

# ***Stress & Job Burnout***

Excerpts from:

*Labor Guide to Local Union Leadership*

Class Designed by:

***Terry Grant***

President

Ohio Postal Workers Union

AFL-CIO

**2011 APWU Postal Press Conference**

## STRESS AND JOB BURNOUT

### What is Stress?

In its medical sense, stress is essentially the rate of wear and tear in the body. Dr. Hans Selye has been called the father of modern stress research and has defined stress as "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it."<sup>1</sup> We have all felt some stress during our lives, and it can take place during both pleasant and unpleasant events. Almost every event in life causes stress according to Selye, and the only way we can rid ourselves of stress entirely is through death.

In his book, *The Stress of Life*,<sup>2</sup> Selye listed some common misunderstandings about stress and the correct concepts according to his research.

#### **What Stress Is**

Stress is the wear and tear on your mind and body caused by life.

Stress is the mobilization of the body's defenses that allows us to adapt to an event.

Stress is dangerous when it is prolonged, comes too often, concentrates on one part of the body, and is unnoticed.

Stress can be brought on by both pleasant and unpleasant events.

Stress can begin in either your mind or your body.

#### **What Stress Is Not**

Stress is not simply nervous tension.

Stress is not an emergency discharge of hormones from the adrenal glands.

Stress is not anything that causes an alarm reaction (that is the stressor).

Stress is not the influence of some negative occurrence.

Stress does not only result from bad events.

Stress is not something to be avoided.

### Three States Of Stress

In 1950, Selye published his first paper on stress, which he called the "General Adaptation Syndrome." His research over the years has shown there are three stages that follow a threatening experience:

<sup>1</sup>Hans Selye, *Stress without Distress*. New American Library, New York, 1974, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life*. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1978, pp. 57-67.

1. *Alarm stage:* When threat is perceived through the body's senses (sight, sound, smell, touch), a message is sent to the pituitary gland in the brain where the adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) is made. ACTH then travels by the blood to stimulate the adrenals (glands attached to and over the kidneys) that manufacture adrenaline and other hormones. Their job is to cause the body to increase breathing and heart rate, raise the blood pressure, release sugars and fats into the circulation, and tense the skeletal muscles. Such actions provide the fuel and oxygen for quick energy, prepare muscles for strenuous action, help increase blood clotting mechanisms to protect against cuts or lacerations, and improve the sight and hearing and other protective actions required for "fight or flight" and survival.

2. *Resistance stage:* After the immediate threat disappears, the body relaxes and returns to a normal state. The pulse, blood pressure, and breathing rate slow down and return to normal levels. The pupils that were enlarged to improve the range of vision become smaller. The tensed muscles of the legs and arms, ready to fight a foe or run away to a safer place, relax. The digestive system, which had ceased functioning so that extra blood could flow to the muscles and brain, resumes its normal movement and digestive functions. The bladder and kidneys, which had dramatically slowed down, now can speed up and return to their normal function, often bringing the strong urge to urinate.

3. *Exhaustion stage:* If the actual or perceived danger continues over a prolonged time, a new stage begins that can end in disease or in certain cases, death by exhaustion. Protracted wear and tear can affect any of the body's organs or systems. In the case of the arteries in the cardiovascular system, there may be such continuous spasm that a condition develops called hypertension (high blood pressure). The increased blood-clotting mechanisms may create a clot in a small vessel in the heart, leading to a myocardial infarction (heart attack). Other types of wear-and-tear problems depend on the physical and hereditary makeup of the individual. Examples include peptic or duodenal ulcers, heart rhythm abnormalities, diabetes, and nervous colon.

### Pleasant and Unpleasant Stress

Throughout all his writings and research Selye has emphasized that stress is not always bad for you. The alarm reaction is a physical response set off by what Selye calls a *stressor*. A stressor is defined as something that produces stress. If the stressor is present, the alarm reaction will follow.

As mentioned earlier, a pleasant event such as the birth of a child yields stress, but this is positive stress or *eustress*. An unpleasant event, such as an IRS audit, brings about negative stress or *distress*. Keep in mind that stress can be triggered by both sad or happy events. That will be important when you later go through the life event chart that will determine the possibility of you having a stress breakdown or illness because of stressful events in your life.

Most of us are at ease when our lives are stable, orderly, and predictable. When changes occur, we can go through either eustress or distress. When people go through many changes over a short period of time, studies have shown that

they are more vulnerable to injury and infection, sickness, heart attack, and strokes.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe have devised a rating scale that measures life events and have shown how they can be scored. This scale will give you some predictability for sickness or worse if you score too high. See Exhibit 12-1.

EXHIBIT 12-1  
Score Yourself on the Life Change Test

<u>LIFE EVENT IN LAST 12 MONTHS</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>TIMES HAPPENED</u>	<u>YOUR SCORE</u>
1. Death of spouse	100	_____	_____
2. Divorce	73	_____	_____
3. Marital separation	65	_____	_____
4. Jail term	63	_____	_____
5. Death of close family member	63	_____	_____
6. Personal injury or illness	53	_____	_____
7. Marriage	50	_____	_____
8. Fired at work	47	_____	_____
9. Marital reconciliation	45	_____	_____
10. Retirement	45	_____	_____
11. Change in health of family member	44	_____	_____
12. Pregnancy	40	_____	_____
13. Sex difficulties	39	_____	_____
14. Gain of new family member	39	_____	_____
15. Business readjustment	39	_____	_____
16. Change in financial state	38	_____	_____
17. Death of close friend	37	_____	_____
18. Change to a different line of work	36	_____	_____
19. Change in the number of arguments with spouse	35	_____	_____
20. Mortgage over \$45,000*	31	_____	_____
21. Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	_____	_____
22. Change in responsibilities at work	29	_____	_____
23. Son or daughter leaving home	29	_____	_____
24. Trouble with in-laws	29	_____	_____
25. Outstanding personal achievement	28	_____	_____
26. Spouse begins or stops work	26	_____	_____
27. Begin or end school	26	_____	_____
28. Change in living conditions	25	_____	_____
29. Revision of personal habits	24	_____	_____
30. Trouble with the boss	23	_____	_____
31. Change in work hours or conditions	20	_____	_____
32. Change in residence	20	_____	_____
33. Change in school	20	_____	_____

<sup>3</sup>Martin Shaffer, *Life after Stress*. Contemporary Books, Inc., Chicago, 1983, p. 29.

34. Change in recreation	19	_____	_____
35. Change in church activities	19	_____	_____
36. Change in social activities	18	_____	_____
37. Mortgage or loan of less than \$45,000*	17	_____	_____
38. Change in the number of family get-togethers	15	_____	_____
39. Change in sleeping habits	15	_____	_____
40. Change in eating habits	15	_____	_____
41. Vacation	13	_____	_____
42. Christmas	12	_____	_____
43. Minor violations of the law	11	_____	_____
Total score for 12 months _____			

\*Adjusted for inflation. The original instrument had a figure of \$10,000.

Note: The more you change, the more likely you are to get sick.

Of those people with a score over 300 for the past year almost 80% get sick in the near future; for a score of 150 to 299, 50% get sick shortly; if you scored less than 150, there is only about a 30% chance of sickness in the near future. It is important to note that even pleasant changes can produce stress.

### The Hidden Epidemic

According to Herbert Benson in his bestseller "The Relaxation Response," the United States is in the "midst of an epidemic."<sup>4</sup> Benson says that the epidemic is hypertension, which is the medical term for high blood pressure. Hypertension makes one more prone to heart attacks and strokes. These diseases account for more than half the deaths in the United States annually.<sup>5</sup>

The theories that try to explain why Americans have such a high death rate due to heart failures include (1) inappropriate diet, (2) lack of exercise, and (3) poor family relationships. Benson claims that these are all valid, but he also says that the factor of environmental stress has been ignored and is poorly understood.<sup>6</sup>

Doctors have traditionally handled high blood pressure through medication, which is a polite term for drugs. The family doctor has been trained to treat the symptoms of the body and not the cause. On the other hand, the psychiatrist is concerned with the patient's psyche. One professional treats the body and the other cares for the mind. Stress is related to both the body and mind, and the patient needs a combination of both professionals for most cases of stress to be dealt with effectively.

<sup>4</sup>Herbert Benson, *The Relaxation Response*. William Morrow & Co., Inc., New York, 1975, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. pp. 20-21.

## Fight or Flight

All animals, including humans, react to stress in a rather predictable way. Certain instincts cause us to react to stressful situations by what has been termed the "fight or flight" response. That is, when we are faced with situations that require adjustment of our behavior, we choose to flee from or fight the situation. During this time an involuntary response increases our blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, muscle tension, and metabolism, preparing us for conflict or escape.<sup>7</sup>

If this condition occurs too often and is not relieved in some conscious way, the result might eventually lead to a heart attack or stroke.<sup>8</sup>

---

## JOB BURNOUT: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Now that we have defined stress and shown what unrelieved stress can do to us, let's apply that to your job and the possibility of burnout. There is no doubt about it, your work can be hazardous to your health. Burnout has no respect for education, occupation title, age, or years of service. It can affect homemakers, secretaries, school teachers, coal miners, dentists, college students, and union officers. The time and emotional demands on a local union officer can be enormous, and he or she can certainly burn out or blow up.

The *primary cause* of job burnout is *unrelieved stress*, the kind that goes on day in and day out, month after month, year after year.

## Stages of Job Burnout

In their research on job burnout, Veninga and Spradley have found five stages before one is totally spent or "fried."

1. *Honeymoon stage*: A period of high energy and job satisfaction. During this stage we are still thrilled about having the job and develop habits of dealing with the stress. People are doing exactly what they want to do. It is almost like getting paid to sample chocolate or play baseball.
2. *Fuel shortage*: The honeymoon has ended. The challenge of work and your former enthusiasm have declined. This feeling can happen every few weeks or only a couple of times a year. There are five signs to look for: (1) job dissatisfaction, (2) inefficiency at work, (3) fatigue, (4) sleep disturbances, and (5) escape activities. All these early warning signals can alert you that work stress may begin to affect your health. During this fuel shortage stage, people begin to eat and smoke more.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

3. *Chronic symptoms:* One begins to feel that "something is happening to me" and many people will visit the doctor. During this stage you might feel chronic exhaustion, physical illness, anger, and depression.
4. *Crisis:* This stage begins when symptoms become critical: bleeding ulcers, rapid heartbeats, long-term migraine headaches. People become obsessed with their problem; job burnout dominates their lives.
5. *Hitting the wall:* Victims of job stress can no longer function and their personal lives deteriorate. They can no longer adapt and have taken on the other problems of alcoholism, drug abuse, heart disease, and mental illness. Very few can reach this stage and recover.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly job burnout does not mean that in order to be "fried" you have to go through all five stages. Many people bounce between stage one and three for years. It might indeed take a long period of time to ever get to the later stages. The key is to identify the early warning signs or symptoms and treat them as listening posts and learn how to cope so as to prevent job burnout. Knowing which stage you are in is a big step in dealing with job burnout.

### Symptoms: The Signs of Danger

Your body is equipped with many warning signs to indicate that something might be wrong with you. What you have to do is pay attention to these signs, recognize that they might be stress related, and then do something about the stress. In his book, *The Stress of Life*, Selye points to many of these symptoms:

- General irritability
- Depression
- Hyperexcitation
- Pounding of heart
- Dryness of throat or mouth
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability
- Overpowering urge to cry or run and hide
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts and general disorientation
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, or dizziness
- Become easily fatigued
- Floating anxiety; we are afraid, but do not know exactly what we are afraid of
- Emotional tension and alertness; being keyed up

<sup>9</sup>Robert L. Veninga and James P. Spradley, *The Work Stress Connection: How to Cope with Job Burnout*. Ballantine Books, New York, 1982, pp. 37-70.

Trembling  
Tendency to be easily startled  
High-pitched, nervous laughter  
Stuttering and other speech difficulties  
Bruxism, or grinding of the teeth  
Insomnia, usually because of being keyed up  
Hypermobility, or an increased tendency to move about without any reason; you just can't sit still and relax  
Sweating  
Frequent need to urinate  
Diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness in the stomach, and sometimes even vomiting  
Migraine headaches  
Premenstrual tension or missed menstrual cycles  
Pain in the neck or lower back  
Loss of or excessive appetite  
Increased smoking  
Increased use of legally prescribed drugs  
Alcohol and drug addictions  
Nightmares  
Neurotic behavior  
Psychoses  
Accident proneness<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the more symptoms that appear, the more obvious it becomes as to whether or not you are suffering from too much stress. An important point to remember is that you can control all these symptoms by proper stress management. You can make a choice as to whether you will continue to suffer and possibly experience a genuine (hit the wall) breakdown or gain control of stress before it controls you.

Our bodies are always talking to us, and we have a responsibility to listen. Just as you would not ignore a bright red light on the car dash that says FUEL, OIL, BATTERY, it is wise to pay attention to our body's warning signals. With awareness and practice you too can listen to those signs. In order to cope, one must be tuned into those signals.

<sup>10</sup>Selye, *The Stress of Life*, pp. 174-177.



## Personalities

Your personality might be an indication of how well you are currently handling stress. Doctors Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman did a 10-year study and reported their findings in a book entitled *Type A Behavior and Your Heart*. They learned that a certain type of personality was three times more likely to get a heart attack. They discovered that attitude and temperament had much to do with a bad heart.

In his book entitled, *Stress/Unstress*, Dr. Keith Sehnert listed the characteristics of a type A personality:

1. Tendency to overplan: they develop time urgency. Even small setbacks can become a major disaster.
2. Multiple thoughts and actions: these people are habitually involved in many actions simultaneously: having a phone conversation, eating, opening mail, interviewing someone, all at the same time!
3. Need to win: they would rather die than lose.
4. Desire for recognition.
5. Overconcerned with earning money and collecting adult toys to constantly prove their success.
6. Impatient with delays or interruptions.
7. Overextend themselves: they will take on many projects and have difficulty in delegating work.
8. Sense of time urgency.
9. Excessive competitive drive.
10. Workaholics: they have no time for recreation, exercise, family, or friends.<sup>11</sup>

## Are You a Type A?

The self-test (Exhibit 12-2) and analysis that follows<sup>12</sup> will help you to determine whether you are a type A personality and, therefore, whether you face a high risk of cardiac illness or other stress-related disease.

As you can see, each scale is composed of a pair of adjectives or phrases separated by a series of horizontal lines. Each pair has been chosen to represent two kinds of contrasting behavior. Each of us belongs somewhere along the line between the two extremes. Since most of us are neither the most competitive nor the least competitive person we know, put a checkmark where you think you belong between the two extremes.

<sup>11</sup> Keith W. Sehnert, *Stress/Unstress*. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1981, pp. 43-48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

EXHIBIT 12-2  
Self-Test for Type A Personality

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Doesn't mind leaving things temporarily unfinished	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Must get things finished once started
2. Calm and unhurried about appointments	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Never late for appointments
3. Not competitive	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Highly competitive
4. Listens well, lets others finish speaking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Anticipates others in conversation (nods, interrupts, finishes sentences for the other)
5. Never in a hurry, even when pressured	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Always in a hurry
6. Able to wait calmly	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Uneasy when waiting
7. Easygoing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Always going full speed ahead
8. Takes one thing at a time	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Tries to do more than one thing at a time, thinks about what to do next
9. Slow and deliberate in speech	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Vigorous and forceful in speech (uses a lot of gestures)
10. Concerned with satisfying himself, not others	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Wants recognition by others for a job well done
11. Slow doing things	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Fast doing things (eating, walking, etc.)
12. Easygoing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Hard driving
13. Expresses feelings openly	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Holds feelings in
14. Has a large number of interests	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Few interests outside work
15. Satisfied with job	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Ambitious, wants quick advancement on job
16. Never sets own deadlines	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Often sets own deadlines
17. Feels limited responsibility	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Always feels responsible
18. Never judges things in terms of numbers	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Often judges performance in terms of numbers (how many, how much)
19. Casual about work	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Takes work very seriously (works week-ends, brings work home)
20. Not very precise	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Very precise (careful about detail)

SCORING: Assign a value from 1 to 7 for each score. Total them up.

Source: Reprinted with permission from *Stress/Unstress* by Keith W. Sehnert, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1981.

### Analysis of Your Score

**Total score = 110 to 140: Type A1.** If you are in this category, and especially if you are over 40 and smoke, you are likely to have a high risk of developing cardiac illness.

**Total score = 80 to 109: Type A2.** You are in the direction of being cardiac prone, but your risk is not as high as the A1. You should, nevertheless, pay careful attention to the advice given to all type A's.

**Total score = 60 to 79: Type AB.** You are a mixture of A and B patterns. This is a healthier pattern than either A1 or A2, but you have the potential for slipping into A behavior and you should recognize this.

**Total score = 30 to 59: Type B2.** Your behavior is on the less-cardiac-prone end of the spectrum. You are generally relaxed and cope adequately with stress.

**Total score = 0 to 29: Type B1.** You tend to the extreme of noncardiac traits. Your behavior expresses few of the reactions associated with cardiac disease.

This test will give you some idea of where you stand in the discussion of type A behavior that follows. The higher your score, the more cardiac prone you tend to be. Remember, though, even B persons occasionally slip into A behavior, and any of these patterns can change over time.

If you are a type A personality, you will want to do something about it. First, you must realize that type A behavior is, like all other behavior, learned. It starts at a very early age with parents rushing us off to school, teachers and their time tests and assignments that must be in by a certain day, our boss who makes time and productivity demands on us. In short, we are reinforced throughout our lives to develop type A traits. That may be fine when we are young and better able to handle stress. As we get older our routines change, and so must our behaviors. One might consider these suggestions by Friedman and Rosenman for modifying your type A behavior:

1. Recognize that life is always an unfinishedness. It is unrealistic to believe you will finish everything needing to be done without something else needing to be done presenting itself.
2. Listen quietly to the conversation of other people, refraining from interrupting them or in any other way attempting to speed them up.
3. Concentrate on one thing at a time.
4. Do not interfere with others doing a job that you think you can do faster.
5. When confronted with a task, ask yourself:
  - a. Will this matter have importance five years from now?
  - b. Must I do this right now?
 Your answers will place tasks in proper perspective.
6. Before speaking, ask yourself:
  - a. Do I really have anything important to say?
  - b. Does anyone want to hear it?
  - c. Is this the time to say it?
 If the answer to any of these is no, remain quiet.

7. Tell yourself daily that no activity ever failed because someone executed it too slowly, too well.
8. Refrain from making appointments or scheduling your activities when unnecessary. Try to maintain as flexible a schedule as possible.
9. Remember that your time is precious and must be protected. When possible, pay someone else to do bothersome chores and save your time.
10. Purposely frequent restaurants, theaters, and other such places where you know there will be some waiting required. Perceive such occasions as an opportunity to get to know your companion better or, if alone, as a chance to get some "downtime" away from the books, phone, or people seeking your time.
11. Practice eliminating polyphasic behavior (doing two or more things at the same time) by reading books that demand your entire attention and patience. A several-volume novel that is complex would work well. Proust's *The Remembrance of Things Past* is recommended.
12. Plan relaxing breaks from activities you know will result in tension by nature of the time or effort required to do them. Plan these breaks to occur prior to the feelings of tension and pressure.
13. Engage in daily practice of a recognized relaxation technique (which will be discussed later)
14. Smile at as many people as you can so as to decrease free-floating hostility.
15. Thank people for nice things they have done.
16. Remind yourself daily that no matter how many things you have acquired, unless you have improved your mind or spirit, they are relatively worthless.
17. Consider most of your opinions as only provisionally correct, while maintaining an open mind to new ideas.
18. Seek some "aloneness" regularly.
19. Consolidate your relationships with some friends and acquaintances to make them more intimate and rewarding.
20. Spend time periodically remembering your past and the well from which you sprang.<sup>13</sup>

---

---

## MANAGING YOUR STRESS

### Changing Your Lifestyle

If you are like most people in leadership positions, you never seem to have enough time to get things done or keep putting things off that should be done. There is a constant battle for your time, energy, ideas, and body to be all things

<sup>13</sup>Meyer Friedman and Ray H. Rosenman, *Type A Behavior and Your Heart*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1974, pp. 230-235.

to all people. Your job, house, union, spouse, children, co-workers, subordinates, boss, committeepeople, all want a piece of you.

According to Karl Albrecht, there is a steady-growing philosophy that human happiness, health, and well-being are a *holistic* aspect of life.<sup>14</sup> This holistic concept implies that you cannot be an *effective leader* and be an *ineffective person* in private life. Since your total life is a sum of the various parts of your life, a breakdown in one will sooner or later affect the others.

To be a truly effective leader, you have to be an effective person. The effective leader is an effective spouse, parent, committee person, companion, and friend. A holistic approach to effective leadership and life-style requires a balance of all dimensions of living and working.

Consider the following six dimensions of your life that Albrecht details in his research, *Stress and the Manager*.<sup>15</sup>

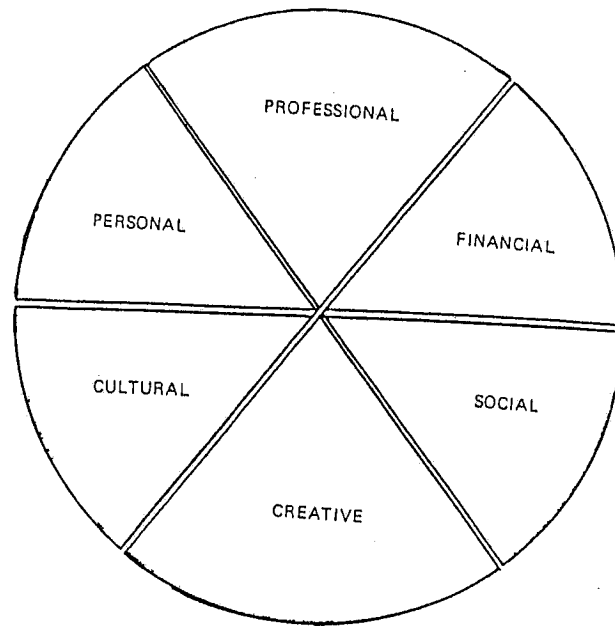
1. *Professional*: how you go about making your living; your relationship to the organization.
2. *Financial*: your salary, benefits, security, assets, and liabilities.
3. *Social*: relationships and activities you share with others; family, friends, organizations, colleagues, members of the opposite sex.
4. *Cultural*: movies, plays, television, traveling, adult education; anything that helps you grow into a more knowledgeable person.
5. *Creative*: hobbies, crafts, artwork, gardening, remodeling of your apartment or home.
6. *Personal*: your physical health and well-being; recreation to relax and bring relief from tension; exercise, diet, privacy. (See Figure 12-1.)

A holistic approach to managerial life-style requires a balance of all dimensions of living and working.

Take a pencil and paper and draw a circle approximately the size of Figure 12-1. Make six segments of a pie and draw them in according to how much effort you put into each of the six dimensions that we have just outlined. If some of the segments are only slivers or, worse, not part of the pie at all, you may need some reworking of your life-style and habits. The key here is to seek some form of balance. They cannot possibly all be equal, but you will now have an idea of where your general areas of living could use some attention and more balance.

<sup>14</sup>Karl Albrecht, *Stress and the Manager*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979, p. 216.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.



Source: Reproduced with permission of Karl Albrecht, *Stress and the Manager*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979.

FIGURE 12-1. Dimensions of living and working

### The Wellness Triad

The holistic approach to stress management deals with balance, especially balance of the six general areas of living that you just sketched. (If you haven't sketched them, you're cheating and in too much of a hurry.) According to Albrecht, the wellness triad also deals with balance—the balance of *relaxation*, *exercise*, and *diet*. Albrecht unites these three factors and says that they must be dealt with as a synergistic whole—a wellness triad.<sup>16</sup> The following description will not be totally valid for all readers, but some of it is bound to apply. Albrecht frequently refers to this as his RED triad. A brief description follows:

1. *Relaxation*: anything you do, including deep relaxation practice, to relieve the stress accumulated through your daily activities. A good night's sleep; sitting in a quiet place and observing the silence; listening to relaxing music; taking a quiet walk by yourself; creating your own time out to put up your feet and relax; listening to a deep relaxation cassette tape or record (they are

<sup>16</sup>ibid, p. 221.

available in most public libraries and many bookstores); meditating; thinking pleasant thoughts.

2. *Exercise*: anything you do that causes you to breathe heavily for more than three to five minutes. Jogging, swimming, fast walking, racquetball, bicycle riding, tennis; activities that arouse your whole body, use your muscles vigorously, make you breathe heavily, and make your heart pump more rapidly and strongly.
3. *Diet*: a good diet is made up of a balanced combination of foods that supply the basic ingredients of nutrition without too many fats, sugars, or calories; supplements taken in moderation; minimal use of "junk foods" and those overburdened with additives, colorings, and preservatives; alcohol in moderation; no use of tobacco or hard drugs; rare use of aspirin or pain medication unless required for medical management of a specific disorder; rare or no use of patent medicines such as antacids, cold remedies, laxatives; no use of tranquilizers, sleeping pills, or other central nervous system depressants; no or moderate use of caffeine (coffee, tea, or cola drinks).<sup>17</sup>

If one decides to adopt Albrecht's wellness triad and seek meaningful stress management, an important ingredient is to proceed slowly and cautiously. Many of the relaxation techniques that will be mentioned later you might find uncomfortable. Keep trying until you find one that works for you. Many of the exercises that are mentioned will not be right for you. Certainly a brisk game of golf can provide both relaxation and exercise, but how many of us become outraged when we slice a drive into the lake and avoid walking the course by renting an electric cart? Diet is another area where it is easy to develop bad habits. Probably all too frequently we eat "empty calories" in overprocessed foods or sweets that are intended to turn off the hunger switch in our minds.

Now that you are becoming familiar with Albrecht's wellness triad, let's look at Exhibit 12-3.

You can see that as you improve your old habits in the wellness triad, the other parts will also be enhanced. It is a snowball effect. One part enhances or supports the other. However, if one part is weak, it also weakens the others.

### Wellness Behavior Test

Albrecht has also developed a test to see how well your RED behavior really is. Use the wellness triad of factors as a checklist of your wellness behaviors. The term behaviors rather than habits is used because it strongly implies that they are

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, pp. 223-224.

EXHIBIT 12-3  
The Factors of Relaxation, Exercise, and Diet Form a  
Synergistic Wellness Triad

<u>THIS FACTOR</u>	<u>ENHANCES THIS FACTOR</u>		
Relaxation	Calmer attitude makes living more enjoyable; relaxation and recreation get higher priority.	Changes time priority; makes it easier to make time for exercise.	Reduces anxiety-related eating; increased body awareness and relaxation reduce over-eating at meals
Exercise	Improved physical condition enables the body to consume stress chemicals; makes relaxation skills easier to learn and maintain.	Improved physical condition raises energy level; makes more exercise easier and enjoyable.	Regular exercise burns calories, promotes gradual weight loss, increases metabolic level, reduces appetite.
Diet	Reducing consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine makes parasympathetic relaxation response easier.	High-quality diet increases energy level; exercise becomes easier as weight decreases.	Good eating habits become easier to maintain over time.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Karl Albrecht, *Stress and the Manager*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979.

voluntary. The following short quiz of a dozen items will tell you how well you maintain the most important form of personal capital you have—your own health.

Refer to the questions in Exhibit 12-4 and give yourself an A, B, C, D, or F, depending on your judgments. Be fair with yourself but be honest. After you have scored the test, you might want to compute the average grade. Assign four points to an A, three to a B, two to a C, and one to a D. If you flunk, you flunk—no points. Then add up all the points and divide by 12 to get your health grade-point average. Did you average at least a B-plus?



EXHIBIT 12-4  
Wellness Behavior Test

*Relaxation:*

1. Do you take time to get completely away from work and other pressures to unwind?
 

Frequently	A	Seldom	D
Fairly often	B	I "just can't"	F
Sometimes	C		
  
2. Do you sleep well? Fall asleep easily? Sleep through the night?
 

Very well	A	Have trouble	D
Fairly well	B	"Certified insomniac"	F
Not so well	C		
  
3. Do you take, or feel you need, aspirin, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, stomach medicines, or laxatives?
 

Seldom or never	A	Quite often	D
Occasionally	B	I'm hooked	F
Fairly often	C		
  
4. Do you practice a form of deep relaxation (e.g., meditation, progressive relaxation, autogenic training, etc.) daily?
 

Nearly every day	A	Seldom	D
Often	B	What's deep relaxation?	F
Occasionally	C		

*Exercise:*

1. Can you run a mile (at any speed) without becoming exhausted?
 

Easily	A	Can't do it at all	D
Fairly well	B	Can't walk a mile	F
Can barely make it	C		
  
2. Can you play a fast game of tennis or other strenuous sport without becoming exhausted?
 

Easily	A	Get exhausted	D
Fairly well	B	Wouldn't try it	F
Get very tired	C		
  
3. Do you jog or engage in some other very active exercise several times a week?
 

Usually	A	Seldom	D
Fairly often	B	Allergic to exercise	F
Occasionally	C		
  
4. Are you fairly strong and physically able?
 

Very	A	Adequate for	C	in a strong wind
Moderately	B	my purposes		

Quite weak	D
I can't stand up	F

**Diet:**

- Are you overweight? (Just check to see how much surface fat is visible on your body.)
 

Not at all	A	Quite a paunch	D
Mildly overweight	B	Butterball	F
Moderate amount of flab	C		
- Do you smoke?
 

Never	A	Pack or more a day	D
2 or 3 a day	B	Chain smoker	F
Half-pack a day	C		
- Do you drink liquor (including wine or beer)?
 

Rarely or never	A	Several a day	D
Socially and seldom	B	I'm an alkie	F
One a day	C		
- Do you drink coffee, tea, cola drinks, or other sources of caffeine and sugar?
 

Rarely or never	A	Regularly, including with meals	D
1 or 2 a day	B	Can't do without it	F
Several a day	C		

Source: Reproduced with permission of Karl Albrecht, *Stress and the Manager*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979.

Putting these various models together—your grade-point average, your personal balance wheel, your life-stress score, and the present state of your health—will tell you most of what you need to know. In a sense, you are estimating your potential for handling stress and the amount of it you have developed in your overall patterns of living.

### Rebuilding Your Health

The following suggestions by Albrecht are based on the assumption that you scored poorly on the wellness behavior test. You may choose any of them to start to bring your stress under control. However, do not start out too ambitiously or quickly. Start slowly and achieve a few "victories" while building the confidence to adopt a good portion of Albrecht's suggestions.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 236-240.

### Relaxation

1. Buy a deep relaxation cassette for yourself, preferably the kind that helps the mind relax the body.
2. Use the tape once a day in private in order to learn to relax completely.
3. Start using momentary relaxation from time to time during the day. This will become more natural as you learn deep relaxation or visualization more thoroughly.
4. Take a course in meditation, autogenic training, or self-hypnosis that is oriented to relaxation training.
5. Program your thoughts with positive images of relaxation, tranquility, and pleasant human relations with others.
6. Do not change any of your medications without your doctor's concurrence.
7. Schedule specific times away from your work for real relaxation.
8. Find a certain amount of private time when you can be absolutely alone with yourself. You have a right to your own space.
9. Develop the habit of self-monitoring. Pay attention to your body signals as you go about the day's activities, and frequently de-escalate your internal level and relax your muscles.
10. Watch less television and read interesting books more often; watch fewer shows and movies with violent scenes or other anxiety-producing episodes; switch off radio news when it gives useless bad news.
11. Find a place that helps you to relax and detach yourself from the world for short periods. Visit a park, the beach, an untraveled back road, or a spot in the woods where you can feel remote from society and close to your own thoughts.
12. Start rethinking your time priorities and make time for regular periods of solitude and relaxation.
13. If you are heavily in the type A pattern, read *Type A Behavior and Your Heart* (Friedman and Rosenman, 1974). Follow the authors' advice and begin to impersonate a type B.

### Exercise

1. Do not increase your exercise activities without making sure you are in reasonably good health.
2. If you are over 35, have a thorough medical examination and get your doctor's permission before beginning any exercise program.
3. Find a healthy doctor who is in excellent physical condition (this may not be easy). Have the doctor administer a heart-stress test (sometimes called an

exercise physical) and give you an idea of your cardiopulmonary fitness level and heart condition.

4. Read a book on exercise and adult fitness. Begin to sell yourself on the importance of good exercise habits.
5. Join a class in slow, long-distance jogging and begin to build up your stamina in easy stages. This also lends itself to group support.
6. Never exercise so vigorously or for so long that you find it fatiguing and that you later are tempted to find many "reasons" to skip it "just this once." Make it so easy that you feel a sense of reward and accomplishment and want to do it again.
7. Take your time getting into shape. Don't become obsessed with the need to prove yourself or to get back into shape quickly. Again, make exercise a pleasant growth experience for yourself and welcome the challenge.
8. Give exercise the same priority as any other routine activity, such as grocery shopping, maintaining your car, cleaning or repairing the house, improving your education, tending to your investments, or even traveling to and from work.
9. Think about exercise as a long-term investment. Set an easily attainable goal for the next month and one for the next three months.
10. Exercise with other people if it helps you to find time for it. Associate with people who are trim and in good condition. Put yourself in situations in which you will be encouraged to engage in enjoyable physical activities.

### **Diet**

1. If you are extremely overweight, get your doctor's concurrence before you undertake any weight-loss program. Find a trim, healthy doctor and ask her or him to help you work out a sensible diet program that is best for you.
2. Otherwise, if you need to lose a moderate amount of weight, do not go on a crash diet—ever. Think of losing weight as a long-term process of readjusting your eating habits so that you take in fewer calories while still enjoying eating fairly well.
3. Consider joining a weight-reduction school or program, preferably one combined with an exercise program.
4. Make up your mind to be satisfied with a slow, steady loss of weight. A few pounds a month will soon add up to a respectable loss, and you will not feel as though you have tortured yourself to do it.
5. Resign your membership in the "Clean Off Your Plate Club." Learn to eat slowly until you feel your body's hunger signal turn off; then leave the rest. Understand that the waste of food took place when it came out of the kitchen, not when you left it on your plate. Select a few morsels you plan to leave on the plate before you begin eating.

6. Trick your mind into being less hungry when you sit down for a meal. You can do this by having a glass of tomato juice about 20 minutes before the meal. This caloric intake will make you less aggressive when you begin to pile food on your plate.
7. Read articles on diet, eating behavior, and losing weight to bring the subject to your attention from time to time.
8. Study your overall eating habits and decide for yourself what changes, if any, you should make. Begin to make them gradually and avoid the self-punishment syndrome of carrot sticks, skim milk, and black coffee.
9. Read some of the literature on nutrition and form your own theory about vitamin supplements in your diet. Don't be intimidated by some physicians (most of whom know very little about nutrition—or wellness, for that matter) who smile indulgently on vitamin users. And do not be bamboozled by health freaks who hop from one magical fad food or supplement to another, urging you to make eating a religious process through chemical manipulation of your body. Find your own middle road.
10. Make sure you have plenty of fiber (roughage) in your daily diet. You can easily and cheaply supplement it by taking a little bran with water now and then—a very effective and simple habit.
11. Pay attention to your feelings after meals. Begin to favor fresh or frozen vegetables, salads, and fresh fruits, all of which contribute to your energy and are easy to digest. Don't worship the thick steak as the epitome of eating pleasure. Balance meat with a variety of vegetables and do not settle for tired, canned vegetables. Demand good-tasting, well-prepared dishes, preferably steamed. Eat lightly in the middle of the day to avoid the heavy, tired feeling of satiety and to function well in the afternoon.
12. Keep careful tabs on the amount of junk food you eat. This practice will lead you to reduce it over the long term if you feel you should. (See Table 12-2.)
13. Start letting go of supersweet snacks or desserts at a comfortable rate. Replace them, for example, with sweet fresh fruits or other tasty but less fattening substitutes (not carrot sticks, unless you especially like carrots).
14. If you smoke, give it up completely. Read health articles, visit a healthy nonsmoking doctor, frighten yourself, associate with nonsmokers, take a no-smoking class or a clinical behavior conditioning program, or do whatever else you need to do to free yourself from this killer. You will probably find that the physiological changes brought about by jogging will help enormously in letting go of the habit.
15. If you drink heavily, cut back immediately. If you flunked the wellness behavior test on this item, see your physician immediately. If you only feel you drink too much, change your activity patterns to find sources of relaxation that make drinking unnecessary. Break the habit of having a drink

every day by making one day a week your "dry" day, and begin to cut down further from there. Use a relaxation practice to help you overcome the tension you have been drowning with liquor.

16. If you take recreational drugs, tranquilizers, or patent medicines more often than rarely, see a healthy physician who understands stress reduction. Have him or her supervise your program of substituting deep relaxation for the use of these chemical controllers.
17. If you drink a great deal of coffee, tea, cola drinks, or other sources of caffeine, start tapering off at a comfortable rate. Take a month or two to get your use down to the "occasional" level. Use a relaxation practice to get rid of the tension that leads you to overuse these stimulants.

### Stress Relief Safety Valves

Most electrical and mechanical devices have a form of safety valve so that the system they are involved with cannot destroy them. Humans also have a series of safety valves to avoid self-destruction. Sooner or later unrelieved stress will exploit a part of your physical or mental well being. In their book that deals with job burnout, Veninga and Spradley mention stress safety valves and their two important functions:

they enable you to escape the direct pressure of work stress . . . and counteract the biochemical and psychological changes that occur when our bodies mobilize to deal with stress.<sup>19</sup>

They go on to point to numerous safety valves to help release stress. Again, not all will be right for you, so pick and choose to fit your needs.

1. *Changing gears:* In its worst form this involves changing jobs, but if you feel a total breakdown about to occur, the change might be worth it; develop or restart a hobby that you truly like; get involved in your children's school or some community project.
2. *Plan some fun:* If we can plan work, we can plan fun. Take out your pocket calendar, look for the next Saturday night and plan on going out to dinner, a play, the movies, bowling, ice skating, or for a long drive in the country. While looking through your calendar, we will bet you came across two dozen work-related items and dates. Now, plan some kinds of things that the whole family can be involved in from day trips to vacations. This can do wonders to reduce the stress levels within the family.
3. *Reduce work hours if they are excessive:* There is a law of diminishing returns and you just might owe it to yourself and your family to spend less time at work. Even if yours is the type of job where you must be in at 8

<sup>19</sup>Veninga and Spradley, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

A.M. and you are still on the move at 10 P.M., there may be a chance that you can get away during the day, if for no other reason than to break your routine. Go to a movie, take a walk, join a health club and exercise during the day.

4. *Exercise:* Dr. George Williams, Director of the Institute of Health Research in San Francisco, believes that exercise is one of the best ways to counteract stress. He says that exercise can relieve the accumulation of stress for the day and, therefore, put you in a better position to accept stress the next day.<sup>20</sup> If you have had a particularly stressful day, stop at your favorite bowling lanes and play a game or two. It is marvelous therapy to hit those pins and relieve your anxiety.
5. *Treat yourself good:* There are many ways in which you can be good to yourself. You might want to "have a night on the town." Go to the bank, take out \$200, and go to the best restaurant, order the best meal and wine and enjoy! Purchase that new fishing rod that you've admired for some time. When it comes to pampering yourself, let your imagination run wild, and do it!
6. *Get a proper start on the day:* Many of us just get started poorly each day. We know it takes 30 minutes to get to work and so we arise at 7:25 and cram washing, breakfast, and dressing between then and 7:30 so that we can be in by 8. Of course, we are exaggerating, but this scenario is probably accurate in some phase of your life, perhaps when going to visit your relatives, to church, or to a sports event. When it comes to starting the day, allow enough time for a proper breakfast and extra time in case there are traffic problems. You will arrive at work much more relaxed and mentally ready to have a solid day. You should also know if you are a morning, afternoon, or night person. That is, know what time of day you can concentrate best and do your mental work; do the routine work at some other times. Don't try to do your high-stress jobs when you are tired; they just won't get done as effectively as when you are fresh.
7. *Learn how to relax:* Practice the relaxation techniques that are discussed later in this chapter.

---

## RELAXATION, EXERCISE, DIET

**Medical caution:** This section of the chapter will deal with some approaches to RED that may be entirely new to you or they may be things that you may not have used for years. Read through the remainder of the chapter, decide what is best for you, discuss your findings with a competent physician, and then move on to genuine stress management.

<sup>20</sup>"How to Deal with Stress on the Job," *U.S. News & World Report*, March 13, 1978, pp. 80-81.