, his blood began to boil. As he drove, he mentally worked himself into a nervous, quaking frazzle.

When Bill finally confronted his valued right-hand man, he erupted, verbally assaulting the man, leaving him dazed and confused, a lump on the sidewalk feeling like a useless slug.

This is not a good management practice—in landscaping, golf or any other field. Yet it happens too many times during the long, hot, busy months of July and August.

Bill was showing signs of job burnout, that terrifying spectre we hate to have to face (but must, at least once or twice a year in the golf and landscape business).

"Burnout is the result of unrelieved job stress," writes Andrew G. Goliszek in his book *Breaking the Stress Habit*. "Whenever we feel trapped in our jobs, or helpless to solve problems or conflicts," we run the risk of burnout.

In *The Pursuit of Happiness*, Dr. David G. Myers wrote that, "when challenges exceed our available time and skills, we feel stressed. When challenges don't engage us, we feel bored." As a result, we

very seldom attain that valued middle ground.

However, Myers adds, people who are the happiest with themselves and their job situations (and less likely to suffer burnout) exhibit some obvious traits. First, they genuinely like themselves. They also strongly believe that they choose their own destinies. Finally, they are optimistic and outgoing. Myers implies that anything an individual can do to strengthen these traits will lead to increased happiness.

Preventive maintenance—"The best tool you've got is you, and you have to

5) Disconnect your emotions from the outcome of events; establish preferences rather than expectations or demands.

Dr. Barbara Mackoff, in *Leaving the Office Behind*, suggests that people who are feeling pressure on the job "hum a few bars of a favorite song, doodle, exercise and talk to your bartender."

Another key to surviving July and August is to keep things in perspective. Don't become preoccupied with your career or job. "Work does not equal worth," notes Dr. David D. Burns in his book *Feeling Good*. "There is no such thing as

personal worth. Rather than grasp for 'worth,' aim for satisfaction, pleasure, learning, mastery, personal growth and communication with others, every day of your life."

The ability to survive these two months rests with individuals, both the employer and the employee. Relaxation—maybe not a lot of it, but certainly planned and deep relaxation—helps the individual's perspective.

"Make darned sure you learn to relax," says Jadin. "Relaxation is something you have to practice about 30 minutes every day. You have to be able to *do nothing* and not feel guilty. You should do what *you* want to do, not what everyone else is doing.

"You've got to find a socially accepted way of going crazy—like a good, violent physical activity—and deal with the whole mess. It forces you to unwind. Physical activity and mental activity are connected."

Separate work from home, Jadin continues. "Don't do the same kind of stuff after work you do at work."

Goliszek adds to Givens' list of "burnout extinguishers:"

6) Express your feelings and emotions regularly.

7) Schedule downtime.

8) Schedule work according to your

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maintain yourself at least as well as you maintain your other tools," says Tom Jadin of Jadin Consultants, Shiocin, Wis. "You've got to learn to focus on the things you can change rather than banging your head against the wall on things you can't change."

In his book *Super Self*, Charles T. Givens says periods of high job anxiety should be balanced with a delicate approach to your job and your life:

1) Exercise for 20 to 60 minutes every other day.

2) Eliminate negativity from your life.

3) Continually affirm to yourself "it's just an event" when faced with a difficult situation. Realize that you can't really change events, but you can change your reactions to them.

4) Don't make value judgements about people or events.

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energy patterns.

9) Do not undertake more than one stressful activity at a time.

10) Engage in outside physical activities.

11) Break complicated projects into smaller parts.

12) Delegate authority.

13) Learn to say "no."

14) Improve your work skills by learning new techniques.

15) Learn to relax.

Another Jadin suggestion—one that Bill would do well to follow—is to have a certain "detached concern" in your dealings with other people.

"Learn to appreciate them," Jadin notes. "You don't have to be a friend or pal, but there's (also) no reason to get hostile or defensive or sarcastic.

"Practice being genuine. There are people who feel they have to put an emotional

uniform on the job, when all they have to do is the job. If you're a clown, be a clown...if you're a jerk, be a genuine, good jerk."

Above all else, be good to yourself. As Thomas Jefferson once said: "It is neither wealth nor splendor, but tranquility and occupation which give happiness."

Begin thinking about next season's pay system NOW

Options are available to help you and flatten your payroll, especially in times of huge overtime payments.

by Ron Hall,
Senior Editor

■ Mid-summer is a poor time to revise a technician pay system. Technicians are battling the heat, the work is hard, and the good people who have helped you through the hectic spring don't need any surprises now.

But mid-summer is a good time for a company owner or golf superintendent to

gather notes and mull improvements for next system's technician compensation package.

Many supervisors/owners pay technicians an hourly rate plus time-and-a-half for overtime. When the technicians work, they're paid; when they don't they're not, for instance when it rains. This system is easy to understand, both for the employer and for the employee.

But it's not necessarily the best pay system for every situation.

One reason for this is overtime. Production pressures often dictate that technicians work more than 40 hours per week during the growing season. Employees that are not exempt from overtime must be paid extra for any hours over 40 that they work in a particular work

week. Technicians are not exempt from overtime pay although most administrative, executive, professional, and outside sales people are.

Assuming that the technician is making \$7.50 per hour for 40 hours under the most common pay system used in the industry, the overtime pay is \$11.25 per hour over 40 hours—time-and-a-half. For a 60-hour week, the technician receives \$300, the 40-hour wage, plus \$225 representing the 20 overtime hours multiplied by \$11.25.

But there's another system that might fit some situations better. It's the so-called fixed-salary-for-fluctuating-work-week system. One of its most obvious benefits is that it flattens otherwise huge overtime costs.

In this system the technician receives a salary instead of an hourly wage. Let's

PAYMENT PLANS

HOURS WORKED	'TIME-&-1/2' PLAN	'FIXED SALARY' PLAN
32-hr. (weather-shortened 4-day week)	\$240	\$300
40-hr. (normal week)	\$350	\$300
60-hr. (normal week + 20 hr. O.T.)	\$525	\$300

*all earnings based on \$7.50 an hour wage