



Workplace Stress? Sidestepping Stress on the Job by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Did you ever notice how when your boss, client, or co-worker has a bad day, it can really put a cramp in yours?

Fascinating Fact: It has been reported that the highest incidence of heart-attacks occurs at 9:00 on Monday mornings. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2005/BUSINESS/02/03/monday.pressure/index.html>) Coincidence? While it is frustrating and can be infuriating to have to deal with co-workers who are unreasonable or unreliable, it's also likely that we will encounter one or two along the way. So we need some tools. To the untrained eye, there is a fine line between personality quirks or eccentricities and true pathology. A co-worker or employer may be clinically intact but personally "quirky," or just going through some dreadful personal problem. Stress happens. It happens to us all, and it happens every day. How we cope will determine its impact.

Internal Stress-Triggers are determined by individual bio-chemistry, (*e.g. number of endorphin receptor sites, heredity, predisposition toward addictive disease, sensitivities/allergies, etc.*).

External Stress-Triggers may be determined by conditioning (*e.g. how you saw your parents handle stress, witnessing addictive behaviors acted out, environmental factors, relationships, quality of life, the media, job satisfaction, etc.*).

Could You Be Increasing Your Own Stress Level?

Here are 4 women's responses to the exact same event, a flat tire:

1. "Oh, no! My life is ruined. Hello? Suicide Prevention?"
2. "What a pain! Oh well, I'll call AAA and then get on with my day."
3. "Gee! I'm glad I took that Auto Shop class. This'll be a piece-a-cake!"
4. "Whoa - That AAA guy was a babe! This must be my lucky day!"
5. See? How we experience an event determines its "stress value" for us!

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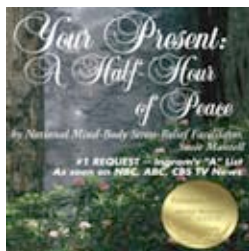
Side-stepping a verbal "swing":

The anger, sarcasm and insults that people hurl are a "neon" display of their own fear, anxiety, depression and disappointment. The more we can remember that, the healthier our immune systems, self-esteem and relationships will be.

Many hasty and unkind words have been avoided with this whimsical but highly effective technique, allowing you to think and respond later, calmly and mindfully. When your boss is on the warpath, ask yourself, *"Will this matter in a month?"* If the answer is "Yes," you have something that needs attention, but if not, try to keep perspective, and try the following whimsical tool:

- As the first salvo is fired, freeze the moment.
- Inhale balance and reason through the top of your head, flowing down to your feet, into the ground beneath you.
- Bringing awareness into the lower half of your body, feel stability and power.
- Now - just above the speaker's head, imagine an airplane with an advertising banner attached to its tail.
- Visualize the words coming out of the speaker's mouth, but before they can reach you, watch them float up and attach themselves to the banner as it sails on by, out of your field of vision. *(This works with a scathing memo or email too.)*
- Realize they're just words, they're in the air, and they'll be gone in a minute.
- Keep breathing and repeat three times, "This, too, shall pass."
- Remember: Life really *is* short. Do your job. Care about doing it well and keeping it. But first, care for your health and well-being!

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