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All Work, No Play

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Many stressors exist within your workplace, and at times it can be very trying. Suppose you're in a situation where others have resorted to violence, or are on the brink of doing so. In other words, you're in an organization or a setting where it's extremely stressful. What can you do on a personal basis to maintain some semblance of balance? In a word: *relax*. It's actually possible to relax while maintaining high intensity.

If you're not able to relax, almost any situation can be nearly fatal. In Japan, golf reputedly has become a killer. By some reports, nearly 5,000 Japanese die on the greens every year because golf courses, believe it or not, are viewed as an extremely stressful place for some people.

Membership fees and green fees are extremely expensive in Japan. In some cases, you have to book a reservation to play months in advance. When you finally get on the course, there are so many people playing before you and after you that you may have as little as six minutes of time per green.

Is this any way to wind down? Of course not. While social customs may dictate that an executive maintain a golf membership, you wouldn't regard golf in this sense as relaxing at all.

Some How Tos for Relaxing

Here are some effective ways to take it easy, despite an ultra-hectic or stressful work environment:

- Blow off steam by attending a basketball, football, or baseball game. You can raise your voice in public or at a sports contest in ways you simply can't otherwise let yelling serve as an outlet for you.
- Bring water with you on the job; even keep a plastic bottle in your briefcase. Sometimes a sip of that refreshing H2O is all you need to change your outlook. Often, when you feel stressed, a small glass of water can make a noticeable dent in how you feel.
- Change your posture. The mere motion of standing up more erectly enables every system of your body to function more effectively. You can't be as stressed when you're standing up straight as when you're slouched over. It's a physiological impossibility.
- Buy a joke book. Whether it's *The Lighter Side* or *The Dilbert Principle*, carry something in your briefcase that you can pop open and, in a few seconds, get a chuckle. I have a pessimistic friend who says, "Let a smile be your umbrella and you're likely to get a face full of rain." The mere act of smiling can change your disposition.
- Take a hot bath. Even among men, this proves to be one of the most popular techniques for reducing stress.

Words from the Wise

*"Difficulties mastered
are opportunities
won."*

- Winston Churchill

- Read something of interest to you. I don't mean work-related reports, depressing newspaper stories, or statistics about bloodshed and violence. Read the sports page, the fashion page, or something that lightens your spirit. Reading is a key stress reducer among both men and women.
- Keep a hand gripper nearby. This could be a tennis ball, or a mechanical hand gripper. Squeeze it a few times throughout the day. Squeezing the gripper can provide a release that satisfies your body's fight or flight response mechanism.
- Count to thirty while holding your breath. Taking a deep breath and holding it in helps many people to relax. When you get to thirty, release your breath slowly over a five-second count. If you can do this several times in succession—thirty seconds followed by five seconds—all the better.
- Call up a friend. You know the one that always has the uplifting observation or the quick joke? Chatting with somebody for five minutes can change your outlook.
- Take a hot or cold shower, whichever feels better for you. Simply going from the medium of air to being under water, changes your outlook.
- Leave nice notes for yourself where you'll see them. For example, if you have a particularly rough working environment, when you get home, sometimes it's refreshing to see a note that says you did a great job today, despite all you had to put up with. Such notes could also be left on your car dashboard, in your calendar, in one of your desk drawers, and in your gym locker.

About the Author

Jeff Davidson, CMC, MBA, is The Work-Life Balance Expert®. A speaker at many large companies, Jeff believes that career professionals today in all industries have a responsibility to achieve their own sense of work-life balance. He supports this quest through his websites www.BreathingSpace.com and www.Work-LifeBalance.net. Jeff can be reached at jeff@breathingspace.com.