

Oops! I Did it Again! (That ol' Home Business Stress)

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By Donna Schwartz Mills

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I've had a busy couple of weeks. I updated my website, designed one for a client, began work on another site of my own, edited an eBook, launched a chapter of a local Moms group, put together an article syndicate... and came down with the flu.

Once again, I tried to cram too many projects into too little time. I skipped meals, slept poorly and paid the price with three days in bed. At my age, you would think I'd know better.

And I do know better. Back in the bad old days when I was an employee, I was able to pace myself. There were others with whom I could share tasks. There were scheduled lunch breaks. There was that guaranteed weekly paycheck. Sometimes it sounds like heaven on earth.

But in actuality, my old job was a long way from Eden, especially after my daughter was born. I spent my days obsessed with time -- mentally calculating the point when the L.A. traffic would make it impossible to get from the office to our daycare provider before closing. And all the while, what I really longed to do was be at home and watch my little girl grow.

The idea of working at home was very appealing, if only for the stress relief.

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Two years later, I have a growing home business — but surprise! I'm still playing Beat the Clock — only now running against Megan's preschool schedule... and I'm just as stressed now as I was then.

"How can that be?" asks my incredulous husband.

For one thing, it's a different kind of stress.

Experts list money problems and uncertainty among the things that cause anxiety in people, and if you really need to net x-amount of dollars from your home business, you can expect to experience both. Losing the comfort of that weekly

paycheck is a major reason more people don't choose to be entrepreneurs, and I can assure you they have a point. I begin each month by staring at my revenue spreadsheet, wondering if this will be the one when nothing comes in. Then, when I've made some entries and it starts looking sort of good, I worry that the pace won't keep up — or that the next month will be a dud.

However, as nerve-wracking as that can be, if you feel trapped in a situation you hate (as I was in my former job), feelings of helplessness can set in... and that's not only stressful, but can plummet you into depression.

The anxiety I experience over money woes is more than offset by how empowered I feel because I'm doing something I enjoy. I write, I publish, I design, I network, I learn new things every day... and I get paid for it! (Well, most of the time. And if the money is slow coming in, there are always things I can do to try to drum up a little bit more.)

The fact that the success or failure of my home business rests entirely on my shoulders adds to my stress-level. But at the same time, it's exhilarating — and is what drives me and other home-based entrepreneurs to take on too many projects.

My three days in bed were actually a delight. I didn't even turn on my computer and did little else but watch old movies on television. It's a shame it took a little sore throat and fever to force me to slow down — and now that I'm back on the job, I'm determined not to let it happen again!

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Here are some tips to help you (and me!) get off the frustrating cycle of work–binge and rest–purge:

1. Set regular work hours... and stick to them!
2. When work–time is over, turn off the computer. Don't check email!
3. Get some exercise – it not only helps rid your body of the symptoms of stress, but it clears your head and gives you the energy to work more efficiently.
4. Get out of the house! Take a walk, go to the mall, indulge in a designer latte.
5. Pamper yourself – Get a haircut, a massage, a manicure or buy yourself a little something special. Do this at least once a week and enjoy.
6. Make a playdate with your kids.
7. Make a playdate with your partner. (No, not your work partner! Unless that really appeals to you...)
8. Read a book for FUN... or see a movie. Whatever you like, as long as it does not relate to your business.
9. Catch up with old friends and make some new ones.
10. Consider the time you have and use it wisely. Just say no to extracurricular activities that do nothing to advance your family's well–being or that of your business.

Will I be following my own advice? Yes – but not all at the same time. Two or three of these a week can make a lot of difference.

Now, if you'll excuse me — I'm off to Starbucks for that latte.

Donna Schwartz Mills writes about the specific needs of work at home parents at her website, [The ParentPreneur Club](#) "For Parents Who Want Choices, Not Office Politics." The latest news, tips, and tools you need to help grow your homebased business while raising a family. [Subscribe to our weekly](#)

newsletter:

Control Stress or It Will Control Your Business

By Dale Collie

When we think about stress in the workplace, we usually refer to ulcers or heart conditions, but stress has a much broader impact. It is known that stress is linked to cancer, lung ailments, cirrhosis of the liver, immunity to common illnesses, back problems, and many other medical problems.

It is estimated that stress is the underlying factor in 75 – 90% of all physician visits.

We see the effects of stress in workplace absenteeism, accidents, health care costs, workers comp, quality problems, productivity, litigation, grievances, violence, customer service complaints, resistance to change, personnel turnover, and profits.

Workplace stress is costing your business thousands of dollars per year. Is stress a line item on your budget? Knowing how much you are spending on stress is a good place to start, but you must take responsibility for stress control and its impact on the bottom line.

To receive a free article about the signs and symptoms of workplace stress, send a blank email to

. It's automatic.

If stress is such a problem, you might be asking questions such as:

++How much is stress costing our company each year?

++How can we find out the costs?

++How can we control stress to put this money back on the bottom line?

Controlling stress is beneficial on the bottom line and for employees who work hard to make the company successful.

Dale Collie speaker, author, coach, and former US Army Ranger, corporate president, and teacher at West Point. Selected by "Fast Company" as one of America's Fast 50 innovative leaders. Author of "Frontline Leadership: From War Room to Boardroom," and "Winning Under Fire: Turn Stress into Success the US Army Way," (McGraw Hill).

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