

Beyond the Horizons Consulting

Volume 2, Issue 7

July 2005

Stress in the Wider Context, Part II in a Four-Part Series

In our April Newsletter we specifically identified 15 causes of on-the-job stress. But that is not all you or your employee is dealing with! We probably all experience a greater variety of *stressors** nowadays versus, say, 20 years ago. Need I mention a few? — more traffic, heightened bad air and water quality, greater difficulties and delays in traveling, more difficulty in communicating (despite e-mail, text messaging, enhanced cellular phones, etc.), more effort needed to complete shopping, repair orders, etc.

Stress and Stressors

We each come into this world programmed with a specific **genetic makeup**. Add to that, the individual's **education** and **life experience**. These three factors operate on our psyches (the emotional and spiritual parts of our being) and on our bodies. Now add a stressor to the mix — being stalled in traffic while you are running late for an important meeting. You see that the *stressor is the external factor*, while *stress* is your subjective experience of that situation. In this case, you might experience a rise in blood pressure, an upset stomach, the emotions of anxiety and/or frustration, and the spiritual experience of disappointment in your higher Self.

Now if you handle your subjective experience — your stress — in a positive way, you will move toward maturation, health, the development of new skills, even wisdom. For example, if you change your morning routine to get up a bit earlier, give yourself time for meditation and a walk, and leave 15 minutes earlier for work, you have handled your stress in a growthful

way. However, if you continue your pattern of going to bed late, getting up just in the nick of time, and leaving yourself no leeway for the unforeseen, you will undoubtedly experience the same stress again and again. You may develop high blood pressure or nervous stomach, hate your job, or even get a reprimand from the boss.

The Social Readjustment Rating Scale

Holmes and Rahe created a scale of events to which they assigned “life change units” — what we would call *stress values*. From working with hundreds of people of different ages, cultures, and walks of life, they determined that experiencing 200 or more of these units during a year's time would precipitate psychosomatic or emotional illness.

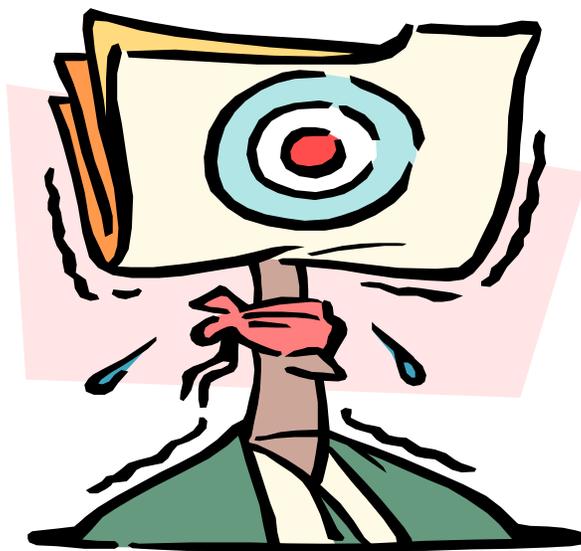


I will list on the next page just a few of the events and their point values.

Please e-mail me
 (info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com OR
 jeaneva@comcast.net) for the complete list. It may be
 helpful to you personally and/or professionally in terms of
 self-awareness and/or consulting with your employees.

EVENT	Scale of Impact
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Personal illness or injury	53
Retirement	45
Difficulties in sexual relationship	39
Change to different line of work	36
Mortgage over \$100,000	31
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Change in sleeping habits	16
Vacation	15
Christmas	12

Obviously, these are generalized degrees of experienced stress. Some individuals may experience heightened stress in response to any particular stressor. With the entire list, one can add up the assigned stress values and gain some idea of the total amount of stress experienced within a given year.



Stress Exhaustion Symptoms

It is important for each of us to accurately identify our own specific reactions to stress. Awareness is the first step to actually beginning to deal with unrecognized stress. And don't forget that if stress is not dealt with, *it will deal with you*. Depression is one of the most common symptoms precipitated by long-term untreated stress. Look at the following symptoms and check off those that apply to you. At the bottom of the listings, we will clarify any ambiguous symptoms.

Physical Symptoms

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Appetite change | Accident-prone |
| Headaches | Teeth grinding |
| Tension | Rash |
| Fatigue | Restlessness |
| Insomnia | Foot tapping |
| Weight change | Finger drumming |
| Colds | Increased use of alcohol,
drugs, or tobacco |
| Muscle aches | |
| Digestive upsets | |
| Pounding heart | |

Emotional Symptoms

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Anxiety | "No one cares" |
| Frustration | Depression |
| The "blues" | Nervous laugh |
| Mood swings | Worrying |
| Bad temper | Easily discouraged |
| Nightmares | Little joy |
| Irritability | |

Spiritual Symptoms

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Emptiness | Looking for magic |
| Loss of meaning | Loss of direction |
| Doubt | Needing to "prove" self |
| Unforgiving | Cynicism |
| Martyrdom | Apathy |

Mental Symptoms

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Forgetfulness | Confusion |
| Dull senses | Lethargy |
| Poor concentration | Whirling mind |
| Low productivity | No new ideas |
| Negative attitude | Boredom |

- ◆ Understanding personality type in business commu-

Mental Symptoms, Cont'd.

Spacing out Negative self-talk

Relational Symptoms

Isolation	Lowered sex drive
Intolerant	Nagging
Resentment	Distrust
Loneliness	Fewer contacts with friends
Lashing out	Lack of intimacy
Hiding	Using people
Clamming up	

Clarifications

Under “Emotional,” please note that *irritability*, as well as being *confused*, are symptoms of depression.

Under “Spiritual,” *emptiness* and *loss of meaning* — a dry or fallow time — are clearly related. *Unforgiving* comes from an anger or resentment toward others, toward oneself, and toward a Higher Power. *Looking for magic* is seeking the easy way out of a situation that requires spiritual growth, not a little pink pill or inheriting a fortune. *Needing to prove self* also comes from anger at perceiving oneself unacceptable or unloved.

Under “Relational,” stress/depression may lead many to isolating behavior, fewer contacts with friends, and loneliness. Since the person suffering from stress exhaustion is “at their rope’s end,” they may end up *using others* in a desperate attempt to escape their situation.

Upcoming Newsletters

Our August Newsletter will deal with some of the remedies for stress exhaustion. We will continue offering helpful coping mechanisms in our September Newsletter.

We are happy if we have given you some tools to assess your own and/or your employees’ stress levels. Space does not permit a full treatment of this topic in this issue, but we do offer you the opportunity to call us for a complimentary consultation for yourself and/or your business. **We would be happy to provide you with coaching and/or to tailor a seminar to your organization’s needs.**

Give us a call at **505-466-4990!** or contact us at **info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com.**