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## Respect Your Speed Limits

One good way to cultivate peace in your life is to improve your stress management skills. Stress in all its forms creates severity, coldness and intolerance. To understand what I mean, you need only compare a flexed muscle to one that is relaxed. Relaxed muscles make you soft and flexible, whereas tensed muscles make you stiff and rigid and create tension.

Some people divide stress into two types, positive and negative, but I have a hard time seeing it that way. All stress is negative as far as I am concerned. The flow I experience in my daily work when everything progresses smoothly is something completely different, in my view, than what we usually call stress.

The work pace these days is often exaggerated. Changes fly by at a dizzying speed and we're all expected to keep up. The Internet and e-mail have so quickened communication that when people write to you, they want answers NOW.

Do we even have time to think anymore? Do we take time to really consider things? In these hectic times it is perhaps more important than ever to give intuition its place. With so much happening around us, we cannot depend on logical thinking alone. As former Volvo CEO P.G. Gyllenhammar put it, "We need feeling too."



We truly need access to our feeling and intuition if we are to make wise decisions, but this access is also a prerequisite to experiencing true inner peace and satisfaction. If we let ourselves get stressed out, then it's impossible to attain any degree of inner harmony. But it takes time to practice intuition. Do we give it the time it needs to mature? Unfortunately, we often do not, and so we invest our time and energy poorly. We are sucked into the rush of the workplace and fail to reflect upon where we're heading.

Work stress burns people out and wastes human resources. Many employers don't seem to be aware of the great investment and sacrifice on behalf of the company required for each new employee. Experience isn't as highly regarded as it used to be. Youth and new ways of thinking are considered more important. But this way of thinking will surely prove costly in the long run.

Just because communication is now electronic doesn't change the fact that a marketplace is a marketplace. The large part of our traditional knowledge about customers, markets and sales is as necessary today as it has ever been. It is only the forms that have changed. We are therefore making a mistake if we discount the experience of our old workers just because they aren't as quick with the keyboard.

Stress in the workplace also breaks down interpersonal communications. It leads to misunderstandings, conflicts and unnecessary errors. Since I was born with a speech impediment, it is natural for me to think before I speak. Because of this, I am regularly amazed at how much babble there is around us.

It is as if we are afraid of silence. Yet it is through silence that we access our innermost sources of knowledge and wisdom. Perhaps this

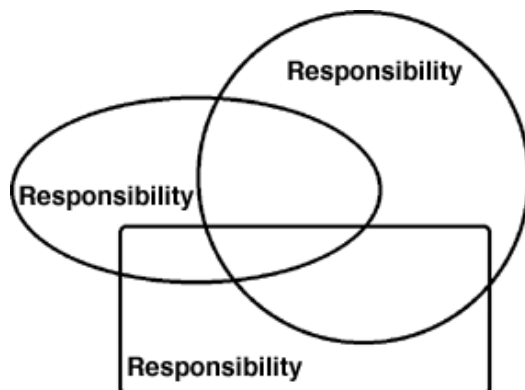
inner knowledge frightens us and that is why we don't want to listen to it. Perhaps we don't want to listen to it because we know it would require us to make certain changes in our way of living.

I believe that the babble around us is getting worse. As the pace of our lives continues to increase, we lose more and more of our habit of listening to our inner selves. We choose to listen to the babble instead.

Stress is costly. It results not only in employee burnout, but also in poor communication that in turn leads to inferior work that has to be redone. If our communication isn't calm and clear, then we not only risk finishing our work assignments incorrectly. We also risk not finishing our work assignments at all. This is what can happen if in a particular project we have not taken time to specify who is responsible for what. It can turn out as in the illustration below.



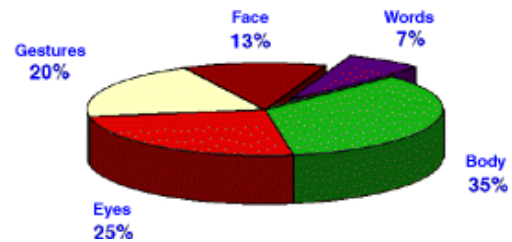
There is also the risk that some work assignments will be done more than once by different persons because no one really knows who is responsible. The areas of responsibility have not been sufficiently delineated, as is the case in the illustration below.



There is, of course, also the risk that both of these situations occur at the same time, which leads to total chaos. Co-workers who are caught up in this don't know up from down. They do not know what is expected of them, and this abolishes all sense of security. This type of

chaos can turn out to be an unduly expensive experience for any kind of business organization.

Human communication takes time because it is complex. It might be easy to think that it is only a matter of words, but actually, the entire body is involved in our communication. This is why it is crucial to give it the time it needs. If we don't, we can quickly find ourselves in a tricky state of affairs that wastes great amounts of money and resources.



Experiencing the world from a wheelchair offers unbelievable opportunities to study how silly we humans can sometimes behave. It takes me a quarter of an hour just to put on a shirt. Every trip to the bathroom takes at least that long. Because of this, I live my life at a completely different pace than most people. I have had to learn to give myself plenty of time to get things done and like to do a thorough job with whatever I do. This doesn't mean, however, that I never get impatient.

My point is that this slower tempo offers me time to reflect about people and about what is going on around me. I suspect that many people habitually refuse to give themselves enough time for such reflection and contemplation. You could say that these people live one step removed from what is actually taking place in their lives and therefore lack the information they need to make wise decisions.

On the other hand, I am no advocate for navel contemplation or other ineffectual forms of meditation. People sometimes choose these practices as a way of fleeing from the outside world. That's not my way.

Stress creates a severe climate. This kind of toughness is traditionally linked to a more authoritarian style of leadership. If you would rather create involvement and commitment among your colleagues, then you have to give them time and freedom. Something that many of us fail to realize is that democracy takes time. It requires far less time just to bark out orders.

Fewer and fewer people are allowing themselves to be treated authoritatively. If you want to retain your best colleagues, you have to give them the time and liberty they need to do what is expected of them.

As I wrote at the beginning of this book, achievers need to see results. This means that many achievers have a tendency of becoming absorbed in their work. Because of this, many of them need help in establishing a healthier balance in their lives – balance between work and family, between sense and sensibility, between their masculine and feminine sides, between pleasure and duty. If they do not find this balance, then they face an even greater risk than other people of burnout.

To attain results, achievers must focus on what they are doing. This focus, however, should never shut everything else out of your life. I believe that we all have an innate need for variation. Without variation, we get quickly bored and do inferior work.

It is as if the brain has a constant need for new experiences. New impressions engender new ideas. That is why it is necessary that every once-in-awhile we jump out of our ruts and do something completely new. Last week, for instance, I was in the mountains and went snowmobiling. It is thanks to this trip that I am able to get back to writing right now. Before that, I had not been writing for several months. This shows the importance of being able to take time now and then to do something completely different.

To be sure, it is crucial for achievers to have meaningful goals to work towards. But it is just

as important for anyone to be able to live here and now. We cannot just chase desperately after one spectacular achievement after the other. Unfortunately, we sometimes fool ourselves into believing that everything will be alright if only we get accepted into the right university, or if only we get our degree, or if only we get that dream job, or if only we meet Mr. or Mrs. Right.

This chasing after goals is one way of avoiding living in the present. Any real living has to take place here and now, for you can do nothing in the future or the past. The past has already passed away, and it is impossible to know everything about the future. Children are good at living here and now. Children do not experience time as do adults; for them it all but does not exist. They live existentially, right in the middle of the present moment. If you too want to learn more how to live existentially, spend some time with children. On the next page you can test yourself on how well you live in the present.

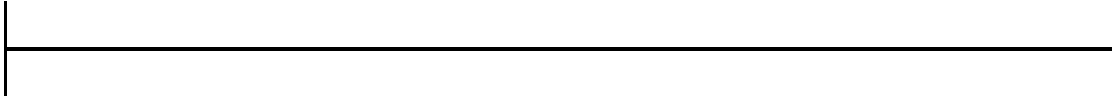
As you have noticed, this section has not included very many practical tips or tricks on how to manage stress. That was not my intention. Instead, I have wanted to show you the importance of lessening stress and so creating a place for peace in your life. It is necessary, I believe, for each of us to search out his own methods to accomplish this. Unfortunately, there are no fast-and-easy solutions.

# Are You Living In The Present?

On the scales below, mark both where you are today and where you would like to be in the future. How can you get there? Give examples.

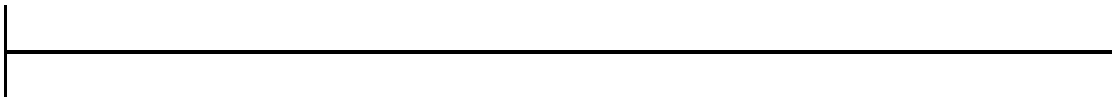
”The past is history, the future is a mystery and every now is a present.”

Deepak Chopra



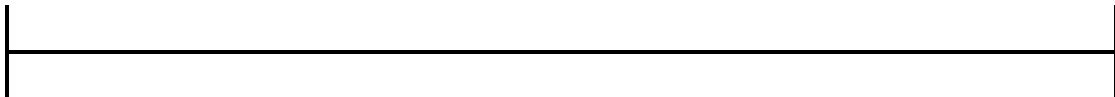
I never worry about tomorrow.

I often worry about what's to come.



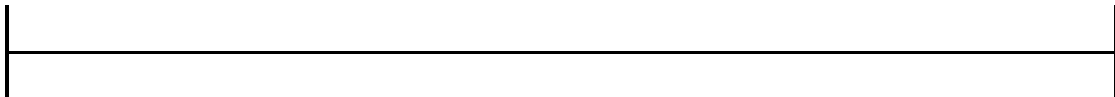
The future of mankind is promising.

I am very worried about mankind's survival.



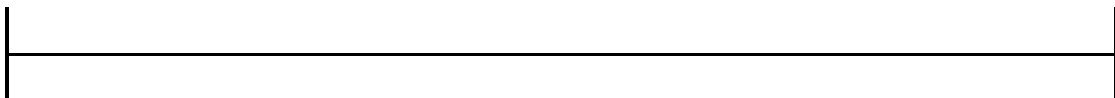
I never regret what I have done.

I often wonder why I've done what I've done.



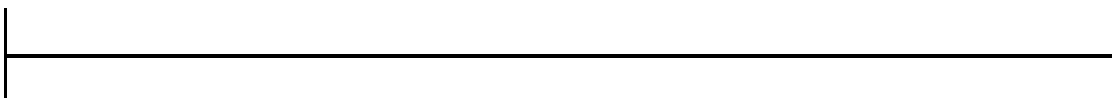
I am never stressed.

I am often in a hurry.



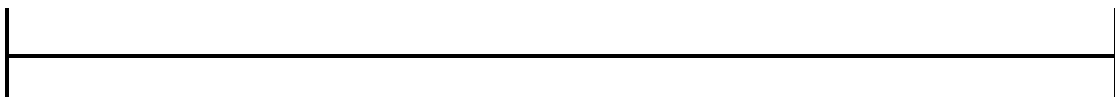
Meals take as long as necessary.

I usually eat too fast.



It takes as long as it takes.

I am usually impatient about my personal development.



I see a meaning in everything I go through.

I usually wonder why I end up in the same trouble time and time again.