



It's Not About Stress

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Stress in the workplace is a growing concern for employees and employers both in Australia and internationally.

The cost of stress is psychological health, physical health as well as reduced productivity and creativity. Chronic stress has been linked to many health disorders, including depression, heart disease, cancers, and Alzheimer's disease.

Did you know...

- Depression is currently the leading cause of non-fatal disability in Australia, but only 3 per cent of the population identifies it as a major health problem.
- Each year, undiagnosed depression in the workplace costs \$4.3 billion in lost productivity and this excludes Workcover/insurance claims, part-time or casual employees, retrenchment, recruitment and training.
- On average, every full-time employee with untreated depression costs an organisation \$9,665 per year.
- Each employee with depression will, on average, take three to four days off work per month which is equivalent to over six million days lost each year in Australia.
- In addition to absenteeism, depression accounts for more than 12 million days of reduced productivity each year.
- Around half (50%) of people with depression don't get help for it.
- Workplace stress is a significant risk factor for developing depression.

Source: beyondblue

Just reading these statistics is stressful in itself.

Positive Psychology is a newer and increasingly popular branch of psychology that seeks to focus not on pathology, but on what contributes to human happiness and emotional health. It focuses on strengths, virtues, and factors that help people thrive and achieve a sense of fulfillment, as well as more effectively manage stress.

In the case of stress, positive psychology seeks to ask not "Why are so many people stressed?" but rather, "What do those who are successful and able to lead a healthy and happy life do?"

Stress is by its very nature designed to be good for us – it makes us more resilient, enlarges our capacity for wellbeing, joy and success.

Given this, a case is being put forward that Stress is **NOT** the problem, but rather the **lack of recovery**. If any of you have undertaken weight training, you will well know that stressing the muscles is a good thing and that the real work occurs when one is in recovery. The problem begins when we over train and we are innervated rather than energised.

To use another example – consider a marathon runner versus a sprinter. At the end of a marathon, the runner looks depleted, as opposed to the sprinter who at the end of a 100 metre dash is full of life and typically bouncing around the track.



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So how does this relate to ourselves on a daily basis? Ask yourself, how much recovery do you take in a day – do you go from one meeting to another, eat lunch while working, read emails on the bus or train to and from work and then still expect to be productive. Each day are you are running a marathon and then coming back in the next day and expecting to be in peak form?

Given that recovery is the problem, consider redesigning your way of working to be that of a sprinter rather than a marathon runner.

So how..... by creating a ritual that represents 60 – 120 minutes of work and 15 + minutes of recovery. To learn more about rituals here is the link to my last newsletter.

What you will find is that you will be more focused, more creative and more productive. How do I know? Well apart from the research I have tested the theory and can attest that it does work. And yes, I needed to create a ritual to embed this. It is easier to put this aside when busy but this is when it counts most.

So what can you do with 15 minutes?

- Go for a walk
- Read a non work related book
- Phone a friend
- Whatever places you in a recovery mode and that includes not answering your mobile phone or checking your emails!!
- Stretch
- Listen to music

Self Reflection

How can you build 15 min recovery times into you working day?

What's the smallest thing that you can do that can make a difference to supporting yourself?

Recommended Reading: The Power of Full Engagement - Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehlt

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