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Understanding Your Stress Levels

By Trevor Dumbleton

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In order to understand stress better, it is a good idea to understand that there are different stress levels. These levels vary in the form of stress they take and they can often provide an indication of how to treat the stress. Furthermore, there are tests available that can help people understand their own, particular brand of stress and, with this knowledge, they can also understand themselves better. Then, with this information, a complete stress management method can be constructed. So, when you examine your own stress, keep these stress levels in mind so that you can come to grips with yourself and learn the proper methods for keeping your mind balanced.

These stress levels were found and characterized by Dr. Hans Selye and Dr. Richard Earle of the Canadian Institute of Stress. Thus, the names and types are theirs.

Type 1 – The Speed Freak

This stress level is characterized by an incessant need to be giving 110% at all times. They are often perfectionists, they tend to speak quickly, and they are very impatient. Generally, Speed Freaks have learned that it is necessary to work hard in order to succeed, so they figure that, if they are working hard all the time, they are certain to succeed. This, of course, is not necessarily the case, since running full-bore all the time will only lead to stress over minor issues.

Speed Freaks need to learn how to relax and they need to clarify their goals so that they will work hard on things that really matter, while relaxing while they are working on more mundane tasks. By doing this, they can get up to speed when they need to put in the effort and conserve energy the rest of the time.

Type 2 – The Worry Wart

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The Worry Wart stress level is characterized by an inability to stop thoughts, but an equal inability to put thoughts into action. They tend to overanalyze things to the point that they paralyze themselves. Thus, they simply end up spinning their wheels as they get nowhere. True to the name, Worry Warts tend to spend a lot of their time worrying and this only leaves them even more incapable of action.

Worry Warts need to think very specifically about the problems they are facing, write down every possible thing that can go wrong, then think about just how likely these events are. Then, once everything is treated with a philosophical distance, the worry will decrease and the Worry Wart can move on toward their goals.

Type 3 – The Drifter

Drifters are people who keep so many options open that they are incapable of actually developing any skills in depth. Instead of focusing their energies on specific life goals, they end up putting effort into a

variety of tasks so that none of them ever really get done. Thus, their hours are spent productively, but their hours rarely produce anything concrete. In fact, they create a paradox of complete freedom in which they are trapped by their own inability to use that freedom effectively.

Drifters need to clarify their life goals, focus on things that make them feel worthwhile, and try to build up a life that is open to more than just work. Then, once they have a place to direct their efforts, they can shed all the excess nonsense that they surround themselves with.

Type 4 – The Loner

This stress level is recognizable by the fact that Loners are unable to create meaningful relationships with others. This is due to the fact that they generally work alone, so that do not receive much feedback from others. Thus, rather than building relationships that can help support them, they tend to crawl into a shell and keep other people outside of it. Thus, as they avoid shared experiences with others, they become incapable of finding out what they enjoy and who they enjoy doing it with.

Loners should attempt to clarify their own values, then work to build relationships with people who share those values, which in turn gives Loners a way to move toward their goals. This will give them both a purpose and a support structure that can help them succeed in that purpose.

Type 5 – Basket Cases

This stress level is very dangerous, as Basket Cases are creating their own energy crises. Instead of caring for themselves, they tend to be achy, depressed, and they often decide that activities are simply too much effort. They are often in poor health and their own malaise and depression makes it hard to do anything about it.

Basket Cases need to start eating right in order to start the healing process. Then, after a few weeks, they should start exercising. Then, once they have a little more energy, they need to learn how to conserve energy by taking breaks during work and not overextending themselves.

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Type 6 – Cliff Walkers

Cliff Walkers are people who are at risk for destroying their health. They tend to look worn, they often smoke, eat badly, drink too much, and rarely exercise. However, they usually figure that nothing bad will ever really come out of their bad habits, so they cause themselves even more damage. Thus, they tend to have problems maintaining their energy.

The treatment for Cliff Walkers is the same as that for Basket Cases. Eat right, then start an exercise program, then learn to conserve energy so that they are not constantly worn out.

By understanding stress levels, people can not only learn more about themselves, they can also learn how to succeed. Then, once a person's particular type of stress is treated correctly, the very portions of the personality that were once a burden can become a boon. Thus, learning about stress levels can actually help people achieve their goals.

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Your Work and Your Stress

By Catherine Pulsifer

We all want less stress in our lives. Do you think today's workplace is too stressful?

I know at times it may be difficult to accept, but, you and only you can control your stress.

Stress is not only created by how we see a situation, but also how we react to it. We do, in fact, control our own stress. So, if you are feeling "stressed out", you are responsible for creating that feeling.

I am not saying there are no situations which are stressful. What I am saying, however, is that how you choose to react to those situations will determine your own stress levels. These reactions will affect how you behave, how you communicate with those around you, and how you respond to your customers and clients.

When I start to feel stress, I ask myself a question: "how much will this matter in five years?" In the majority of cases, it doesn't matter. It is amazing, how this one, simple question can change your thought processes, and lower your stress levels resulting in less stress.

Another technique I use when my job seems overwhelming is to keep it all in perspective by saying to myself: "My job is important but it only forms part of my life – it is not my entire life." So, by thinking this way, I am altering my thoughts from one where my job controls and rules my entire life to one where I realize my job forms only a part of my life's equation.

So the next time you feel your job is causing you stress, ask yourself how am I reacting? You may find

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that it is not your job creating the stress but you are creating the stress.

We all need some stress in our lives, but less stress is better than more stress!

Catherine Pulsifer is one of the authors of *Stress Less Country* – a lifestyle change! A journey to a simplified lifestyle – visit the site for a collection of articles, thoughts, quotes, and stories on: simplicity, stress, gardening, recycle & reuse, country crafts, saving money tips, and Atlantic Canada.

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