

# CAREER HEALTH

## All Stressed Up, With No Place To Go!

By Phillip Van Hooser, CSP

Your manager just dumped his latest “high priority” project on your desk - the third this week. Mary from the accounting department just emailed you asking for the inventory numbers before the end of business today. A secretary at Johnny’s school just called and needs to schedule a meeting with you and Johnny’s principal as soon as possible. There is a message on the recorder from your mother asking if you will be able to stop by for a visit anytime soon.

Sound familiar? For most of the people I know, these scenarios are far from the realm of fiction. Personal and professional pleasures, responsibilities, deadlines, and change constitute the current realities of life. How do leaders go about managing these constant experiences that frequently prove so stressful? The basic human stress reaction has been commonly referred to as the “fight or flight syndrome.” Simply put, mentally we decide if we should defend ourselves against the stressful challenges and situations we face or flee from them. Past experience tells us that we can run, but we cannot hide. Therefore, the best way to fend off the negative effects of stress is to mount a deliberate counter-offensive.

It’s time to do battle. Consider these simple, yet effective techniques for managing personal stress. They work for me.

**TREAT YOURSELF TO DAILY EXERCISE.** This is by far the best single activity for managing stress. Since stress is a mental process that manifests itself physically, the best way to neutralize the effects is to work them off --- literally. Walk, swim, bike, or jog. The activity itself is not critical. What is important is that there is regular, sustained activity. In this case, it is important to “sweat the small stuff.”

**BE SURE TO EAT RIGHT.** This advice comes directly from one who grew up believing, “If it ain’t fried, it ain’t fit to eat!” My southern roots run deep and I still believe fried pork chops are heaven sent. But, I now recognize that most things require moderation. The wrong kind of fuel in our car certainly affects the vehicle’s performance. The same is true for the foods we eat.

**ASK YOURSELF, “IS IT WORTH IT?”** Much of the stress we experience today is self-inflicted. Too often, we are more concerned with conforming to someone else’s expectation of who we should be, and as a result, we forget what is actually most important to us. When faced with personally stressful situations, take a minute to ask yourself, “Is it worth it?” If the answer is “yes,” then proceed with energy and unrestrained enthusiasm. But, if the answer is “no,” then take the time to seriously reevaluate your commitment to the leadership process. I am not suggesting that anyone run out today and quit their job. However, I encounter individuals who find themselves in positions of leadership who have concluded that the process of leading, for them, is no longer worth the effort. For their own good, and that of their followers, I encourage them to step aside and make room for others willing to accept the challenges and stressors of the leadership effort.

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## Holistic Wellness: Taking Charge of Your Health

Continued from front page

others see you as moody? What are your biggest fears? What do you do to celebrate? Is your way of celebrating in any way self-destructive? What do you do when you feel like crying? Let it flow? Bottle it up? When was the last time you cried? Who are your favorite comedians? When was the last time you heard a good joke? Can you tell a funny story about yourself?

*“Comedy is acting out optimism.”*  
-Robin Williams

Now think about your inner world. Do you ever meditate? When was the last time you did? If prayer is meaningful to you, do you allow yourself prayer time on a regular basis?

*“In human life, art may arise from almost any activity, and once it does so, it is launched on a long road of exploration, invention, freedom to the limits of extravagance, interference to the point of frustration, finally discipline, controlling constant change and growth.”*

-Susanne Langer

There are many more areas within each domain of the human experience which enter into the concept of health. The challenge is to consider each domain, not just that of body, when you ask yourself, “How am I feeling today?”

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**“Some of the most wonderful people are the ones who don’t fit into boxes.”**

- Tori Amos

# VALUES - BASED QUALITY OF LIFE™ Newsletter

Because Making Smart Choices About Your Money Impacts The Quality of Your Life

Over the years, we have found that there are elements of your life that are more important than money. These elements - Physical Health, Relationship Health, Inner Health and Career Health - cannot be delegated.

We hope that you find these articles to be of value in improving the quality of your life.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

### Holistic Wellness: Taking Charge of Your Health

By Richard Patterson, Ph.D.

Many of us grew up with a limited understanding of health. We tend to view health as a phenomenon of the body, disconnected from mental events. As such, we may pay close attention to our physical health while neglecting other areas of human experience. Yet increasingly we are finding out that the state of our mind, emotions, and spirit have significant impact on both our health and our recovery when illness strikes.

The concept of holistic health has become generalized to include many things: the use of herbs, the use of mental imagery, the use of hypnosis, to name a few. Some people equate the concept of holistic health with the New Age Movement. What I’d like for us to consider here is the idea of holistic health as consisting of an attitude of wellness in all areas of human experience - body, mind and emotions.

Think of your body for a moment. In general, how is your health? Do you cope with a chronic health problem? If so, how responsible are you as far as medication is concerned? Do you miss or skip doses frequently? Now think of stress. What kind of regular stress do you experience? Where do you feel it in your body?

(Muscles? Stomach? Headaches?) What do you do to delight your body on a regular basis? (Exercise? Bubble Baths? Massage?) Now think about your world of attitudes and ideas - your inner mental world. Do you harbor resentments toward anyone? Do you have a little voice inside your head that is constantly passing judgment on you, criticizing you at every turn? Do you accept the conclusions of that voice without question? Do you ever use your imagination to picture relaxing scenes? Do you often spend time thinking about what-ifs? Are many of those what-ifs unpleasant ones? What are your gifts? What is your reaction if I ask you “What have you done for yourself in the past week?” What do you like to read? When is the last time you read something for pleasure? For personal growth?

*“There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits of human intelligence, imagination and wonder.”*

-Ronald Regan

Now think about your emotional world? How often do you get angry over trivialities? Do

Continued on back page

# RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

## Cooperation Beats Competition

By David E. Sanford

How healthy is the competition in your relationship? If you compete with each other for control, for attention, for sympathy, for being right; if you compete for resources, like money or time to rest; and if competition leaves you at odds with each other - then clearly your relationship is suffering.

You could change - from competition to a more agreeable way of being with each other. Here are the steps to follow:

- First, understand your preference for competition. Perhaps you learned competition in your birth family, because what you needed - e.g. recognition or affection - was in short supply and you had to compete to do without. Maybe you're a first-born married to another first-born, and you both believe you're entitled to be boss.

Perhaps you think that, in every situation, there's only one right way; and you compete to be the one who has it. Possibly being close makes you uncomfortable, and, by competing, you keep your distance. Or perhaps you compete because you believe that, to feel worthwhile, you must always do better than someone else.

- Second, question your competitiveness. Ask yourself, what benefit do I get from being competitive? (You get to be right about an argument.) Then ask, why is the benefit important to me? (You must clarify your feelings to accept them; and believing that you're right is the only justification that works for you.)

Then consider how your competitiveness affects the relationship. (You can usually wear your partner down and "prove" that in an argument, you were right. You can then justify your feelings to yourself; but you pay a high

price. Your partner resents you deeply; and you're uneasy, knowing that you had to beat someone down to feel worthwhile.)

- Third, reorient yourself. If you conclude that the costs to the relationship of competition outweigh the benefits, you will seek a better way to meet your needs.

Competing partners usually assume that scarcity makes their competition necessary. There isn't enough (truth, attention, sympathy, etc.) to go around; so each must

***"With the gift of listening comes the gift of healing."***

**-Catherine de Hueck**

fight to get his. If competition is to yield to a better way, then belief about scarcity must be disproved.

Battling partners should understand that their relationship style perpetuates scarcity, e.g., if two people both talk at the same time, then listening is scarce indeed - nobody is doing it. Or, if people ridicule each other's opinions, then merit is also in short supply, because somebody's viewpoint must always be "stupid."

- Fourth, try cooperation instead of competition. As an experiment, adopt the hypothesis that there is enough (of whatever matters) for both of you.

A commitment to cooperate requires that you each think for two instead of one - "me and you" instead of "me against you." For example, she says, "At the end of the day, I need time for myself." He says, "I need time

for myself then, too." Then somebody says, "We both need time to ourselves at the end of the day. How can we work together to assure that each of us gets some time alone?"

This "win-win" approach promotes the long-term health of the relationship. It requires thinking beyond the moment and taking seriously the thought that, if one person wins it all, the other loses it all - and losers make unhappy partners.

Thinking for two instead of one requires a profound reorientation for most of us. Trying this exercise may help: Take some situation in which you appear to have competing needs. E.g., Roger wants to crash after dinner and watch TV; Betsy wants to talk. In this exercise, each advocates forcefully for the other person's needs.

In another situation to advocate well for each other, Roger interviews Betsy, asking questions about her need until he fully understands. And Betsy interviews Roger, for the same purpose. Then, facing each other, Roger champions Betsy's need, and Betsy champions Roger's need.

Assuming success in the exercise, they experience, through each other's empathy and support, enough security to drop the egocentric grasping after their own wants that we all do when we're afraid. They can then trust the "we." Immediately, they have enough for both, and competition becomes unnecessary.

*"So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it."*

-Krishnamurti

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# INNER HEALTH

## If Not Now, When?

By Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC

"If I could only get a little breathing space." How often has that thought or a similar one occurred lately? Probably too frequently. Although you and I may not have met, I'll bet that: your desk is piled high with papers, you continually find yourself racing against the clock, you are deluged with projects and tasks right now.

If so, you are far from being alone. Most people today feel time-pressed. One of the most effective ways to alleviate the constant sense of pressure is by "living in the moment." What does living in the moment mean? It means living with vibrant expression and keen perception, with an intense awareness of what exists in your life. It's waking up each morning with the thought, "I'm alive, and this day is only starting."

Living in the moment means being aware of your power in the present, it is not a recipe for accomplishment. It is observing the finely woven canvas of your life while you are also living it. It is giving yourself permission to be who you are. It is resting when you are tired. It is not having to strive. It is allowing yourself breathing space.

Living in the moment does not mean taking a Pollyannaish approach to life, pretending that all is well. All is never well with anyone, at least not for long. Living in the moment doesn't mean acquiring a facade. You don't have to greet everyone you pass cheerfully. Freed from preoccupation that limits your experience of the present, however, you may feel like greeting everyone.

Living in the moment does not mean living for the moment or living to get to the next moment. It means total, unconditional acknowledgement that what is now, is your life; that now is the only moment there is. It isn't that you can't work to change things. It is that right now, this is how things are. For most people, how things are is not so bad, and how things can be is in reach.

Living for the moment does not mean "live for today"--- a well-intentioned, but shortsighted philosophy. Some time management experts

suggest pretending you only have six months to live. However, this exercise misses the mark. It would be silly to sell off your property and spend your savings if you have years to live. Living in the moment encompasses the truth about your life.

It does not mean, "get the most out of life;" there is no "most" to get. It does not mean, "make every minute count" -- an attitude which borders on obsessiveness.

Although the concept of living in the moment is primal, it is needed now more than ever. Too few individuals have any experience or knowledge of living in the moment. It is lost among a flurry of activity and "busy-ness." The overglut strangles it. Living in the moment remains

***"There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening."***

**-Professor Marshall McLuhan**

one of the least understood, least addressed, and least used human capabilities.

Years ago, Alan Watts explored living in the moment in his book, The Wisdom of Insecurity and observed that "human beings appear to be happy" when they have something to look forward to. Yet when that something arrives, "It is difficult to enjoy it to the fullest without some promise of more to come." The relentless quest to move on to what's next keeps you from fully enjoying what's here.

Preoccupation is elongated deliberation of what came before or what may be. Preoccupation with the past or the future blocks the experience of the present. Do you reminisce nostalgically about something or someone in your past even though back then, the experience was not nearly as pleasant? For reasons of adaptation, our memories retain positive

elements of certain experiences selectively. Longing for what you no longer have more strongly than reveling in what you do have is a guarantee for missing the present and all the magic it holds. Revel in what you have.

Must five years pass before you regard today with fondness? Can you accept that right now your life is taking place? Can you shout for joy for no reason? Can you give your life unconditionally?

You can now embark on a quest to live in the moment. Good or bad, the present moment is, in reality, all you have. It is the only point of power, the only moment in which action can be taken. Your ability to acknowledge and to live within it is a basic, satisfying human capability.

Living in the moment is the freedom to experience the essence and perfection of your life and what is now, even the aspects about now you may not like - a stumbling block for many.

Each of us faces many obstacles to living in the moment and having a full experience of the present. Clinging to victim status helps one avoid personal responsibility for existing in the present. Paying homage to ritual, a form of reinventing the past, limits the options of the present. The way you've always done it has little to do with how you might choose to do it now. Too much noise can block off your experience - you need some quiet.

Failure to live in the moment condemns you to never feeling in control of your life. Life controls you rather than the other way around.

Accept the present moment as it is, and for what it is -- the most important moment in your life. How fortunate if you're happy or content right now, because now has the greatest importance. Nothing else exists.

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