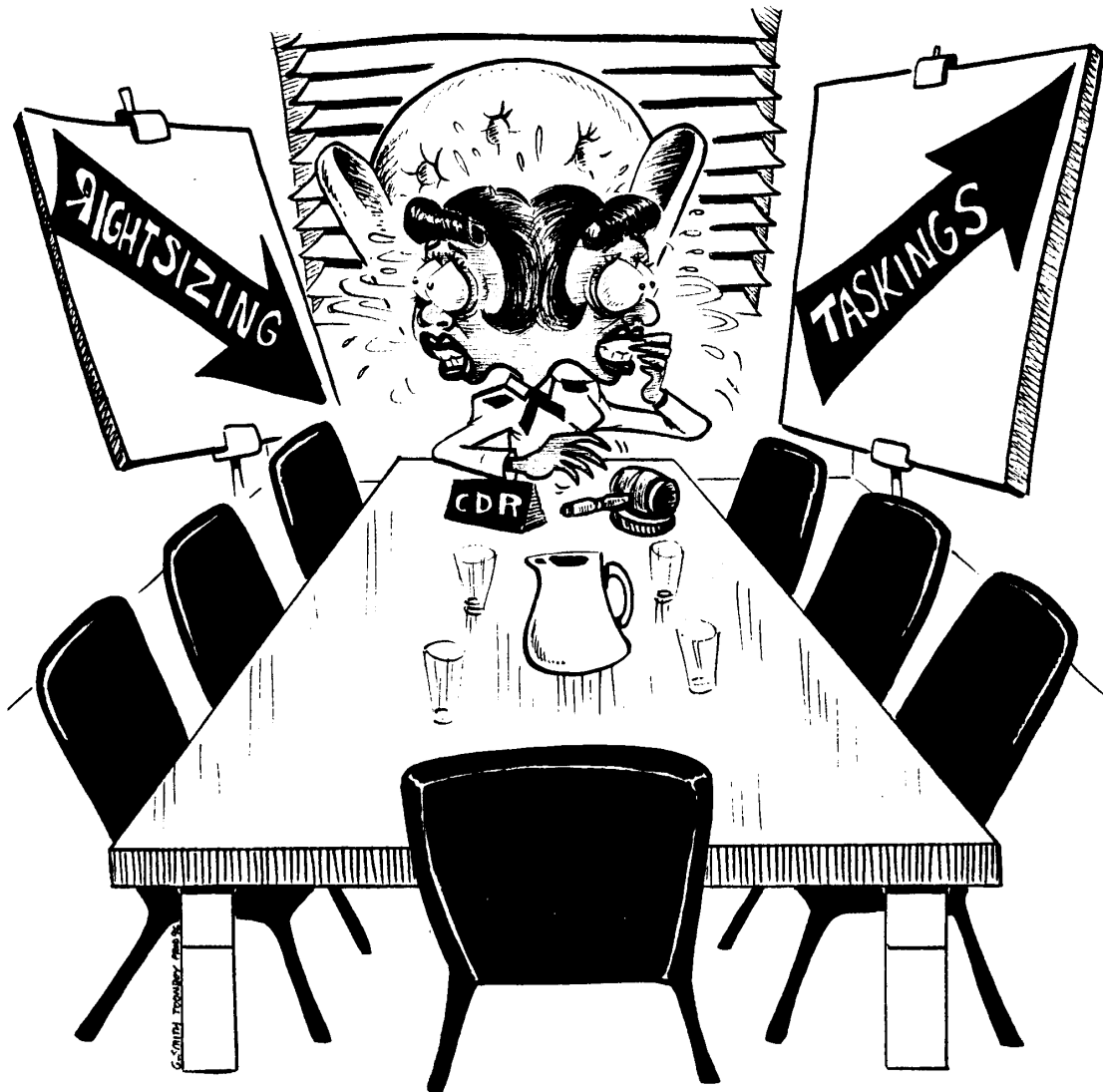


Stress Management: A Guide for Senior Leaders



Stress Management:

A Guide for Senior Leaders

by the U.S. Army Physical
Fitness Research Institute

Excerpt from the book: *Executive Wellness*, available on-line from the Army Physical Fitness Research Institute (APRF), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA at <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/apfri/>



Stress and the Mind-Body Connection

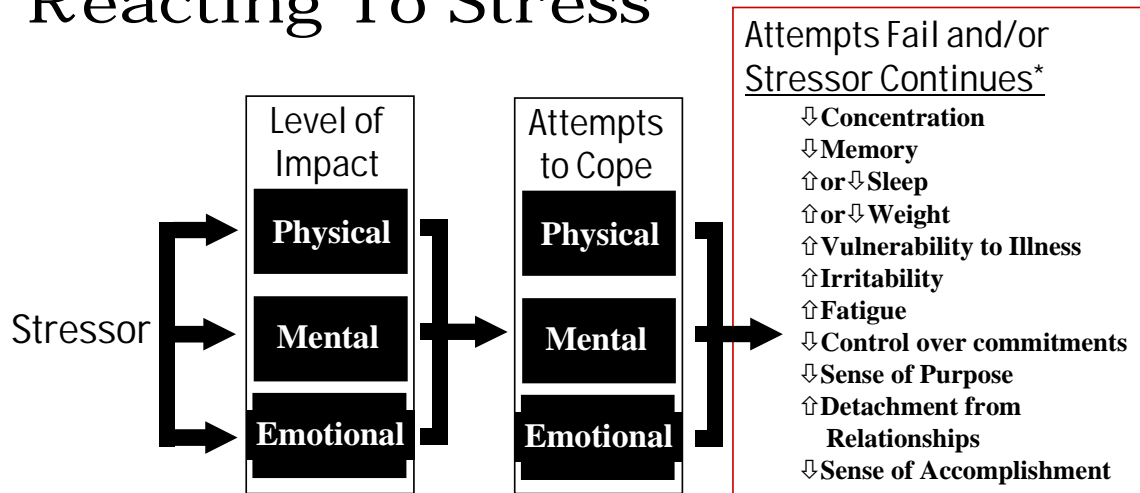
According to medical educator, Dr. Timothy Brigham, stress is "the basic confusion created when one's mind overrides the body's desire to choke the living daylights out of some jerk who desperately deserves it."

Whether or not one takes a more conventional view than Dr. Brigham, we live in a busy world where conflicts, disappointments, frustrations, losses, and pressures can make us feel nervous, keep us awake at night, get us angry, or make us sick. It is impossible to be alive and live without stress. Not surprisingly, stress has become the fashionable disorder of our time, and treatment of stress is an extraordinarily popular and profitable activity where everyone can participate. Dr. Ethel Roskies, a Canadian therapist who has spent over 15 years treating stressed-out managers and professionals, sarcastically observed, "The most distinctive characteristic of stress management as a treatment is its universality; there is no one for whom treatment is apparently unneeded or inappropriate."

Because stress is so ubiquitous and stress management so sweeping, it is tempting to dismiss this subject as a fad or to trivialize it. Confronted with more serious problems of mankind and attempting to find real solutions under deadlines, ambiguity, insufficient resources, and conflicting social priorities, one's patience for something that seems "all in your head" can be quite limited. Popular stress management prescriptions like, "make time for rest and recreation" can sound astonishingly naive and irrelevant to the fast pace and high-tempo of a modern executive. Accustomed to bulldozing through personal obstacles and achieving crisp goals, the fuzziness and wimpy nature of stress is foreign. No wonder some of the most distressed leaders deny their stress until they experience physical or mental burnout. Some of these symptoms are becoming more common:

feelings of intense fatigue; vulnerability to illness; feelings of lack of control over commitments; an incorrect belief that you are accomplishing less; a growing tendency to think negatively; loss of a sense of purpose and energy; and increasing detachment from relationships, causing conflict and more stress. Moreover, corporate downsizing sometimes puts more work and strain on the survivors, causing them to resist acknowledgment of their distress-- especially if it is regarded as personal weakness. They personify the words of a satirist who likened the business world to life among sharks and advised: "When swimming with sharks, don't bleed."

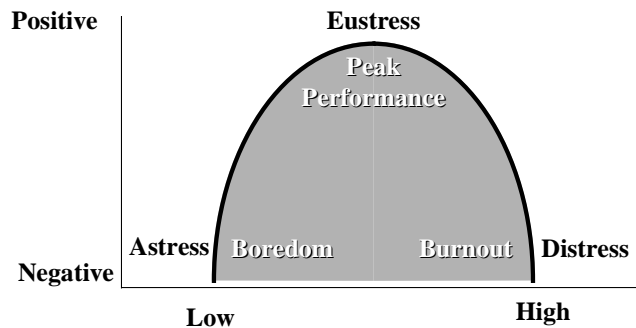
Reacting To Stress



***Individual responses may vary and vary in unpredictable ways. Other reactions than those listed above are possible.**

The very definition of stress has been vague and inconsistent, sometimes referring to an outside force, sometimes to the body's reaction to it. In the scientific literature, no definition has succeeded in capturing the complete nature of this complex phenomenon or even of satisfying the majority of stress researchers. Notes psychologist Dr. Kenneth Pelletier of the Stanford University, Corporate Health Program, scientists have at least agreed, however, that stress is not what happens to someone-- those outside forces are the stressors-- but how a person reacts to what happens. He explains that the distinction caps a long evolution in our understanding of stress. In a great deal of early work, stress was thought of as a universal force acting on a passive

What is Stress?



body. A classic illustration is found in the early research of two psychologists, Drs. Robert Yerkes and John Dodson. They demonstrated an "inverted-U" relationship between performance or efficiency and stress, suggesting that there is an optimal point at which stress promotes performance, with either too little or too much stress associated with poor performance. It was once assumed that all people would react in more or less the same way to crises or disruptions and that such extreme "stresses" were likely to be hazardous to health. But there is no direct link, researchers have discovered, because people differ in their reaction to events and disturbances-- one person's exhilaration at an exciting challenge can be another's anxiety and dismay, and there can be profound contrasts among people in the outcome of both positive and negative events on their health.

By focusing on how a person reacts, rather than the external events, science has helped us to appreciate the extent to which the mind can influence the body. As Dr. Pelletier explains, "Mind and body are inextricably linked, and their second-by-second interaction exerts a profound influence upon health and illness, life and death. Attitudes, beliefs, and emotional states ranging from love and compassion to fear and anger can trigger chain reactions that affect blood chemistry, heart rate, and the activity of every cell and organ system in the body-- from the stomach and the gastrointestinal tract to the immune system."

In the most accurate meaning, stress management is not about learning how to avoid or escape the pressures and turbulence of modern living, it is about learning to appreciate how the body reacts to these pressures and about learning how to develop skills that enhance the body's adjustment. To learn stress management is to learn about the mind-body connection and the degree to which we can control our health in a positive sense.

The mind's influence on the body has been known to medicine from its beginnings. Hippocrates, the founder of Western medicine, equated health to a state of harmony between the mind, the body, and nature. Evidence for the mind/body connection has scientific roots in the work of physiologist Walter Cannon who, at the turn of the Century, first described the fight-or-flight response, the internal adaptive response of the body to a threat. In this involuntary response, the body secretes hormones that immediately raise the heartbeat, liberate fuel for energy, and drive blood to the large muscles, preparing a person or animal under threat to fight or run away. The most familiar of these stress hormones is adrenaline.

In prehistoric times, the fight-or-flight response had an adaptive purpose for occasions when humans faced threats of physical harm from predators. It was the emergency mechanism that focused the body's operations on survival. The cascade of physiological changes induced by the outpouring of the body's "stress" hormones all support this goal: heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension all rise sharply; the stomach and intestines become less active; the level of blood sugar rises for quick energy; fatty acids are released from storage into the bloodstream; peripheral blood vessels constrict; and blood platelets become sticky so that clotting time decreases.



Endowed with the ability to reason and learn, early man developed a fight-or-flight response that could trigger physiological changes on the basis of anticipation of a threat. This psychological advantage permitted humans to ready their physical resources for fighting or running by recognizing signs or conditions under which attack was possible. Unfortunately, our ancestors' psychological advantage over predators now causes the body to react to all of today's challenges as it does to physical threat, even when they are not able to be handled by fighting or running. What's more, the mind can store and reproduce their memory for replay many times over, causing them to be reexperienced throughout the day when the real

stressors have withdrawn.

The fact that the body reacts to today's stressors-- more often psychological and interpersonal-- as if it were preparing for a real physical threat means that we experience the fight-or-flight response significantly more than our prehistoric ancestors did. Dr. Herbert Benson, a Harvard Medical School cardiologist, estimates that the average person experiences 30-50 adrenaline hits a day, compared with one or two from prehistoric threats. That means that 30-50 times per day the heart speeds up, extra fats circulate in the blood (they will later condense into cholesterol), blood vessels clamp down, and muscles tense. If you are under chronic stressors-- for example, if you're facing constant deadline pressure or having major difficulties with your spouse-- your body reacts with the same physical changes that would be appropriate for a near miss on the freeway or the reaction to a loud noise, explains Stanford's Dr. Pelletier. Moreover, under chronic, long-term stressors, the perfectly normal fight-or-flight responses are protracted and lead to chronic disease or contribute to its development.

Evidence for the mind/body connection through the fight-or-flight response has been accumulating at a brisk rate since a serendipitous discovery by Dr. Robert Adler, a psychologist at the University of Rochester in 1974. While conducting a learning experiment on white rats, Dr. Adler discovered that the immune system can be conditioned, just like Pavlov had shown that dogs can be trained to salivate at the sight of food. Adler's research opened the way for a field of medical science known as psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), the study of the links between thoughts and emotions, the brain and the nervous system, and the immune system. PNI has deepened our understanding of how the physiological changes that occur under emotional distress may make people more susceptible to autoimmune disease, infectious disease, and cancer. Taken together, the evidence from 20 years of research confirm that the "stress" hormones generally suppress immune responses. Even more fascinating, the cells actively involved in the immune system have been shown to produce substances--the interleukins and interferons, chemicals that immune system cells use to communicate-- that can trigger cells in the brain. "This is evidence that the immune system and the nervous system

speaking the same chemical language," comment Drs. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and husband Ron Glaser, prominent PNI researchers.

Quieting the adrenaline storm.

If the mind and body are really one, then can intentional efforts to quiet the body reverse the automatic effects of the flight-or-fight response? And will positive health benefits result from a regular induction of this quieting, much as the negative consequences follow from the chronic stress response? These issues have intrigued Harvard Medical School's Dr. Herbert Benson since the late 1960s, when he reluctantly agreed to research the

claim of several practitioners of transcendental meditation that they could lower their blood pressure. To his surprise, Benson found that the simple act of sitting quietly and giving the mind a focus decreased metabolism, slowed the heart rate, decreased the breathing rate, and even produced significant changes in brain waves. The evidence he gathered had compelling implications about the control that people could exert over their bodies. He comments, "It suggested strongly that you could use your mind to change your physiology in a beneficial way, improve health, and perhaps reduce your need for medications. I subsequently coined the term relaxation response to describe this natural restorative phenomenon that is common to all of us." If the stressors of modern life cause the fight-or-flight response, the relaxation response can be used to counteract the harmful effects of stress. Just as your heart begins to beat rapidly when you imagine a frightening scene, your mind can be used to slow your heart rate.

In the fall of 1988, Dr. Benson and his colleagues founded a research and teaching center called the Mind/Body Medical Institute at the New England Deaconess Hospital and the Harvard Medical School. It was the first place of its kind organized to study the effects of the relaxation response and other self-help measures and their potential role for the prevention and treatment of disease. At the Deaconess Hospital, groups are conducted for a wide range of medical conditions including high blood pressure and heart disease, cancer, chronic pain, insomnia, and even infertility. Benson and his associates have learned that the relaxation response can help in the treatment of many medical problems; in some cases, it can eliminate them entirely. It is certainly not the only treatment for those disorders nor a substitute for regular medical care. But to the extent that any medical disorder is caused or made worse by stress, the relaxation response is a valuable complement to conventional medical treatment with extensive clinical research behind it and scientifically proven success.



Dr. Benson speculates that the relaxation response corresponds to what Swiss physiologist Walter Hess found when he stimulated certain areas of the brain of laboratory animals and produced a response opposite to the fight-or-flight response, characterized by relaxed muscles, decreased blood pressure and breathing rate. Hess called this effect "a protective mechanism against over stress." It now appears that this "protective mechanism" can be used by virtually anyone to bring about a rapid quieting of the body's revving engine, as well as a tranquillity that is not unlike the experience gained from meditation and repetitive prayer practiced throughout the centuries by all of the world's faith groups.

Although the relaxation response can be a powerful way to treat stress-related medical problems, it is equally beneficial for preventing disorders or for enhancing performance. On days when exercise is not possible, relaxation techniques are an excellent way to bring down the body's stress level. While exercise dissipates the arousal caused by the fight-or-flight response (remember, running was one of our prehistoric ancestors' limited options), the relaxation response neutralizes the stress response. Scientists at the Harvard Medical School have demonstrated that in people who have practiced the relaxation response, the body is less responsive to stress hormones, even during the times of day they are not practicing the response. This means that it takes a stronger stress reaction to bring about an increase in blood pressure and heart rate in these people.

According to Dr. Benson, a wide array of techniques can elicit the relaxation response. They may be religiously-based or have a secular focus. When people chose a technique that conforms to their own preferences, it is much more likely that they will adhere to the practice. There appear to be only two elements required to bring about the relaxation response-- concentration on rhythmical breathing and the repetition of a word or phrase. At his Institute, Dr. Benson teaches the following approach:

The Relaxation Response

Step 1. Pick a focus word or short phrase that's deeply rooted in your personal belief system. For example, a nonreligious person might choose a word like peace or love. A Christian person might choose the first few words of a psalm such as "The Lord is my shepherd"; a Jewish person could choose Shalom.

Step 2: Sit quietly in a comfortable position.

Step 3. Close your eyes.

Step 4. Relax your muscles.

Step 5. Breathe slowly and naturally, repeating your focus word or phrase silently as you exhale.

Step 6. Throughout, assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When thoughts or distractions come to mind, simply note that your mind has wandered, say to yourself, "Oh well," and gently return to your focus word.

Step 7. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for a minute or two, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes open. Remain seated for one or two minutes.

Dr. Benson also reports that the relaxation response can also be elicited during exercise, which adds a valuable psychological lift to a workout. As you run, pay attention to your breathing. As you achieve a regular rhythm, focus in particular on its in and out rhythm. As you breathe in say to yourself, silently, "in", and as you exhale, say to yourself, silently, "out". In effect, these become the focus words that operate in the same way that you would use them with other relaxation methods.

Stress Hardiness: Beyond Jogging

There is overwhelming evidence that the relaxation response can be beneficial in taming stress and the inner arousal unleashed by the fight-or-flight response and that exercise can dissipate the excesses of stress hormones. Yet, it's also a fact that people differ in the way they respond to the stressors of daily living, and it is particularly useful to learn what ways of coping can buffer the body from stress.

Psychologist Suzanne Kobasa has identified a style of psychological coping she terms hardiness, that appears to modify the relationship between stress and illness. Dr. Kobasa studied business executives for eight years and identified certain personality traits in those who stayed the healthiest while running their companies. One trait was challenge: people who take on life as a challenge respond with excitement and energy to change. They welcome new situations as an opportunity to learn, to grow, to develop on a personal level, rather than looking at everything new as a possible threat. Another was having a commitment to something they felt was meaningful-- their work, community, family. People who are high on commitment experience life as interesting. They have a curiosity about what is happening to them and a desire to give their best shot. The third trait-- a critical one--



**If It Ain't
Run'n,
It Ain't
Train'n!**



was a sense of being in control: a strong sense of being able to make decisions that make the critical difference, that they can make things happen.

Health Maintaining Attitudes

- ◆ Take life on as a challenge respond with excitement and energy to change.
- ◆ Be committed to something you feel is meaningful-- work, community, family.
- ◆ Develop a sense of being in control: a strong sense of being able to make decisions that make the critical difference.

Can these findings be translated into a prescription for stress hardiness? During a conference for physicians, psychiatrist Roy W. Menninger, chairman of the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, listed ways that doctors could take better care of themselves. His suggestions form a great set of advice for those who want to be like Dr. Kobasa's stress hardy executives:

A Prescription for Stress Hardiness

1. Have goals and objectives that have been established by you--not by others, your practice, or your social role.
2. Set priorities for how you're going to spend your time, money, and energy, and "make sure self is on the list."
3. Give yourself permission to enjoy life without guilt. Lay off yourself! Be kinder, gentler, more generous to the self!
4. Make sure your life includes diversity. Seek "to achieve depth, breadth, broader interests--not a monochromatic pattern of living."
5. Make a commitment to continued growth--in knowledge, wisdom, competence, perspective, or skills.

Other experts focus on the fact that stress is a reaction to a perceived threat. As psychologist Richard Lazarus has pointed out, stress lies in the eye of the beholder as much as in the external event itself. In much the same way that our prehistoric ancestors' fight-or-flight reaction was prompted by anticipation of the potential dangers around them, our appraisal of a potentially stressful experience can elicit the same response. "What you're telling yourself about what's happening may be what makes it seem to be a threat," explains Dr. Brigham, assistant dean at Jefferson Medical College in

Philadelphia. Individuals tend to develop habitual ways of reacting, certain mental habits that increase a person's vulnerability are as follows:

Mental Habits to Avoid

- ✘ Deficiency focusing-- the "habit of focusing on the negative at the expense of the positive." This causes a person to see the thing going wrong more than the things going right.
- ✘ Necessitating--the habit of translating every request into a demand. When we always think we have to do something rather than we have a choice in doing it, any failure to live up to demands produces stress.
- ✘ Low skill recognition--the tendency to underplay the role of your abilities in your successes. Everything positive is attributed to something external, such as luck or another person.

Dr. Brigham observes that these habits are not ingrained personality traits and can be changed. He suggests that when necessitating ask, "What can realistically happen if I don't do this?" or "Is there room for negotiation?" When deficiency-focusing ask, "What's right?" in the situation. "How can the obstacles be overcome". He explains, "The goal is not to negate or pass off mistakes but to gain perspectives on them by placing them in the proper context." For low skill recognition ask, "What did I contribute?" and "What abilities did I show?" Here, the goal is not to ignore limitations but to recognize skills and abilities that bolster self-esteem and confidence.

The Behavior Connection

The mind and body are integrated through behavior. Individuals can manage a significant amount of their stress by paying attention to those habits and tendencies that keep them stress-prone, vulnerable to situations that call out the fight-or-flight response. Dr. David Posen, a family physician who consults on stress management for firms such as IBM, Motorola and Peat Marwick, suggests 10 practical strategies that he has found helpful for himself and his patients.

1. Decrease or discontinue caffeine. Most people do not think of coffee, cola, or chocolate as the source of a powerful drug that actually generates a stress reaction in the body. Dr. Posen advises his patients that the best way to observe the effect of caffeine is to get it out of the system long enough to see if there is a difference in how they feel. Three weeks is adequate for this purpose. He reports that 75 to 80 percent of his patients notice a benefit. They feel more relaxed, less jittery or nervous, sleep better, have more energy (a paradox, since caffeine is a stimulant), less heartburn, and fewer muscle aches. One warning, however, you must wean yourself gradually, or you will get migraine-type headaches from caffeine withdrawal. Dr. Posen suggests decreasing by one drink per day until you reach zero, then abstain for three weeks.

2. Regular exercise. It goes without saying that exercise is an essential ingredient in any stress reduction program.

3. Relaxation/meditation

4. Sleep. Sleep is an important way for reducing stress. Chronically stressed patients almost all suffer from fatigue, and people who are tired do not cope well with stressful situations. Most people know their usual sleep requirement (the range is five to 10 hours per night; the average being seven to eight), but a surprisingly large percentage of the population is chronically sleep deprived. Dr. Gregg Jacobs of the Mind/Body Institute at Deaconess estimates that 20-40 percent of the adult population complain of insomnia. But, paradoxically, he suggests that the most common explanation is poor sleep scheduling. One of the most important ways to improve your sleep is to reduce your time in bed. It is common for poor sleepers to extend their time in bed, especially after a restless night, in order to "catch up" on sleep. However, the more time you spend in bed, the more difficulty you will have falling asleep and the lighter and poorer your sleep will be. By reducing that time, he says, you will also be drowsier at bedtime, can consolidate and deepen your sleep, and make it easier to fall asleep and sleep more deeply the next night.

5. Time-outs and leisure. No one would expect a football or basketball player to play an entire game without taking breaks. It's just as irrational to expect yourself to be working from dawn to dusk without taking intermissions. Dr. Posen suggests two aspects, pacing and balance. Pacing involves monitoring your stress and energy level and then pacing yourself accordingly. It is about awareness and vigilance, knowing when to extend yourself and when to ease up. It is also about acting on the best information your body gives you. The other key to pacing is taking periodic time-outs. Dr. Ernest Rossi wrote *The 20-Minute Break*, a book that extols the virtues of a short recess every couple of hours throughout the day. Just as we have cycles of deep sleep and dream sleep throughout the night, we also have cycles of energy throughout the day, peaks of energy and concentration interspersed with troughs of low energy and inefficiency. Dr. Rossi terms these "ultradian rhythms", because they happen many times per day (as opposed to the 25-hour circadian rhythm). The main point of his book is that we need to watch for these troughs and take 20 minute recovery breaks when they occur, as opposed to working through them and building up stress. Dr. Posen advises that a mid-morning break, lunch, a mid-afternoon break, and supper divide the day into roughly two-hour segments. These time-outs can include power naps, meditation, daydreaming, a social interlude, a short walk, a refreshment break, a change to low concentration tasks, or listening to music. He reports, "Since I have started to work with this biologic pattern (instead of resisting it), the results have been pleasing. Like the catnap, it is simply a good investment of time that pays itself back quickly with increased productivity and reduced stress."

Work-leisure balance is also important. Dr. Posen asks his patients to think of their lives (excluding sleep time) in four compartments (work, family, community, and self)

and then to assess what percentage of their time and energy in an average week goes to each part. He explains, "There is no normal range, but I become concerned when work is over 60 percent and/or when self is less than 10 percent. We all require time to meet our own needs, and when that is neglected, trouble usually follows." The word leisure is derived from the Latin word *licere* which means "permission". The main reason so many people lack leisure time is that they don't give themselves permission to make the time to enjoy it.

6. Realistic expectations. People often become upset about something because it does not concur with what they expected, Dr. Posen comments. Take, for example, the experience of driving in slow-moving traffic. If it happens in rush hour, you expect it-- you may not like it, but it will not surprise or upset you. However, if it occurs on a Sunday afternoon, especially if it makes you late for something, you are more likely to be stressed by it. When expectations are realistic, life feels more predictable and more manageable. There is an increased feeling of control because you can plan and prepare yourself (physically and psychologically) for it. Often, a reality check on your expectations, of situations and self, is necessary to avoid the stress from your negative experiences.

7. Reframing. Reframing is a technique used to change the way you look at things in order to feel better about them. Dr. Posen remarks, "We all do this inadvertently at times. For example, many people viewed the baseball strike as a personal disaster, whereas others immediately realized they were going to save a lot of time and money by not hotfooting it down to the ballpark." The key to reframing is to recognize that there are many ways to reinterpret the same situation, like the age-old question, "Is the glass half empty or half full?" He explains, "The message of reframing is that there are many ways of seeing the same thing--so you might as well pick the one you like."

8. Belief systems. Much of our stress results from our beliefs, thousands of premises and assumptions about all kinds of things that we hold to be the truth. A good percentage of these beliefs are not objective truths, however. They are opinions based on the way a person is raised. We have beliefs about how things are, how people should behave, and about ourselves. Some people believe, "If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself." They do not delegate well and tend to get overloaded. Most of our beliefs are held unconsciously, so we are not aware of them. That gives them the power to run our lives. Uncovering the assumptions behind our actions is often a good way to locate the reasons that we become stressed or experience conflict. These beliefs sometimes also trigger automatic thoughts which precipitate negative moods and emotions. These are knee-jerk responses to a perceived stressor: quick, fleeting, and unreasoned. You believe them unconditionally without really being aware of them, and because they feel so right. We develop what Dr. Donald Meichenbaum calls a confirmatory bias, meaning we selectively perceive or attend to things that fit our point of view and confirm our negative mood. One technique helps us to change the automatic way we think in stressful situations: stop, breathe, and reflect. That is, examine the

cascade of automatic self-talk against a reality check and identify the thoughts that are associated with the mood. This helps to reduce the negative emotions.

9. Ventilation/support system. There is an old saying, "a problem shared is a problem halved." People who have relationships and social support feel considerably more stress-hardy than their counterparts who feel isolated and misunderstood. Another form of ventilation that many people feel helpful is writing, for example, in a private journal. Most recently, psychologist James Pennebaker demonstrated how beneficial this process can be. He studied volunteers, half of whom were encouraged to write about their most traumatic experiences for 20 minutes a day. After just four days, those who wrote about their experiences and their feelings about them showed much greater immune cell activity than the others, showing how valuable it is for health reasons to deal with problems and the feelings around them.

10. Humor. Humor is a wonder stress reducer. Laughter relieves tension. In fact, people often laugh hardest when they are feeling the most tense. Dr. Posen cites an example from his patients. He recalls an executive who felt besieged from several directions at once: customer demands, telephone calls, and staff members who needed his help. The man said he started using a phrase that helped him cope and gave him a laugh, "I love it when they fight over me!" In this case, he generated his own humor and reduced his upset.

An Object Lesson

General George C. Marshall served as the Army Chief of Staff from September 1939 to November 1945. During his tenure, the Army grew from a mobilization base of 174,000 troops to a vast operational force exceeding eight million. The demands of leading this tremendous buildup and conducting a global war compelled General Marshall to develop effective strategies for managing his time and conserving his energy. He followed a strict routine that included time for work, time for exercise and sleep, and time for family and friends. He rose at 0600 and exercised daily on horseback because it allowed him time to think. He ate lunch at home, and after lunch, Marshall would often take a nap on the chaise-lounge in the second floor sun room of his quarters. He worked until 1600. Although General Marshall occasionally worked longer hours, one of his most famous assertions is that, "nobody ever had an original thought after 1500." He spent 1600 until 2100 on dinner and relaxation. Marshall generally dined with his wife on his sun porch and then went for a ride or a walk with her around Fort Meyer or Arlington Cemetery. When the weather was too hot, Mrs. Marshall would prepare a picnic dinner and the two of them would then go canoeing on the Potomac River. He usually went to bed at 2100.

Dr. Sherwood of the Army Center for Military History summarizes Marshall's lifestyle:

Because of the many relaxation strategies that Marshall and his wife employed, this Chief of Staff managed, as he put it himself, to "save [his] ammunition for the big fights and avoid a constant drain of little ones." He also was extremely successful in putting his best face forward. "I cannot allow myself to get angry," he once remarked, "that would be fatal--it is too exhausting. My brain must be kept clear. I cannot afford to appear tired, for I recall in the First World War that General Pershing, after a long inspection trip, leaned back in the car to rest as we drove back to his quarters in Chaumont, and those who saw him took his attitude for discouragement. From that small incident, the rumor spread that things were going very badly." Needless to say, things rarely appeared to be going badly during Marshall's tenure, and his time and energy management strategies may have contributed greatly to his record of success.

What can a senior leader learn from this example? Perhaps the instruction is best conveyed by General Marshall himself, by quoting from a letter penned in August 1939, to a young brigadier:

I want to make a few very confidential, personal comments on this new business of yours of being a brigadier general.

...Now I counsel you to make a studied business of relaxing and taking things easy, getting to the office late, taking trips, and making everybody else work like hell. It is pretty hard for a leopard to change his spots, but you must cloak your new rank with a deliberate effort to be quite casual. I know that try as you will, it will be almost utterly impossible for you to take things too easy, and I fear that it will be next to impossible for you to relax to anywhere near the degree that I think it is important.

I woke up at about thirty-three to the fact that I was working myself to death, to my superior's advantage, and that I was acquiring the reputation of being merely a pick and shovel man. From that time on, I made it a business to avoid, so far as possible, detail work, and to relax as completely as I could manage in a pleasurable fashion. Unfortunately, it was about six years before I could get away from details because they were in my lap. In China I made a good beginning, and at Benning I refused to read a great deal of the material worked up, and made it a practice of pleasant diversions. I have finally gotten to the point where I sometimes think I am too casual about things; but I think I have reaped a greater advantage than this other possible disadvantage.

Please take me very seriously. You have wonderful qualities, but you are too conscientious. I will be delighted to find that you have decided to take leave and do a little traveling before you report for duty, and I would be even more pleased if I had to write you later and tell you that you were absenting yourself too frequently from your duties. With my most sincere regard for your future.

Faithfully yours,

General George C. Marshall

