



October 2009 [\(pdf - available within 24 hours of this email\)](#)

By Donna Zajonc



Too Much Stress is NOT the Problem

"I am so stressed out!" shouted a good friend. I suggested she take some time off but she said she didn't want to deal with the hundreds of emails in her inbox when she returned to her office.

I have heard similar statements from my clients in recent months. "If I just stay focused and keep working harder I will be able to deal with the stress of too much work." Daily life has become so fast-paced that our beliefs and strategies about how to work with stress have not matured at the same pace. **Many of us still hold on to the old mode of thinking that if we just work harder we will deal with the stress. Now is the time to update that belief.**

In the last couple of decades "time management" seminars were all the rage. They sold fancy calendars with detailed tips about how to organize your day. The premise of the time management seminars is based on the idea that if you can get yourself organized, you will be able to complete all you have to do. That premise does not match-up for today's crazy, hectic, over-the-top pace of life.

The premise for today's work is very different. It goes like this: ***It is impossible to complete all the work I have. There will always be another task to complete, more information to absorb and more to learn. Therefore, the secret to my success is not "time management". The secret to my success is "energy management."***

Based upon this new premise, there is now an opportunity to change your relationship with stress and work over-load. Fulfilled and successful leaders are learning the secret to energy management and have discovered that it is possible to remain refreshed, creative and feeling good even in the midst of many challenges.

Stress is NOT the issue. Human beings have experienced stress from the beginning of time. It is learning to RECOVER from the stress that is the secret to remaining resilient and happy--even in the midst of very stressful situations.

What do I mean by "recover?" A good analogy is lifting weights. We increase muscle strength when we lift every other day. We hurt ourselves if we lift

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Book of the Month

The Power of Full Engagement

by

Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz



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"After reading their research and case studies, you will be convinced that you do not have to burn the midnight oil to be productive."

~Donna

Bainbridge Leadership Center

every day and risk tearing a muscle and experiencing a painful set-back. Taking time off in between the weight-lifting session is the recovery time needed to replenish the tissues so they can get stronger.

A 2002 research report by Professor Richard Dienstblier from the University of Nebraska studied the concept of toughness and recovery. He found that: "Repeated workouts that are too intense to allow for complete recovery may cause endurance athletes to experience "staleness" a syndrome that is characterized by increased psychological symptoms of anxiety and increase in cortisol rates." (Cortisol is commonly called the stress hormone. It increases the rate of heart attacks, diabetes and many other diseases.)

Successful athletes have discovered that recovery is as important as focused work sessions for their body to excel and grow strong. But the concept of recovery is only just beginning to be recognized in the work place as essential for growth and sustained levels of high performance.

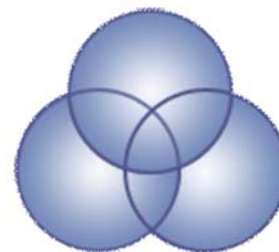
Human resource staff encourages their workers to take breaks and enjoy their vacation benefits. The forty hour work week was born out of the awareness that we need time off. Even the Biblical reference to the Sabbath reflects the ancient awareness of the role rest plays for all human beings.

Our laws reflect the concept of recovery but many individuals believe rest is for every one else and doesn't apply to them. "I am tough and resilient. I don't need time off." I also hear, "It is important for my team to see the boss working long hours." At that rate, the boss will be exhausted and sick (or worse) if they do not update their beliefs about recovery in creating a sustained high level of work performance.

Here are a few strategies to help you incorporate recovery into your work life:

1. See recovery as an investment in high performance. Taking time for recovery is not something to resist. Rather, embrace recovery as a secret ingredient to your success.
2. Plan your work in sprints rather than marathons. Work in 90-120 minute sprints with periods of 15-20 minutes of recovery in between. While working in these 90-120 minute sprints, minimize distractions and truly concentrate for that allotted time. You will discover more productivity during these short sprints than multi-tasking all day.
3. During the 15-20 minute break, do things that refresh you. Staff away from office gossip or other negative situations. A brief walk or soaking up some sunshine resets your neurological system and prepares you to focus again.
4. Breathe deeply. Even 6-7 deep breaths at any time during the day can refresh you. These are long, deep breaths. The in-breath matches the long out-breath. Try it now. It is amazing how just breathing deeply can renew our energy.
5. Exercise. Under stress, exercise is often the first thing to go. It should be the first thing we do. Just a few minutes of walking can help us recover. Ideally you need 30 minutes of aerobic exercise at least 3 times a week.
6. Check in with your body. If you are listening to your body, it will tell you whether it needs rest. Cultivate new body awareness through yoga, deep breathing or other mindfulness techniques.
7. Learn to say "No." The new premise that it is not possible to complete all the work demands, means you must become very good at determining what is yours to do and not do. That means using the first

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Donna's Speaking Calendar

October 26, 2009
Public Service: A Calling or a Craving?
for Oregon Municipal Finance Officers Assoc.
Portland, OR

November 15, 2009
Creating Powerful Partners
for Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks
Anchorage, AK

If you are looking for a dynamic keynote speaker, or workshop facilitator for your next conference or team retreat, think of me.
[\(click to email me\)](#)

Favorite Leadership Article

[The Art of Powerful Questions](#)

by Eric E. Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs

Check out other great articles at their website:
www.theworldcafe.com

Quote of the Month

"The most common source of mistakes in management is the emphasis on finding the right answer rather than

word that most of us learned as babies: "no." Set boundaries and agree to clear work loads and expectations.

And finally, ask yourself this question: "How can I introduce the concept of recovery into my life?"

These strategies will help you begin a new leadership path toward understanding that stress is not the problem. It is the lack of recovery that is the challenge. If you want to be a good leader, you must be good to yourself.

Testimonial

"Everyone was pleased by your well-chosen words of wisdom, attention to every detail and audience engagement. I was especially impressed with the way you drew your audience in and had them nodding their heads in agreement with your remarks and completely held their undivided attention."

Jean Wessman
Washington State Association of Counties
Policy Director/Conference Coordinator

"Because Donna is a former elected leader she really knows what it is like to deal with all the demands of public office. Donna helps me focus on what matters most and has started me on a path to a more balanced life while helping me be more effective in my business and public service. Donna is an excellent coach and I highly recommend her."

Jeffrey Quibell
City Councilman, Blue Springs, MO
President - CPros, Inc
2008 Candidate for Mayor

**Planning Your Next Retreat? Need a Great Facilitator?
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the right question."

Peter Drucker

Coaching with Donna!

**Beginning in November
Donna has room for one
new coaching client.**

If you want to end this year with a sense of direction and kick off 2010 with a dynamic plan for your life, coaching may be for you.

Call Donna at 206-780-9300 and we can talk about coaching and what may work for you.

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