

Surviving Workplace Stress

by **Steven D Huff**

You may have heard the one about the two businessmen who were talking several years ago about the economic recession. Jack said, "I'm about to lose my job and our house in foreclosure - but I don't worry about it." Bob, his friend, asked, "How can you not be worried?" Jack answered, "I've hired a professional worrier. He does all my worrying for me. That way I don't have to think about it!" Bob replied, "That's a fantastic idea. But how much does it cost to hire a professional worrier?" "\$50,000 a year," Jack answered. "\$50,000! Where are you going to get that kind of money?" Jack replied, "I don't know. That's HIS worry!"

The stress that comes from worry and frustration is unavoidable. No one is immune to difficulties in the workplace. The key is making sure stress doesn't become distress. Someone said, "Stress is really an integral part of life. We set our whole pattern of life by our stress end-point. If we hit it exactly we live dynamic, purposeful, useful, happy lives. If we go over, we break. If we stay too far under, we vegetate." A certain amount of stress is healthy and motivates us to action, but too much stress causes burnout, fatigue, poor health and a loss of productivity.

Here are a few principles for surviving workplace stress:

- **The Principle of Dedication: Know Who You Want To Please.** You can't please everyone. Just about the time you get one group of people happy, the next group will be upset with you. If you understand your loyalties and your priorities, you will never have to stress about who to please.
- **The Principle of Organization: Set Clear Goals.** There is an old saying that goes like this: "Preparation prevents pressure but procrastination produces it." You can work by either priorities or pressures. Setting clear objectives will help you sort out the important from the urgent.
- **The Principle of Delegation: Don't Try To Do Everything Yourself.** We get tense when we feel like everything depends on us. If you don't learn to delegate, you will become what Harry S. Truman called "a four-ulcer man in a five ulcer job." Try following the advice of Hotel founder Bill Marriott, Sr., "Don't do anything someone else can do for you."
- **The Principle of Relaxation: Take Time To Enjoy Life!** Consider this old saying, "Making a life is more significant than making a living." Lee Iacocca in his days at Chrysler once said, "I'm constantly amazed by the number of people who can't seem to control their own schedule. Over the years, I've had many executives come to me and say with pride, 'Boy, last year I worked so hard that I didn't take any vacation.' I always feel like responding, 'You dummy. You mean to tell me that you can take responsibility for an \$80 million project, and can't plan two weeks out of the year to go off with your family and have some fun?'"