THE DREADED ‘S’ WORD

ARE YOU STRESSED? WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT IT?

PAGES 6-7
STRESSED AND LOVING IT!

HAVE you heard anyone say that they love stress? I haven’t. Usually, the word “stress” is accompanied by groans and complaints. However, there are people who say “I love challenges,” and what do you know, challenges always involve stress! How do we resolve this?

Stress is what the body naturally experiences when it is responding to demanding circumstances. Research shows that stress can either be good or bad.

It’s good when it acts as stimulation to fuel performance, and good stress brings with it a string of benefits. These include improved efficiency, better memory and higher resistance to infection. One 2012 study even shows that stress can make you more socially connected. But stress is bad when it is attached to fear or a threat of some kind, or the stress is severe and extreme.

Interestingly, it’s possible to transform bad stress into good stress with just a change in perception. A study published in Health Psychology in 2012 called Does Perception that Stress Affects Health Matter? found that people who believed that stress is bad for health had a 43% increased risk of dying. However, those who did not see stress as harmful did not have an increased risk of death, even though they experienced the same amount of stress as the other group. When individuals see stress in a positive light, the study showed that their blood vessels remained relaxed in stressful situations.

“Their heart was still pounding, but this is a much healthier cardio-vascular profile,” explains psychologist Kelly McGonigal, who refers to this same study in her popular 2013 TED Talk to Make Stress Your Friend.

So it seems that our bodies respond to stress according to how we view it. If you see stress as bad for you, your body will react accordingly. However if you see a stressful situation as an exciting challenge, your experience can shift to one more akin to excitement, anticipation, “or at least steeled resolve,” says wellness coach Elizabeth Scott. This can convert your bad stress into good stress.

Since stress is a given part of all our lives, here’s one thing we can do to extend the length of our lives and reap the benefits of good stress. Let’s commit today to change our default setting of seeing stress as bad. Stressful situations are opportunities to grow! This is why some people say “I love challenges,” and seem to thrive under pressure. However, let’s not be naive about the effects of bad stress and resort to optimism to help us through all stressful situations. In healthy amounts, we reap the many benefits I listed earlier. But if stress is sustained and severe, not only do the benefits disappear, but the effects become quite the opposite. You’ll find more information on this on pages 6-7.

I hope you enjoy our pages this week. Just remember, stress can be helpful in many instances, it continues to distract our lives in ways we may not necessarily think of straight away. The truth is, everyone wants the latest smartphone. Most people love spending time on the applications that are available, endlessly being “in communican” with friends and acquaintances, or finding out information about anything and everything around us.

We are now expected to be reachable at any time of the day, and be able to find out information at the touch of an icon.

Happiness, however, and stress levels, take a hit. Professor Paul Dolan from the London School of Economics argues that smart phones have made people so distracted from those present around them.

With all attention drawn to the device and what it provides, people tend to not concentrate on family, friends, and building those relationships that really enhance their lives. Dolan warns that this may lead to mental illnesses if it does not stop.

He goes on to name a few mental conditions that have already been attributed to technological advances. These include internet addiction, and Phantom Vibration Syndrome (when people imagine hearing a text or call coming in). If you want to live a healthier, stress-free life, switch off your phone for a while. Pay attention to what is around you, including people you may have been neglecting all this time.

Recent studies have concluded that men who put their mobile phones in their trouser pockets or hang them on their belts have lower sperm count and/or have less active sperm, due to mobile phone radiation.

Studies have shown that excessive use of mobile phones lowers your self-esteem, something that may also be connected with cyber-bullying.

Studies have also shown that children are at a greater health risk than adults. As their skulls are thinner and smaller, they absorb radiation up to 10 times more than adults.
OLL them alive! And while you are at it, put them in the water upside down, head first. That way, they will be disoriented and die without thrashing about. And increase the heat gradually.”

That was poh poh’s advice to Alyssa when she asked her which was the best way to cook lobsters. It seems a tad cruel but it is a foolproof method poh poh swears by.

Interestingly, a domestic home cook’s tip reminded me of an interview where a candidate told the hiring manager he needed the job to get out of the career rut. He went on to share a story of a frog boiled alive as an analogy of him in his comfort zone.

While the self-disclosure belies an honest man, it did not impress the boss. Without mincing his words, the boss gave me a marching order to find someone who is a game changer, masterful at leading change and stretching the boundaries. A tall order, indeed!

At one time or another, wanting to step out of our comfort zone and improve ourselves is a great thing. Imagine how many people start 2014 with such New Year resolutions? Probably many of us! And more often than not, our good intentions go away and we end up not implementing any of our resolutions.

In this article, let us some tips to get out of the comfort zone, stretch ourselves and avoid falling into the panic zone. And to top it all off, achieve our resolutions along the way! (This article draws reference to Karl Rhonke’s CSP Comfort Stretch Panic zone model.)

**COMFORT ZONE**

Comfort zone, as the name suggests is a place where you are comfortable with the way things are. You may be in the same job for the past year, doing something you are already very familiar or good at but not learning much.

It may sound boring but your comfort zone is important, as it is a safe haven. It is a place where you don’t have to take any risk and there is no pressure. If there is no pain, why change?

“I am not going to offer the cliché “no pain, no gain” slant; instead I will share a more compelling quote by David Viscott, author of *Finding your Strengths in Difficult Times* which goes; “If you want to feel secure, do what you already know how to do. But if you want to grow, go to the cutting edge of your competence. This means a temporary loss of security. So, whenever you don’t quite know what you are doing, know that you are growing.”

Chuan, a food scientist is proud to share his story. Upon completing the diploma and after one year of proving his mettle to the manufacturing boys that he has more to offer than just a “lab coat”, he was promoted to a senior role in food production.

His secret of successfully making the transition? Asking himself some very challenging questions.

- What he wants to change
- How much he wants to change
- Will the change enhance his life?
- Does it give him better opportunities?
- What his current strengths are that he can leverage
- What if he doesn’t change?

The answers he duly uncovered provided him the impetus for change.

**PANIC ZONE**

When a person enters the panic zone, he or she becomes overwhelmed by the issues or challenges presented. Success seems impossible and they can’t see light at the end of the tunnel. Let’s take the rubber band as an analogy of stretch. When you extend the rubber band, it starts to stretch due to the pressure.

This is the stretch zone where you are truly developing yourself – learning, growing, challenging yourself and gaining new experience to realise your full potential.

If the tension is too much, the elasticity gives way and breaks. This is the panic zone.

**A STRETCHED OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!**

Phoebe, a young and upcoming marketing leader is cutting her teeth in the regional marketing role. Identified as a global talent, she was assigned a string of countries in Asia Pacific, a region now becoming the go-to channel for MNC high potentials to exercise their entrepreneurial chops.

From the get go, she introduced a long overdue revamp to the marketing function and processes which will lead you to new possibilities.

The brief encounter invoked an AHA moment that sets Chuan scurrying in search of ways to get out of his comfort zone. He went on to share a story of a frog boiled alive as an analogy of him in his comfort zone.

**STRETCHED ZONE**

Chuan is a pragmatic guy and holds dear to the belief that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” As expected, he did not storm ahead to do anything radical like skydiving or F1 racing to get out of his comfort zone. Instead he enrolled himself in a practical culinary course.

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**FINAL THOUGHTS**

Stretch for life! Just like a rubber band, we are built for stretch. For companies building their talent pipeline, here’s some advice: stretch your talents, don’t break them.

By adjusting the pressure on turning on the optimal heat can result in creative tension, a phrase coined by Dr Peter Senge, referring to a “situation where disagreement or discord ultimately gives rise to better ideas or outcomes.

For you talents out there, don’t be stuck with New Year resolutions which you broke and then repeat year after year.

To get out of your comfort zone, start by asking: “What needs to change? Why do you want the change? What do you get out of it? What if you don’t change? How do you make the change?”

Once you get past that, maintain the stretch by pushing your personal boundaries. Know thyself – your strengths, capabilities and areas of development. Have reviewers weigh in with their feedback and develop a thick skin, ask how you are doing as often as you can!

Let go of your familiar, comfortable habits of thoughts and stay open for new thought processes which will lead you to new possibilities.

Anna Tan is a bean counter who found her calling in HR. Her journey in corporate HR has led her to pen “STRETCHED!” Unleashing Your Team’s Potential by Coaching the Rubber Band Way where she likened human potential as flexible and agile like the rubber band.
The 2013/2014 Towers Watson Staying@Work Survey has found some intriguing insights about how companies approach issues about the health of their employees, and how their employee’s health influences productivity.

Companies that are highly effective in their health programmes and workforce management are more likely to adopt a multi-faceted, holistic approach to health and productivity (Hi&P), the study found. Such an approach would include a focus on data, the commitment and support of senior leadership, and effectively integrating technological tools.

Stress in particular was found to be the number one workforce risk in Asia, with its sources still obscure and unidentified. The study found that employers are struggling to tackle it.

Despite the high ranking of stress as a risk, however, when companies in Asia-Pacific were asked about their priorities when developing their Hi&P programmes, only a third cited improving the emotional and mental health of their employees. Additionally, only 26% of employers in Asia currently offer a programme on stress or resilience management.

The top three actions taken by employers to tackle stress seem to be education and awareness campaigns (implemented by 41% of employers), flexible working options (40%) and stress management interventions such as yoga and tai chi workshops (38%). However, many employers take no action.

Fourteen per cent of Asia-Pacific employers said they have implemented none of the programmes suggested in the survey (22% of employers in China, 16% in Singapore, and 10% in India). Only 5% of employers in the United States said the same.

The 2013/2014 Towers Watson Staying@Work Survey was completed between May and July 2013 in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia by a total of 892 employers. In Asia, the survey had 372 respondents from China, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.
By PREMA JAYABALAN
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CALLING WOMEN ON CAREER BREAKS

TALK about creativity and innovation, and you have entered his territory. Ranked as one of the top management thinkers in the world and profiled for generating one of the best ideas of the year by the New York Times in 2004, Charles Leadbeater is a leading authority on innovation and creativity. He is adviser on innovation strategy to a diverse group of clientele that comprise governments and companies around the world. These include the Department for Trade and Industry and the European Commission, the government of Shanghai, BBC, Vodafone, Microsoft, Ericsson, the Royal Shakespeare Company, and many more.

Besides that, Leadbeater is also a highly-acclaimed author of best-selling books on innovation and technology. Most of the big companies I work with are concerned that they are too slow moving, cumbersome and inward looking. They have an inbuilt tendency to become quite conservative and cautious, which means they can be outwitted by nimble, fleet-footed competitors.

So the senior leadership of many large organisations often want to find ways to shake them up, to get new energy into them. “I often say that entrepreneurs are usually ideas in search of assets, whereas large companies are often assets in search of new ideas,” explains Leadbeater when asked on the main concerns of companies today.

This renowned adviser believes that innovation is about coming up with new recipes and new blends of ideas for services, goods and technology, which create better solutions and value for consumers and the wider society.

Creativity, to him is a vital part of most innovation and it is the ability to spot commonalities and ways of seeing things, on which innovation thrives.

However innovation involves a lot more than just creativity. Coming up with ideas is one thing, but making a product work takes technical skills. Understanding how consumers will use it takes skills in marketing and social understanding. Working out how to make money from a good idea takes innovation in business models.

Context is as crucial as creativity. According to Leadbeater, it is essential to be innovative but it has to be in a way that works for the company and the market. He says that there is no point in trying to be completely innovative in a slow moving market with conservative consumers.

When asked if creativity and innovation can be learned and how, this is what he had to say: “Obviously, some people are more open to new ideas and new ways of thinking. They are more curious and more open. It is difficult to take someone who is naturally very cautious and not very curious about the world and make them innovative.

“However, I find that if you can create the right conditions, pose the right challenges, get people to collaborate in the right way, give them time and resources to experiment, then most people enjoy being creative and coming up with new ideas.

“In other words you can create the conditions in which people will allow their innovation to come to the fore. Employees often have more good ideas that companies realise. It’s just that they do not create the conditions for employees to express and articulate those ideas.”

To create and cultivate the culture of innovation and creativity, Leadbeater says that you have to keep people open to the world. This will trigger them to be curious and inquisitive. When this happens, you have to create a highly collaborative culture inside the company so that people with different ideas can come together to mix and blend their thinking.

Being collaborative is critical to most innovation, he says. Companies that are very rigid and hierarchical will find it hard to innovate.

Leadbeater adds that just having good ideas is not enough. They have to be turned into products that people want to buy. So innovative companies need a culture of action to turn ideas into products and services.

For all this to take place, there must be good leadership. He defines good leaders as attractors who pull and attract people to take on bigger challenges which they never thought they could handle.

Charles Leadbeater will be in Kuala Lumpur on April 3. He will be speaking at The Business of Innovation forum organised by The London Speaker Bureau. For more information, visit www.bfino-vation.com.my or call 03-23010988.

By TERRY SMALL
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

SOME foods are fun to eat. It’s even better when they’re good for your brain. Food has the power to heal your brain. The chemical components in what you eat have powerful effects on the way your mind works. My favourite hot weather brain food treat is watermelon. They are a virtual watermelon. Adults, not so much...

However innovation involves a lot more than just creativity. Coming up with ideas is one thing, but making a product work takes technical skills. Understanding how consumers will use it takes skills in marketing and social understanding. Working out how to make money from a good idea takes innovation in business models. Context is as crucial as creativity. According to Leadbeater, it is essential to be innovative but it has to be in a way that works for the company and the market. He says that there is no point in trying to be completely innovative in a slow moving market with conservative consumers.

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And, if that’s not enough: “For three centimes I can eat, drink, and wash my face, all by the means of one of those slices of watermelon you display there on a little table,” says Anatole France in The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard (1881). Watermelon can be put in salads, smoothies, or you can have it as a quick snack.

Or, you could purée watermelon, cantaloupe and kiwi together. Swirl in a little plain yoghurt and serve as refreshing cold soup. Remember, what you eat literally becomes you. You have a choice in what your body acquires. Tointeract with Small, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

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WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the process where stressors, from an exhausting work schedule to looking within ourselves? Were we designed to deal with such bat—the million dollar question is why do we get stressed? Let’s look at the signs and symptoms of stress. The signs and symptoms have been broken down into four main categories: physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms.

PHYSICAL

- Headache
- Drowsiness
- Compulsive eating
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Sleeping problems

EMOTIONAL

- Distress
- Depression
- Anger
- Irritability
- Anxiety

COGNITIVE

- Memory problems
- Loss of concentration
- Poor judgment

BEHAVIOURAL

- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Social withdrawal
- Being easily annoyed
- Neglecting responsibilities

Stress cannot be avoided because it is simply a normal part of our lives. However, we can be an active participant in our stress response. Stress cannot be avoided because it is simply a normal part of our lives. However, we can be an active participant in our stress response.

HOW much StRESS IS TOO MUCH?

HOW DO we DEAL wITH PRessURE?

1. IDENTIFY WHAT makes you STRESS

From all of us, we have to identify what makes us stress. There are different reasons for this. It could be due to the nature of our work or it could be due to the nature of our lives. It could be due to the nature of our workplace or it could be due to the nature of our personal life. When you are thinking about this, you have to consider all of these factors.

2. MANAGE your TIME Wisely and Be more organised

Another way to manage stress is to organize your time wisely. There was always a point for more minutes, more hours, more days per week to accomplish more in each day. The simple joy of living between seasons was gone. The time you have to do the things you love will re-energise you and distract you from stress.

3. TAKE TIME OUT

Make time to do fun activities to de-stress. You need to find hobbies that interest you. Some personal "fun time" is vital to keep yourself healthy. Is your "fun time" a walk in the park, a game of tennis, or a massage. Doing the things you love will re-energise you and distract you from stress.

4. ACCEPT that there will be some THINGS YOU cannot change

Last but certainly not least, embrace the things that you cannot change. Accept mistakes. It is absolutely okay to make mistakes because no human being is perfect. Doing the absolute best that you can is good enough. Accepting the things that you cannot change is the key to your success.

HOW TENSE are YOU?

How many of these can you identify with?

- I have problems sleeping due to the stress
- I find it difficult to get out of bed
- I feel so irritated when I’m delayed or interrupted
- I hardly have time for my family
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If you have ticked five or more of these statements, it is time to re-examine your lifestyle. Based on the facts from the article above, too much stress is certainly unhealthy. Let’s look at the signs and symptoms of stress. The signs and symptoms have been broken down into four main categories: physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms.

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McCarthy has been dubbed the “blackest racing driver in the world,” but hasn’t let disappointments hold him back.

PERSEVERANCE TRUMPS ALL

THE BLACK STIG ON OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

By CINDY YAP
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

He name perry McCarthy will ring a bell to those familiar with Top Gear, the British motoring television show on BBC which began in 1977. The show, which re-launched in 2002, is estimated to have around 350 million viewers per week in 170 different countries.

Being the original Black Stig appearing on the show in 2002 and 2003 behind a full-faced helmet, McCarthy, on the condition of anonymity, was tasked to test lap times for cars tested on the show.

Draped in the Stig’s racing suit, he was known for launching the show’s iconic “Star in a Reasonably Priced Car” segment, where celebrities race round a track in a family car.

After starring in two series, McCarthy had a tragic ending of being shot off the end of a warship’s deck in a rocket-powered vehicle in the series three premiere due to the revelation of his identity.

McCarthy, who was born in Stepney, East London, tells The Leaderonomics Show how he was signed up as the resident test driver by Jeremy Clarkson, the quirky and humor- ous presenter, after meeting him at a party in 2002.

“He told me about plans to re-launch Top Gear and said that they needed a racing driver called The Gimp,” the flamboyant star shares.

“I told him that there’s no way I’m going to be The Gimp!” McCarthy quips. “So he went away and came back with The Stig. That’s when I told him we have a deal.”

The mysterious role of “The Stig” catal- pulled McCarthy to fame and he admits that he has mostly fond memories of his two years on the show.

THE EARLY YEARS

Driving since the 1980s, McCarthy’s 10-year fight to become a Grand Prix driver paid off in 1992 when he had one season driving for the fledgling Andrea Moda, before turning his attention away from Grand Prix to the legendary 24-hour Moda, before turning his attention away from Grand Prix to the legendary 24-hour

Being the original Black Stig appearing on the show in 2002 and 2003 behind a full-faced helmet, McCarthy, who opines that writing turned his luck around.

“Were there many moments where I was leading a major race a long way, then something unfortunate would happen and I would go ‘Why?’ But I’m still here and am still having fun. So I can’t complain much,” he adds.

Being born in an average income family, McCarthy had to work hard to self-finance his racing career. Even after joining Andrea Moda, he had to pay for his own flight tick- ets and miscellaneous expenses.

Although luck wasn’t always on his side, McCarthy considers himself lucky to be given a chance to race and just being alive given the dangerous nature of the sport.

BEING THE BLACK STIG

McCarthy fondly recalls his stint on Top Gear as “good fun”.

“Cars, driving and racing around tracks have been a massive part of my life,” he adds.

“We had celebrities such as Jay Kay (of Jamiroquai) and model Jodie Kidd coming over, where I taught them the finesse of driving cars which were not fast enough to crash. They were all competitive!” he emphasizes.

“I enjoyed the teaching process and watching how they try to get a little bit faster all the time,” he claims.

Secretly was crucial for the show - McCarthy had to put on his helmet right before the security gate of the tracks and had to keep it on all the time, even while eating in the studio canteen.

Even some members of the BBC sen- ior production crew didn’t know it was McCarthy behind that full-faced helmet.

“When I had to speak, I had to put on a fake French accent so that nobody knew it was me!” he recalls.

Having gone through challenge after challenge, McCarthy decided to pen his experiences in a book entitled Flat Out, Flat Broke: Formula 2 The Hard Way which is an honest account of his life struggles in the world of motorsports.

The book, which was laced with end- less witticisms and humour, won critical acclaim for being one of the best ever motorsport books written. It captures his determination in overcoming life obstacles in a comical and entertaining way.

In the book, he brought into the open how he had tricked his way into the F3 paddock posing as a pizza delivery boy for Ayrton Senna and how he doctor newspaper reports to pro- duce fake race results which were then forwarded to sponsors in hope to obtain sponsorships.

“I really enjoyed writing, especially during those ‘aha’ moments in writing,” says McCarthy, who opines that writing turned his luck around.

Ref erred by the United States Sunday Express as a “comedian locked inside a racing driver’s body,” he shares that while being a racing driver is a glamorous life, the journey takes a long time, “especially if you’ve got no money.”

Admitting to talking faster than driving now, McCarthy went on to carve out a suc- cessful career as an after-dinner speaker, sharing his experiences with business lead- ers all over the world.

Asked on his advice for a budding entre- preneur, he replies: "Keep the dream. Do not place money first above everything else, but ponder on these questions: Do I want this? Do I believe this could work? If your answer is in the affirmative, give it your all!”

He adds: “Pondering about money all the time would restrict your creativity, as you are constantly thinking that it won’t work.”

"But if you really believe something’s possible, then the risk will be lessened by your energy, hard work and motivation to make it happen.”

“Follow your passion first and only worry about the financing once you had put in your best to make it work.”

KEY NUGGETS ON OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

With the many disappointments in his life, the 52-year-old father of three daugh- ters attributes his ability to overcome these hurdles to having passion.

“You can only be disappointed if you try to do something you are passionate about and it goes wrong. As much as I understand failure, I also understand success. What I really don’t understand is not try- ing,” he stresses.

He emphasises: “Disappointment is when things haven’t come together the way you wanted. So if you fall, just get back up, dust down and try to get the things you wanted the way you wanted and make sure it works.

“It hurts, of course, but you have to build up an immune system or barriers,” he adds.

Whenever he goes through bad moments, he looks back and thinks to himself: “Hang on, you’ve won that race. You’ve been empowered. You’ve been fast, then slow. You’ve done it before. You can do it again.”

McCarthy also emphasises on the impor- tance of having fun along the way.

“Sometimes, you got to give yourself a pat on the back, realign, smell the roses and tell yourself that you can do it,” he muses.

“You’re only here once. Therefore, keep fighting, keep thinking and keep going. Let’s do everything really well and but in the midst of it all, enjoy the journey,” McCarthy concludes.

To watch this video and for more vid- eos on The Leaderonomics Show visit leaderonomics.tv. Perry McCarthy is a speaker with the London Speaker Bureau.

You can only be disappointed if you try to do something you are passionate about and it goes wrong. As much as I understand failure, I also understand success. What I really don’t understand is not trying.
GOOFSRABA, HOW TO KEEP CALM AND NOT LOSE YOUR COOL

By IMRAN HASHIM
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“GOOFSRABA”
If you are a fan of movies featuring comedian Adam Sandler, you would recall this mantra from his 2003 movie Anger Management (in case you have not watched it, spoilers ahead). That one particular word is supposed to calm you down, consciously distract you from raging anger – at least according to anger management guru Dr Buddy Rydell played by Jack Nicholson.

A brief reintroduction to the movie: Dave Buznik (played by Adam Sandler) is sentenced to anger management therapy after losing his temper on a flight. Claiming that he’s innocent, Buznik agrees to attend Dr Rydell’s session to prove he’s in full control of his emotions.

Except that he’s not – Buznik has been repressing his emotions since he was traumatised from public humiliation as a child, and that has affected his career and private life.

What ensues is your stereotypical American slapstick comedy as Buznik has to live through Rydell’s unorthodox methods with hilarious consequences, exposing Buznik’s years of bottled-up emotional issues, and more worryingly, Rydell’s bizarre personality.

Very quickly their adventures take a turn for the worse, making Buznik a ticking time bomb right till the end of the movie. With the therapy close to an absolute failure, Buznik eventually takes matters into his own hands.

Defying Rydell’s advice he attempts to resolve all his issues for good. All ends well when it is revealed it was a set up all along by his sympathetic girlfriend who only wanted the best for Buznik. While the movie feels like a no-brainer feel-good comedy, there are some takeaways applicable to everyday life.

Because really, with everything that goes on in our daily rituals, you might not realise you’re a walking ticking bomb just like Dave until your timer goes off. Read on for some ways to keep calm and not lose your cool, especially at work.

1. DEAL WITH YOUR PAST

In the opening scene, a young Buznik is the oddball in the neighbourhood struggling with his adolescent fondness for a girl. Just as he is about to kiss the girl of his dreams, he is caught with his pants down, courtesy of a local bully, scaring Buznik for life as he shies away from public affection.

Most often, we convince ourselves to just forget the past and let it be bygone. In the process, we silence our inner voice desperately patronising us to deal with the problem at hand. Eventually it will go away, at least that’s what we believe. Until our past catches up and the proverbial can of worms uncovers itself.

At one point in the movie, Buznik has to confront his past in the form of his bully – whom has miraculously turned over a new leaf and become a monk. Buznik is supposed to demand an apology from his former bully, until Rydell provokes the monk further, causing havoc in the monastery.

While the outcome could have been better, Buznik did one thing right: He faced his troubled past (or rather the root of it) so that he could move on.

The next time you are about to lose your temper, ask yourself if your temperament goes a long way back. Is it linked to an experience earlier on in your career? You might be surprised with what you will find.

2. TALK TO YOUR INNER DEMONS

Buznik holds back a lot of things in his life. He knows perfectly well his boss takes all the credit for his effort with no promotion in sight.

Even when his girlfriend pushes him to have a talk with his boss to ask to be promoted, he lets the matter pass, believing he will get it one day.

To make things worse, despite his long-term relationship with his girlfriend, Buznik is unsure of their future together.

Compounding the issue is his uneasiness with his girlfriend’s closeness with her male best friend. Yet he doesn’t seem to be proactive in dealing with the issues in sight. Not until every thing falls to pieces.

Again, it is so much easier to just let matters take their own course and hope for the best. Unfortunately, it could mean that you’re just hiding a dead fish under a carpet until it gets rotten and eventually turns so bad that everyone suffers.

Just like Buznik when his life went away and his girlfriend left him for Buddy because of his unwillingness to change for the better.

By now you would have realised your inner demon is almost always critical of you. Some might argue these are just your secondary thoughts and should be ignored but the reality is they are a projection of your subconscious. Left unchecked for too long, you might risk clinical depression down the road.

So go ahead, have some quality time with yourself. Tame the dragon within.

3. GOOFSRABA AND SEEK HELP

In all fairness, Buznik did not exactly flip out to result in his mid-flight arrest. The entire fracas did not even involve him assaulting anyone, contrary to what he was accused of doing.

In fact, Buznik was just another well-mannered passenger trying to get a pair of headphones from the flight attendant. At least that’s what he thought.

Well into his first anger management therapy session, Buznik finds himself surrounded by a group of questionable characters.

Amongst the freak show, Buznik is convinced he’s fine and doesn’t need to be in the court mandated therapy.

That is, until he is involved in a bar fight, resulting in a longer term session with the crazed therapist.

Unsurprisingly, Buznik then realises he needs help.

Just like Buznik, we don’t usually feel the need to seek help, especially when it requires speaking our hearts out to solve our emotional conundrums. Not until there is a trigger that makes us recognise the problem.

It could be that we are reluctant, or just unfamiliar/unaware of the various channels available to address our deepest root.

It could be an unhealthy fear of failure, or not knowing how to communicate properly.

Remember, there are more people who care about you than you think. Talk about it, and let it out!

4. LET LOOSE, GIVE YOUR ALL

Speaking of letting it out, towards the end of the movie Buznik decides he doesn’t need Rydell to guide him with his short fuse dilemmas. He resorts to his own approach of facing his fears – he has to, as he thinks Rydell is about to propose to his girlfriend at a baseball game.

What he does next is his personal breakthrough as he runs to the middle of the field to put a stop to Rydell’s attempt to steal his girlfriend away.

For someone as elusive as Buznik to speak his heart out to his love in front of a huge crowd, it is a bold and brave move.

It pays off, and rightly so. Now ask yourself this: When was the last time you did something exciting? Did you go out of your comfort zone to experience anything new? Work can get stressful, and turning to your creative side is one way to help reduce your feeling of anger and stress. Try it, and you’ll notice the difference.

The movie concludes with Buznik finally happy with his life, post-anger management therapy. Herealises that his troubled past self was due to his own doing, holding him back from living his true potential.

Perhaps closer to home, it’s time to have a reality check – are you living your full true self or is there something sabotaging it?

Are there issues you need to address so you can give up to your potential both at work and personally?

Maybe the best way to conclude this piece is with a quote from Dr Rydell: “Remember, temper is the only thing you can get rid of by losing it.”

IMRAN HASHIM is a talent acceleration manager with Leaderonomics. When things get undesirably away, he prefers to keep it cool and not let anger hijack his emotions. Rarely can anger be diffused by further aggravating it. To find out more about Leaderonomics’ talent acceleration programmes, write to people@leaderonomics.com
Fix Your Posture

Not only does powerful body language give you confidence, it also helps to reduce stress. People who assume open, confident, strong poses find their stress levels reduced, even if just for a few minutes.

Amy Cuddy, associate professor of business administration in the negotiation, organisations and markets unit at Harvard University, studies body language and the impact it has on our hormones. She and her team categorised various body positions as “high power” and “low power” poses. High power poses are positions that are more open and relaxed while low power poses are closed and guarded. The visual below shows some examples of high and low power poses. The poses on the top row are high power, while the ones on the bottom row are low power.

Cuddy and her team conducted a study on the impact of high power and low power poses on 42 students. First, a saliva sample was taken from each subject and their testosterone and cortisol (the hormone released in response to stress) levels were measured.

The results showed that high power poses increased testosterone by 20% while their cortisol levels decreased by 25%, indicating that body language has a high level of impact on our body’s hormones.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!

While it’s not exactly healthy to gobble down a whole box of doughnuts, sometimes stress can be easily intensified by simple things like having low sugar levels.

While it’s not exactly healthy to gobble down a whole box of doughnuts, sometimes stress can be easily intensified by simple things like having low sugar levels. Eating can help turn your mood around even after a few bites. Fatty acids and spicy food might even help a little extra. Just make sure you eat in moderation. Here are some examples of food that helps to relieve stress.

I. Relax with some avocado and banana. The high level of potassium contained in these fruits help keep your blood pressure low.

II. Calm your frazzled nerves with a nice cup of tea. Studies have shown that people who drink tea reduce their stress levels more quickly.

III. Have some swiss chard and other leafy vegetables to balance your body’s stress hormone, also known as cortisol.

IV. Snack away on some whole wheat crackers. The carbohydrates boost your energy and trigger the brain to release serotonin, which works as a feel good chemical.

V. Yes, the number one happy food – chocolates! Research has indicated that dark chocolate lowers your stress hormone levels. Chocolate also contains endorphins which makes you happy.

TURN OFF YOUR PHONE

Even if you’re not stressed about work, constant attention seeking notifications from your phone can increase stress levels.

If you’re feeling stressed out, turn off your phone for a few hours, especially if it is after working hours, and have a stress-free evening. It also helps you achieve a healthier balance between work and your personal life.

MAKE DECISIONS

Making big decisions can be a little overwhelming at times, and you don’t want to rush them. However, if the pending decision is the reason your stress levels are sky high, trust your gut and just make the decision.

Our brains have a way of synthesising happiness even if we make the “wrong” decision. So as long as the decisions we make do not have serious long-term consequences, don’t waste so much time being stressed out about the decision.

One easy way for Malaysians to practise this is by not taking such a long time to decide where to eat!

EXERCISE

Exercising doesn’t seem like the most fun thing to do when you feel like pulling your hair out. But exercising can help you feel so much better. Exercise prepares your body for stress, because it thinks you are in a stressful situation.

For example, if you go for a jog, your body thinks you are running for your life. Your brain releases chemicals to fight the stress, which leads to a high level of endorphins once you’re done.

LAUGH OUT LOUD

Laughing works as an instant remedy for many negative situations. Studies show that people who laugh the “most heartily,” show bigger reduction in stress levels when watching a funny movie. Cliche as it may sound, laughter really is the best medicine. So when you’re worked up, take a break and watch something funny for five to 10 minutes.

MEDITATE

Meditation is an extremely beneficial way to calm yourself down. It improves your focus, and clears the distractions in your mind. Just sit comfortably and take deep and slow breaths, focusing your attention on your breaths and away from all the stressful thoughts.

Here is a breathing exercise you can try:

I. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.

II. Breathe in through your nose. You should breathe in enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. If you have difficulty breathing in this way, then try the next exercise while lying on the floor instead.

III. Breathe out slowly through your mouth, push out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. Exercising out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles.

IV. Repeat this exercise for a few minutes. Try to breathe in and out slowly, and try to fill your lungs with air.

FIGHT LONG-TERM STRESS NOW

These tips will help you beat stress quickly, but if you find yourself feeling this way regularly, you may be facing a more chronic problem. Identify the key source of your stress and do something about it.

Sometimes, a simple step like changing your expectations can make a huge difference.


STOP DILLY-DALLYING
GET IT DONE ALREADY

By ZARA JAYNE
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I'll finish my assignment later since the deadline is pretty far away.” I'll start my diet tomorrow instead. “I'll clean the house next week since I'm too busy now.” Don't these statements seem all too familiar to you? Procrastination is derived from the Latin verb procrastinare, which is the term used to delay something until another time. According to Joseph P. Ferrari, author of the book Procrastination and Task Avoidance: Theory, Research, and Treatment, this term is commonly used in Latin texts especially about the military force of the Romans. He says that the “Roman use of this term seemed to reflect the notion that deferred judgement may be necessary and wise, such as when it is best to wait the enemy out and demonstrate patience in military conflict.”

The problem is that we seem to have taken the term and used it even when it is unnecessary and unwise. We often procrastinate to escape the things we don’t like or don’t want to do. As a result of this kind of behaviour, it causes us even more stress.

When we procrastinate, laziness creeps in and then last minute work happens. This is when we usually get yelled at for poor quality work because it isn't our best. We could have done better but procrastination prevents us from doing so. The question is why do we procrastinate especially at a young age? We know there are consequences in postponing our tasks, but why do we still do it?

1. PARENTS
Parents can be a major factor in procrastinating. When a father doesn’t want to see the doctor sooner or a mother is postponing her chores, a child will also follow in these footsteps. This attitude of avoiding completing tasks the soonest, can be picked up at a very tender age. According to Dr Bruce Lieke who is a psychologist, children may develop procrastination when they have “over-functioning parents” or in simple terms, parents who do everything for their children. This discourages independence and self-control in their children.

We may procrastinate in doing our chores around the house when our mother always does them for us. Even with a simple task like washing the dishes, we avoid it because we know our mother will do it in the end.

How then can we stop procrastinating? Procrastination brings more bad than good. How can we prevent procrastination from taking over our lives and start taking action?

1. BE INDEPENDENT & RESPONSIBLE
Our parents will only be there in our lives for a certain period of time. Stop letting them spoon-feed you! As you grow older, more things need to be done on your own from paying the bills to meeting deadlines at work.

Procrastination won’t get you that far. If your parents procrastinate, you don’t have to follow them too. Set a better example. Step out of your comfort zone and be more willing to achieve greater things.

2. CONTROL FEAR
According to author Marc Chernoff, we have to “stare it down” in order to conquer it. “Connect to your fear, feel it in your body, realise it and steadily address it,” he writes. Defeat it by harnessing it. Be brave and build that courageous momentum. Replace your fears with boldness and fill them with “I can” instead of “I can’t.”

Fear doesn’t easily go away but one step at a time can help you get through it. Also, stop trying so hard and lower down your expectations! Since everyone makes mistakes, embrace them. If you get rejected because of your work or even the person you’ve been crushing on, it’s alright. You’ll survive; it’s not the end of the world. Learn from all your failures.

According to writer Becky Ryan, “successful people don’t see failure as catastrophic, they see it as a good data point to guide their next attempts.”

3. FIND INSPIRATION
Find something or someone that can inspire you. It could be a blog, a family member, a friend or someone you know who can be your mentor. Talk to someone who motivates you to do more or be more than you are now. According to Celestine Chua, the founder of Personal Excellence, our behaviours are influenced by the people we mix with. “Identify the people/friends/colleagues who trigger you – most likely the go-getters and hard workers – and hang out with them more often,” she writes.

Through this, we can catch their spirit, and it can drive us to carry out the tasks we need to do. Procrastination is a habit that can go away. It is not permanent unless you make it to be. When you start procrastinating, you have the power to stop too.

Keep going forward and break out from your laziness and excuses. Start completing assignments sooner rather than later to ease the burden of last minute work.

Be an overcomer, not a procrastinator! Zara Jayne is a passionate university student who believes we can be more when we decide to procrastinate less!
In HR Talk, we pick a human resources (HR) related topic and gather a few HR experts to share their opinions on it. If you have any questions about the HR industry, do drop us an email at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com. We would love to hear from you.

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A Google search on the myths and misconceptions about HR churns out about 373,000 results in 0.3 seconds. Go to a dinner event, mention you are from HR and guests will let you in on the latest trending topic: 50 reasons not to date a Human Resources person.

The one mostly joked about is, “When they want something from you, they will call, email, leave a post-it and make you miserable until they get it.”

As HR professionals, we sometimes wonder if we should sigh or laugh at these stereotypes, but most of the time we take it in good faith, as most professionals usually do. But perceptions persist. Here are five myths and misconceptions we have recently heard:

NO. 1 Myth: HR people don’t know numbers.
The absolute truth: We may not be accountants but it is a critical skill we must possess in HR. Having nifty skills with financial spreadsheets also helps and provides that little edge to process numerical or financial data in order for us to analyse data to make informed decisions on how and what will impact the lives of employees we answer to.

The absolute truth: HR professionals work hard to make ends meet and to create a healthy, competitive work environment for the employees we answer to. It isn’t always easy getting to work only to be met by an avalanche of emails or questions from employees of all levels demanding to know the whys, whos, whats or hows – and they want the answer now.

It’s not always about saying “yes” or “no” – it’s about making and contributing to the winning solution for all stakeholders.

There are times you have to make a call which may be unpopular, but will in the long run, bring the success the business needs.

NO. 4 Myth: HR is all about administrative and routine tasks, nothing strategic.
The absolute truth: HR has evolved from being an administrative function to a strategic portfolio in recent years. Talent management has been the buzz word of the decade and it is probably the most complicated strategic plan as it involves dealing with human beings who have very different wants and needs in their career path.

Hiring, retention, talent pool management, training, job rotations and remuneration of talents are some of the examples of the strategic initiatives that HR professionals deal with on a daily basis in ensuring that the most important asset of the organisation is engaged and in return helps increase productivity for the organisation.

NO. 5 Myth: HR is only for women.
The absolute truth: HR is a very unfair profession and has no gender bias. There is an abundance of men who are leading HR functions in many large multinationals and government agencies today.

While focus seems to be on the women agenda, there are still a few good men whom we should not disregard as well.

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