

HOW TO BE STRESSED FOR SUCCESS!

Part of the Humor Hint Series

by Patt Schwab, Ph.D.

Humor is not a joke! When it comes to reducing stress, humor can help put our problems into perspective. Here are a couple quick ways to try it out:

1. Choose one time of the day to worry.

Day or night, when worrisome things come up, jot them down and save them for your "Worry Time." (After lunch is good because it's not a notoriously productive time anyway.)

Allow yourself 15 minutes (max!) to worry. Pace around, flail your arms, chew your fingernails, eat chocolate, cry, look serious, shuffle papers. Do whatever you need to do to express your worrying. If you don't finish in 15 minutes, leave the rest for the next day! You may even want to add that you are worried about not fitting all your worries into the allotted time!

2. Look for an alternative to stress.

You and your family are in a restaurant. The service brings new meaning to the term "wait-person." You have some choices: you can work on that coronary you've been postponing, you can grouse about the service loudly enough that the server hears you and long enough that you depress yourselves with your sniveling, or . . . you can play Menu Charades!

Act out items on the menu for the others to guess. A little dramatic flair can turn the "Stuffed Islandic Flounder," or even "Tofu," into theatrical masterpieces. Kids love Menu Charades, you end up in a great mood and,

best of all, the commotion brings the server running!

3. Take a lesson from Lawrence Welk.

Last summer the evening commute on the Seattle to Bellevue 520 bridge was oozing along at two-to-three m.p.h. What made last summer different was the man holding a Bubble Bear out his car window. As he squeezed the plastic bear the bubbles floated in the still air. Nearby drivers relaxed, smiled and even pointed out especially big bubbles to each other.

4. Remember what is important.

Keep a picture of your family, your pet, or your favorite vacation trip on your desk. Photocopy your biggest commission check and keep it in your wallet. Make a sachet of cedar chips from a backpacking trip for your briefcase.

Keep something nearby to remind you of what is important in your life and to help you keep your perspective when stress starts to mount.

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Dr. Patt Schwab speaks internationally on the topics of managing change and using humor to enhance the workplace environment. She would enjoy hearing your ideas. Write her at:

Patt Schwab, Ph.D., CSP

FUNDamentally Speaking

9401 45th Ave. NE; Seattle, WA 98115

Voice: (206) 525-1031

Fax: (206) 525-8960

Email: PattSchwab@aol.com

