

All Stressed Up - Now What Do I Do?

by Betsy Barbieux

The news stand has it. Radio and television have it. The doctor has it. The massage therapist has it. The professional speaker has it. Your neighbor has it.

What do they have in common? Advice on reducing stress. Do you get frustrated with so many conflicting remedies? Breathe deeply, think happy thoughts, take yoga classes, put drops of lavender oil on your pillow, try a bubble bath, exercise more, use a better calendar system, take a vacation, listen to music, take a walk...and the suggestions go on and on.

Have you ever tried any of these remedies? Why don't they don't work? Because the source of the fatigue and stress hasn't been identified. Deal with the source and you'll deal with the problem. Otherwise, you'll always be randomly searching for a remedy instead of being intentional.

Most fatigue and stress (or the lack thereof) are predictable and are based on three factors:

- ◆ Self worth and the expectations of self and others
- ◆ Personality or communication type
- ◆ Career or industry (or what you do during the day)

First of all, fatigue and stress can come from unreasonable expectations of yourself. While there is merit in setting high standards, perfection doesn't exist. Being a super mom, or a powerful executive, or a successful business owner can produce fatigue and stress if you have low self worth. You may be subconsciously trying to prove that you are worth something, that you are somebody, or trying to please an imaginary audience (your deceased dad who said you would never amount to anything) and will be driven past your limits. To reduce the fatigue and stress from this source, you must deal with your self worth. A good support group or counseling can help you over this hurdle. Dr. Robert McGee's book, *The Search for Significance*, gives practical guidelines for building healthy self worth.

Conversely, fatigue and stress may be caused by the unreasonable expectations of others. Low self worth may cause you to say "yes" to every request. People have learned you won't say "no," so they call you every time they need something. Soon your life is unmanageable, and, again, you push your body past its limits. Learning how and when to say "no" is can be difficult. *Boundaries* by Drs. Townsend and Cloud, provides excellent suggestions.

Second, fatigue and stress may be caused by your communication style. Dominants are quick decision makers and task oriented. Their job stresses them when:

- ◆ Things move too slow
- ◆ They can't be in charge
- ◆ They have to take orders
- ◆ They have to be nice and can't argue
- ◆ They have to wait on others to make a decision

To them, a good argument or a challenging situation is fun! To de-stress, Dominants need to get revved up. They like activities that require physical exertion and competition such as major yard or house repair projects, working out, or sports that make you sweat.

Influencers are fast decision makers and people oriented. Their job stresses them when:

- ◆ Things aren't fun
- ◆ They can't make new friends
- ◆ They can't talk and tell their stories
- ◆ They have to sit still and do paper work
- ◆ They have to stay on schedule and follow a boring routine

To them, having your attention is fun! To de-stress, Influencers need to talk. They like fun, social activities such as going out with friends after work, neighborhood picnics, bowling, card games, or other group activities that involve talking and laughing.

Supportives are reluctant decision makers and people oriented. Their job stresses them when:

They have to tell people "no"

They have to correct others

They have to make fast decisions

Their routines are disturbed

They hear others argue

To them, working behind the scenes is fun! To de-stress, Supportives need to relax. They like "zone out" activities such as a nap after work, flipping channels, long distance driving, pulling weeds, or light reading.

Critical Thinkers are slow decision makers and task oriented. Their job stresses them when:

They make a mistake

They don't have time to think

They don't have time to work out the details

They have to be interactive, enthusiastic, and fun

They can't complete their "to do" list

To them, trouble shooting is fun! To de-stress, Critical Thinkers need to analyze. They like cognitive activities such as balancing the checkbook, straightening something, rearranging the garage, or reading a how-to book.

No matter which is your predominant communication style, several of the above suggestions will suit you. Start this week with one.

Third, fatigue and stress may be caused by your industry or career, or what you do during the day. Some jobs involve a large degree of risk or danger - air traffic controller, law enforcement officer, day trader at the stock exchange. Others are highly demanding -- full time mom, single parent, or caregiver of elderly parents are also high stress. (Community association managers fall into this category!) Some are lifestyles you cannot change; but time will. You'll have to manage the best you can until the circumstances change. For others, it's time to change your job or career to a less stressful one. But, most of us have a choice. If you chose not to change what you do with your day, then you are choosing to live with it.

Fatigue produces, stress produces burnout, and burn out can kill you. Identify the source of the fatigue and stress in your life and take care of it. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it."

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