



Timely Information for Personal Success

Stress

An Equal Opportunity Destroyer

By Nancy O'Reilly

Stress has been called an equal opportunity destroyer. No one is immune from its effects, especially during the current economic downturn. Acute stress is painful, but brief, and many employees are able to find ways to relieve it. However, *chronic* stress takes a terrible toll on workplace productivity when it goes on for days, weeks, months, or even years.

A wise employer or supervisor will monitor employees and notice if they are in danger of experiencing burnout. Is their job satisfaction and performance declining? Does work seem harder to manage?

A symptom checklist can help employees identify if they are experiencing burnout and are at risk for illness or even more severe consequences. Employees may be burning out if they:

1. **Often forget things.** (*What 10 o'clock appointment?*)
2. **Feel unusual fatigue.** (*Can't I go home yet?*)
3. **Suffer from insomnia.** (*Watching old movies at 3 a.m.*)
4. **Experience changes in appetite.** (*Either ravenous...or nothing looks good. This can be associated with weight changes as well.*)
5. **Experience changes in behavior and mood.** (*Leave me alone or I'll hurt you!*)
6. **Often feel grumpy and crabby.** (*Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr.*)
7. **Get sick a lot.** (*It really is my third cold this month.*)
8. **Want to withdraw from others.** (*Go away!*)
9. **Feel extreme anxiety and worry.** (*Now what's wrong?*)

Workers who check four or more of these symptoms are probably in the process of burning out. Encourage workers to tailor the following simple steps to their own style and personality, and they'll be on their way to recovering lost energy and regaining a zest for life.

1. **Create more balance in your life!** Don't let one aspect of life dominate the others. Do you have a hobby or other activity you enjoy? If not, things are getting out of balance.

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Tips to Advance Your Career

In today's competitive workplace, there's no such thing as job security. To keep your job or find advancement opportunities, employees must present themselves as someone who goes above and beyond. The following are some tips:



☒ **Dress for success** —

Appearance is everything. How you're perceived at work depends heavily on your outward appearance. Good grooming and attire shows that you respect yourself and promotes a positive image for your company. You always want to be prepared to make a good first impression.

✓ **Take on more** — Don't be afraid of asking for additional tasks and responsibility.

☑ Submit your ideas — Think about the ways you can improve your workplace, streamline processes, and share them with management. Managers appreciate employees willing to give ideas.

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CLIP-N-SAVE!

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Healthy Recipe: Harvest Apples

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons seedless raisins
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped walnuts
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- dash ground cinnamon (optional)
- dash nutmeg (optional)
- 2 firm, tart apples (such as Granny Smith)

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Calories per serving: 212
- Protein: 1 g.
- Carbohydrates: 45 g.
- Sodium: 7 mg.
- Fat: 5 g; Saturated fat: 0 g.
- Fiber: 6 g.

Serving size: 1 apple

DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2 In a small bowl, mix raisins, walnuts, brown sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg together.
- 3 Wash and core the apples using an apple corer or small knife.
- 4 In a baking dish, arrange apples with tops up. Fill each apple with one-fourth of raisin mixture.
- 5 Pour water into baking dish to depth of 1-1/2 inch.
- 6 Bake for 30-40 minutes. Baste apples once or twice with cooking liquid. Apples are done when they still hold their shape and yield to a knife when pierced. Serve apples when cooled slightly. To warm in microwave: Place apple in microwave-safe dish and microwave on low for 1 minute at a time, until warm. Caution: Parts of the apple can get very hot!

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Live Better on the Money You Make!

With the current economy, who *doesn't* need some dollar-stretching tips? The following are a few ideas:

✓ Save on your cell phone bill.

Call your local cell phone provider and ask them to block every feature that you don't want to pay extra for. Then, you (or a teen!) won't be able to access a feature that adds to your bill. This can be a tremendous savings. For instance, at a certain time in the billing cycle, you may be able to add unlimited texting for, say \$10 a month as opposed to a large overage fee for texting.

✓ **Don't forget to use the calculator feature available on many cell phones.** This function can be especially helpful at the grocery store! Using the calculator and carrying a set amount of cash for groceries makes quick and easy work of sticking to things you really need and cutting out unplanned expenses. A calculator can help you easily see how those extras add \$ to your grocery bill. You won't hesitate to put these items back on the shelf! ♦

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2. **Create support systems.** Work is tough enough these days, let alone trying to go it alone. Find people you can talk to, at work or at home. Everyone needs to be able to discuss work problems. Another possibility is to become a mentor or resource *for someone else*, even in your own workplace. Realizing how much you have to offer to others can be a great antidote to frustration and burnout.

3. **Gain control over what you can, and let go of what you can't.** Find a better way to get the job done rather than just doing more of the same. Investigate ways to adjust your schedule — for instance, flex-time or job-sharing. The point is, you can't complain about how stressed out you are if you never do anything about it. Take at least *some* action.

Summary

Employees and managers alike need to remember that life is too short to waste it feeling frazzled all the time. Every person needs to take time to manage their stress so they can enjoy life. ♦

Nancy O'Reilly, PsyD, is a clinical psychologist, researcher, and founder of the Women Speak Project, an online resource based on research about aging in a youth-driven society. For more information, visit www.womenspeak.com.

Tips to Advance Your Career

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✓ **Get more education** — Employers prefer advance degrees and certifications. To advance your career, take a college class or get a degree. If that's not feasible, become certified in a skill relevant to your job. Ask your supervisor about training (which is sometimes company-sponsored) that will help your job performance. With additional training and education, you become more valuable and less likely to be laid off.

✓ **Be helpful, not helpless** — Even during tough uncertain times, you can still take control of your employment future. Challenging yourself and pursuing goals will help you feel more energized and a more valuable employee. Advancement is limited only by your commitment. ♦

Source: Kim Goff, professional speaker, author, and communications director of United Way of York. She can be reached at kimgoff@excite.com.

