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5 Ways to Stress Yourself Out, Be Late For Everything, and Die Young

by Andy Masters, MA, CSP

As humans, it seems we are always finding new ways to sabotage our happiness and productivity in work and in life, even if it's not our intent. While many are already accomplished at these principles, and exercise each daily, below are the “*Top 5 Ways to Stress Yourself Out, Be Late for Everything, and Die Young*”, to be sure we can all focus on employing the most successful and sure-fire ways to run ourselves into the ground.

1. Overload Your Schedule and To-Do List

Rule number one is to be sure you say “*Yes*” to everyone and everything. Take on new responsibilities and commit to tasks there's no way you have time to handle. Coach that third team. Volunteer for that fourth committee. Commit to writing that article for your organization Newsletter. Unrealistically try to jam 17 projects onto your weekend “*To-Do List*”, then go to sleep upset Sunday evening because you only completed 15.

We often try so hard to be superheroes in every phase of our lives, every day—a condition known as “*Superhero Syndrome*.” We succumb to the principles of “*I don't want to disappoint anyone*” and “*I don't want to show anyone that I can't handle it*”. We honorably try to please everyone else first, by putting our own wants and responsibilities last.

We must know when to say “*No*”, and when to say “*Yes, but not right now*.” When we're placed under pressure from co-workers, clients, friends, or even strangers, each day we should be armed with managing expectation phrases such as:

“Just to be up front...”

“Just to give you a heads-up...”

“Just to be realistic based on my schedule right now...”

Don't tell people what they want to hear. Tell people what they need to hear, in order for you to keep your sanity. Don't paint yourself into a corner by over-committing to promises you may not be able to fulfill. Put yourself in a position to succeed, not fail. Exercise the customer satisfaction and stress relief principle: “*Under-promise and over-deliver*.”

The vast majority of stress in life is completely self-inflicted. Either you're in charge of your time, or someone else is in charge of your time. Either you control your schedule, or your schedule controls you.

2. Multitask As Many Things As Possible At Once

If you attempt to do two (*or twelve*) things done at once, you can't get either task done as well, or as efficiently.

Now, the professional multi-tasker might debate: “*But I'm busy—and I'm certainly skilled enough to send an email while I'm also talking on the phone*.” Ahhh, yes....e-mailing and talking. The “*walking and chewing gum*” standard of our technology age.

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However, when you have emailed and spoken at the same time, has this scenario ever happened?:

“I’m sorry, what was that again”, and “Uggh, I accidentally just deleted that!”

There’s a reason some people are able to achieve more, in less time, with higher quality, and less stress. They master this simple but powerful 2-step process:

Prioritize and Focus.

However, while prioritizing means doing the most important thing first, few actually do it. Most prioritize by doing what they feel like doing, and put off what they don’t feel like doing. This is also called *procrastination*.

Tackle your most important task first.

Regarding focus: If you’re worrying about priority number six, or number eleven, or number three while you are trying to complete number one—you can’t get priority number one done as quickly, or with as much quality. Truly focus on priority number one to the best of your ability, finish it, and move to priority number two. You’ll be amazed at the quality, and quantity, of the tasks you’ll complete—under less stress.

3. Do Everything Yourself, Never Ask For Help, and Don’t Delegate Ever Again

“If it’s going to get done right, and if it’s going to get done on time—I might as well do it myself!”

You’re right. You’ve asked for help before. You trusted someone. Then, that someone made you look bad. You tried to delegate—but you got BURNED! Therefore, you swore to STOP DELEGATING FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

“Fool me once!”

Will delegation ALWAYS work? *No, it won’t.* However, what perhaps could you have done more effectively? Were you clear in exactly what was to be performed, and by when? Did the person have the time, training, and resources to perform the task? Did you follow-up before the deadline to double-check progress in case they got off track?

Delegation is a process, a learned skill, and a habit.

By the way, delegation doesn’t have to be a staff of assistants who work for you. It can simply be having someone *help you* with any responsibility you might have when you’re feeling overwhelmed. Help may come from peers, other departments, friends, interns, your spouse, or even your children (*please consult the child labor laws in your state first*).

“A leader isn’t the person running around doing everything themselves. A leader is someone who empowers others to achieve the goals of the organization as a team.”

Establish the pattern of delegating, especially on smaller or quicker tasks, to create a habit. Look at your “To-Do List” and delegate 3, 4, or 5 items before you do anything else. Then devote your time to your big picture goals--and achieve MORE, in less time, with higher quality, and less stress. You will be amazed at what you and your organization can accomplish.

4. Seek Out the MOST Time Possible With Negative and Stressful People

Picture someone in your life that you currently talk to or spend time with, but whenever you hang up with that person phone or walk back in your door, you exclaim to yourself: *“Why do I even TALK TO THIS PERSON? They completely STRESS ME OUT! They are so NEGATIVE and DRAINING!!”*

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That's when your significant other says *"I don't know, but we're going out with them again next weekend."*

Now picture your favorite relative, or an old friend or colleague, in which you think to yourself: *"Wow, I wish I could spend more time with that person. I really miss their company and talking with them on the phone. But, everyone is so busy these days....that's just how life goes."*

There are two types of people in this world: Those who lift people up, and those who bring people down. We have a choice of who we spend our valuable time with.

5. Don't Have Any Fun In Your Life Whatsoever

Here is a great time management concept: Every time you say "YES" to something in your life, you are saying "NO" to everything else. Similarly, every time you say "YES" to someone in your life, you are saying "NO" to everyone else.

What are you saying "Yes" to? Who are you saying "No" to?

Say "Yes" to yourself. Carve out time to schedule a "date" with your spouse, Daddy's night out with your daughter, or Mom's day off with your friends.

Spend 15 minutes or less, and 15 dollars or less, on yourself.

Fifteen minutes per day is just 1/100th of our time

What if you applied just 1/100th of your time towards that fun project or hobby you haven't gotten around to doing, but always wanted to do? What could you enjoy this week? What could you accomplish this year?

Sign-up for guitar lessons. Learn kickboxing. Write your first book. Imagine one city or country in the world that you want to visit before you die, and book the tickets. Today. Watch the movie *The Bucket List* with Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman, and become inspired to go skydiving and eat lunch under the Eiffel Tower.

"Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do, than the things you did." – Mark Twain

Good Luck!

Concentration on these 5 principles is a sure-fire way to stress yourself out, be late for everything, and die young. Of course, for best results, don't forget to sleep poorly, eat unhealthy, and don't exercise. Best of luck...you can do it!

About the Author: Andy Masters, MA, CSP has written 5 books, earned 4 degrees, and has earned the prestigious CSP award of the National Speakers Association (NSA). Andy presents entertaining and impactful programs on leadership, sales/service, and personal development topics. Visit www.Andy-Masters.com or email Andy@Andy-Masters.com for book information and schedule availability.

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