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About the Author

Helen Mullins has suffered the effects of stress and other consequences of a high-pressure work environment on both her career and her personal life.

She could see that many of her colleagues and other business people she knew were also affected.

Helen wondered why some other people seemed to be able to cope with almost anything that they faced.

Helen said, “Everyone was under increasing pressure as budgets and staff were cut. We were constantly told that better results were needed but resources were getting scarcer every month.”

Helen realized that the situation was not going to improve unless she did what she could herself and got cooperation and help for those factors which were beyond her control.

“I was feeling that I could not deliver the quality of work which I had been doing regularly a couple of years before. I also felt that my efforts were no longer appreciated as they had been.”

Helen said, “I wrote my ebook to share the tips and insights which I learned from my own experience and the stories which my colleagues and other people I knew shared with me.”

Helen said, “I found ways to revive my creative energy which we all have but may think we have lost because of the workload and other pressures we have.”

I hope that it will help other people who also feel that they are under strain because of the pressure of their business and the effects that is having on their personal life as well.

If we feel we are losing our connection with our colleagues and friends, it becomes much harder to turn things around. But, if I can do it, I am sure that others can as well.

Introduction

Thank you for reading my book.

This ebook is not a substitute for professional advice and support.

I am just someone that wants to share her experience of the journey you are on, from enthusiasm to stress and toward burnout.

I hope that what I learned will help you deal with the problems and regain your ability to enjoy and prosper more easily and effectively.



While you are under these pressures, it becomes very difficult for you to regain control. Your self-confidence is crushed under the demands put on you.

It seems impossible to find your way back to where you can enjoy every day like you did before.

Reading about my experience and those of many other people can help you to understand and deal with the effects of stress from the personal and business pressures on you.

I wrote this book to better understand my experience and share those ideas and strategies which were very helpful.

The pressures were different for each person and some people are affected more deeply than others.

But, we all have the potential to turn things around, however hopeless it may seem.

I will help you to understand more about what is affecting you.

Then, you can start to control the overwhelming stress.

The next step will be to repair the personal and professional connections which are so important for you to be more successful again.

The experiences you go through and your success in overcoming the problems will help you build defenses that you can call on if you, or anyone close to you, faces them again in the future.

Once you start to have some positive outcomes, the journey will become easier.

Then, you will be able to enjoy using your, possibly dormant, creative abilities to enhance every part of your new life.

I believe that you will then be able to continue more confidently along your road to greater personal and professional success.

You will get a lot of encouragement and proven tips which will shorten the time and effort required to get back on the road to personal and business success.

Helen Mullins

Stress and Burnout

Stress and **Burnout** are closely linked. That causes many people to be confused. It is very important to understand the differences so we can properly deal with the problems which each of us have.

Stress is the reaction we have to various kinds of pressure which are put on us.

Stress is part of our basic make-up. We can't, and don't need to, eliminate stress.

We need to understand how we can best deal with it so we get the benefits and avoid the potential problems it can generate.

Stress can develop and have a serious, negative impact on us in a short time.



If we get into a state where we have constant high levels of stress and no way to relieve them, we lose control of our day to day existence.

When our confidence is damaged, it affects all areas of our life.

If we don't keep control over the effects of the stress we have, we can develop physical and other problems. Stress can be a factor which helps to shorten our life.

Burnout is a condition which can result from high levels of stress over a longer period of time.

Burnout develops slowly. It leads to depression and lack of confidence in our ability to do our work, build and maintain satisfying relationships and all other areas of our life.

If we recognize signs of potential burnout in our thinking or behavior at an early stage, there are ways we can use to reverse the symptoms, reinforce our defenses and, over time, continue on toward the better life we deserve.

A New “Reality”

When we start living with severe stress, it starts to feel as if it is normal to have the constant pressure.

We accept the negative effects on our lifestyle and well-being as part of the cost of our progress toward a better life for us and our family.

We probably see that many of our colleagues and friends are on the same sort of track and affected in similar ways to ourselves.

After a while, we start to believe that it is a price we need to pay for the all the opportunities which we have.

We know that we can't always have all the experiences we may want if we expect to reach a high level of personal and professional success. So we lower our expectations.

But, we may become distressed and regretful when the expected benefits don't appear and even more effort and sacrifice is demanded. We start to blame other people for the negative aspects of our situation.

That attitude damages our working or personal relationships, leading to problems in our relationships and less support from those around us.

The negative effects are almost inevitable.

Slow Down and Live Better!

As well as having more demands on us, we have more things we want to experience and get.



We are tempted to squeeze more activities into our days.

We take on more commitments than we can possibly do well.

When we find ourselves unable to keep up, we start to lose our self-confidence, fear for our future or blame others for our problems.

Even when we try to enjoy ourselves, the pressure of other demands on our time spoil the experience.

To start reclaiming our lives, we just have to seek quality instead of quantity. It probably sounds easier than you think it will be to achieve?

That's true. But, almost anyone can do it!

The first step is to realize that continuing to do things the way we are doing them will only make us more stressed and unhappy.

We can change things for the better if we take it in small steps.

You can Prevent or Reduce Burnout

You may feel that making any necessary changes are beyond you?

That’s because the stress and its effects you have already suffered have reduced your natural confidence.

But, it does not take away the personal and professional skills which you worked so hard to develop and used in the past to get where you are.

It just creates a barrier of doubt so you don’t believe that you can use them that well any more.

When you let the stress get a grip on you and you stopped enjoying your life, you became discouraged.

You focused on problems. You weren’t enjoying many of the social and business interactions, so you started to withdraw from them. That damaged the close connections you had developed.

When you needed help, there were less people you could still expect to make the effort.

You feel inadequate and focus more into themselves instead of spending quality time with colleagues, friends and even your family.

The first signs of potential burnout start to appear when we make excuses for not trying any more because we can’t see the potential which we still have inside and all around us.

Research shows that most people have almost everything they need for greater success and satisfaction within themselves.

We can deal with the symptoms of burnout if it is not far advanced.

Someone that is at an advanced stage may need some professional help.

Although it may seem that no-one cares or can help, you will find that there is all the help and support you need within reach if you make the first move.

That may involve making some apologies for past hurt or forgetting and forgiving what other did or said that upset you.

First Steps

The first step is to have a thorough medical check by your regular doctor. That shows whether there are any underlying conditions which need attention so that your stress reduction program can be most effective..

You can also discuss your concerns about your career and life with your doctor. With their in-depth knowledge of your background and health, they can help you decide if you should get professional help.

They are also the best source of advice on any significant changes to your lifestyle or diet you are thinking about making.

Then next step is to do a review of where you are and what is holding you back from where you need to be.

Start A Gratitude Book

Get an extra diary and use it to record three things each day which have given you pleasure.

They don't have to be big or things which everyone would consider important.

It is just for what affects you in a positive way and you don't have to share the details with anyone else.

But, the effect of recording and reading these bright spots will remind you that every days has it's good points.

Then, you can share your increased optimism with everyone you meet in other ways.

Review

We all can recognize when we are suffering from stress. But, we feel unable to understand what is causing the stress how easily we can improve the situation.

You may be feeling you are on a treadmill, constantly dealing with multiple responsibilities and demands.

Those pressures can make you feel you can't stand aside, even for an hour or so, and sort out your priorities.

But, that step is essential. You need the best information about your situation and your options laid out in front of you.



If you keep going by instinct and being battered emotionally and physically, you are more likely to crash than crash through.

You need a full medical check and to be aware of all other aspects of your life so that your plan for future improvement is based on facts.

Your review can be arranged in any way which suits you.

If you are good with charts, you might put together a personal version of a business S.W.O.T. Analysis. List all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (or

tensions) which you have currently or which loom on your horizon.

This material is only for you personally, unless you share it with your partner, so you can be completely honest.

Write down everything of importance about:

- Your current performance
- Your ability to handle your work and other commitments

- Challenges and opportunities in your work environment.
- The state of your interactions and relationships with colleagues, friends and, especially, your family.

Some of the following sections give a brief overview of factors which cause stress.

Everyone’s situation and background is different, but you will better understand the particular factors affecting you, so that you can give them special attention or get some help for them.

Then, you will be ready to plan your way forward again.

The Multi-tasking Myth

Do you try to be more productive by multitasking; doing two tasks at the same time or trying to be less stressed by listening to some entertainment when doing your work?



Unfortunately, the latest research suggests that multitasking reduces our efficiency and can hurt the quality of the output we produce.

Our brain only focuses on one item at a time. It needs a small but measurable period to switch off from each task before starting to focus on another.

This means that we spend less actual time focused on each task when we try to do them at the same time.

This puts extra pressure on ourselves.

That will, over time, make us feel more tired and depressed. Those effects will ensure that our other work is also affected as well.

Communication

The first thing that suffers when people are stressed is their communication with the other people around them.

That is why I have given this element its own chapter.

We may tend to blame others for the problems and disappointments we have.



When we lose confidence in our own abilities, we become less understanding and supportive of other people.

Discussions become disagreements and questions more like personal attacks.

Because of the pressure we have on ourselves, we may not realize that our interaction has changed.

When we see more negative reactions, we can think that we are a target rather than the cause of the increased friction.

We need to make maintaining all of our channels of communication a priority.

That will help others as well as ourselves.

Start small and you will soon see big results.

Being considerate of others' needs and respectful of their views is a great start.

People will recognize your improved empathy and give you the same.

Try to maintain a positive outlook. If you avoid negativity, you will attract more positive people to interact with you.

Other Major Stress Factors

Here are some of the most common factors which cause stress in the workplace.

Knowing about them will help you to recognize their effects on you. It will be easier to minimize those effects, even though you cannot always eliminate them.

Technology: The numerous advances in technology failed to give us more leisure and less paper-handling in our working lives.



The advances in communication devices and techniques make many people unable to get free from their job at any time. When you are out of the office, avoid contact with or even thinking about the demands of your workplace.

Health Worries: Get a check-up from your local medical adviser. Worry about possible problems can be very damaging by itself.

An early diagnosis of any actual problem can be a factor in getting a better outcome.

Relationships: A major problem is having a poor balance between the time and energy we put into maintaining and enjoying our family and other social activities compared to the effort we give our job.

You need to work at relationships as much as you work at your business.

Maintaining strong two-way communication. Tell your family how much they mean to you is good but it's better if you show you mean it. Making time with them a major priority in your life.

No-one is Immune to Stress

Every one has to deal with stress but some people are able to do so without any sign of problems.

But, most people have problems with the effects of stress on them at some time during their lives.

Even people that seem to be dealing with it well may be keeping their struggle to themselves. This can be dangerous if emotional or physical problems start to appear when they suffer a crisis.

“The Grass is Greener!”

Some people wish they had their employer’s lifestyle and income.

But, the pressures on employers and those who work for themselves can be as great or even greater than those affecting employees.

They are subject to most of the factors of any other worker, but also have more demands on them from dealing with clients and controlling suppliers.

They also have to be legally responsible for the welfare of their employees under various legislation.

A friend that left a secure job to start his own business said that a self-employed person has many more bosses than the any employee.

People who work for themselves have similar pressures to employees and bosses as well.

High Achievers too!

People who reach high levels of material success, seem to have it made, but are under pressure too.

Unless they consciously arrange their lives so they maintain a balance between the time they put into their work and their personal needs for time completely away from it, they can easily suffer the negative aspects which are so common for everyone else.

Stress Factors at Work

Most employees are subject to the pressure of having to keep up with the rampant flood of improving technology.

Or, because of insecurity about their jobs, they stay on the job for unpaid hours.

But, no-one can continue to perform at their peak without a reasonable balance between their social and business activities.

Inside the business, many people suffer from being held responsible for the results without having any input or control over their work arrangements or compensation.

Many people are still doing a lot of repetitive and undemanding process work. They may also fear that their jobs will be taken over by machines.

Many people find that the targets they are expected to achieve are always increasing. But, the amount of time and other resources they have are being permanently reduced.

Missing Holidays

Many employees avoid taking their holidays to show their loyalty to their employer or to reduce the risk of losing their job because they are not visible in their workplace.

Unfortunately, this has negative results for the whole business.

The employee suffers more stress because they have less time with family and friends. They get no time to recuperate from the workload they handled.

The employer has staff with less enthusiasm and energy as well as a growing financial liability for the stored leave.

Remember that stress and the risk of burnout can affect anyone in various ways.

Effects of High Level Stress

These are some of the most common signs of high stress levels. But, they may also indicate other problems

Get any symptoms or other things which concern you checked by your doctor or other health professional. This is very important if you have difficulty coping with physical or emotional demands you have comfortably deal with in the past.

Many people have emotional stress which causes frequent periods of pain which may have no obvious, specific cause.

Another effect of high stress levels is when it takes longer than usual to fight off simple colds and other minor ailments.

Stress can show as physical symptoms like poor appetite or no desire to eat regular meals, even when they include some of our favorite foods.

Stress can make us have less desire to join in social and other events which we used to enjoy.

When we show a lowered ability to deal with physical problems, we may have a greater risk of developing other medical conditions.

If we start to have trouble with our business or personal interactions, that may lead to greater problems in the future with the people that most matter to us.

Are You Likely to Burnout?

There are many external factors which can push almost anyone towards a high level of sustained stress and possible burnout.

There are some personal traits which some researchers believe make the people who have them more susceptible.

These conditions can affect people to a point where they reach a stage when they lack the confidence or energy to make the necessary changes.

You might be able to use a particular goal, such as repairing the connection with your partner or spending more time with them and your family as a driver to overcome the barriers between you.

Type A personality



People that have characteristics of the theoretical “Type A Personality” are more likely to suffer stress and can be predisposed to risking burnout.

Type A’s are usually strongly assertive and focused on their goals, impatient with people that are not as focused or efficient as they believe themselves to be, and driven and obsessed with making best use of every minute.

But, they’re not always focused on themselves. They are usually honest and enthusiastic about helping other people to have a better life as well.

Perfectionists

Some people want everything to be perfect as they believe themselves to be. They can be unrealistic and hard to please. That causes friction and damage their personal interactions. Other people become less interested in working or socializing with them.

Poor Self-image

This is very common. Some of these people will accept negative input from others as fact too easily and become stressed when they realize the negativity is not really deserved.

When these people lose confidence because they get poor results or make mistakes, they may reduce their efforts instead of trying to find small improvements and get better results.

If people feel insecure or unhappy because they feel they were denied due recognition or reward in the past, they become focused on themselves and avoid opportunities to interact with others.

This means that they get less opportunities and cooperation. So, they harden their negative opinions and keep looking inwardly instead of seeing the potential around them.

Sometimes, some people try to avoid close examination or discussion of their own performance or possible problems by criticizing their colleagues.

The good news is that these traits can be reversed when people recognize the problems which they have. But, it will take effort, determination and a willingness to cooperate with other people.

When you start to deal with the symptoms, you will see positive and lasting results.

Dealing with Emotional Factors

The impact of stress on our emotional reactions can be severe.

Our emotions help us connect with other people more closely. If we are stressed to the point that we cannot maintain our control over our emotions, the benefits can be lost.

Misunderstandings can easily develop and our uncontrolled reactions to people and circumstances can cause problems.



We have to recognize when there is a problem developing, take the time to carefully review what is happening and then deal with it in a considerate manner.

Fear and anger are normal but can have serious negative effects for us and the people close to us if we are lose

control.

Fear is often a trigger for anger and is a major contributor to some people developing serious depression.

Over the centuries, it was an important factor in helping to keep us safe and able to deal with danger in various forms. But, in modern society, we are often not able to react in the traditional ways when we feel the fear.

We cannot leave the situation or try to deal with the challenge we face with action or words.

So, we feel helpless. That can cause us to react strongly or bottle our reactions inside ourselves where they increase our stress levels.

Anger is not an emotion with only completely negative aspects or consequences. It can help to produce positive outcomes, but we must work to control it and accept full responsibility for when we use it.

Mood Changers

Some people look for comfort by depending on alcohol, stimulants or other artificial mood changers. This has many potential risks.

They may find they cannot operate as well without them but they cannot do good work while they take them either.

Lifestyle Choices Affect Burnout Risk

Some major pressures which drive many people to risk burnout are closely related to their work situation, but there are also risks in our social and other personal activities.

Many people cannot close their office or shop door and leave all their work behind until the next day.

The demands for greater production with less resources may have them at their desks or machines almost all day.

This causes physical as well as emotional problems and increases the level of stress for everyone in that business.

If they can't get some time away for their lunch, paying bills and socializing, the connections between colleagues and friends must start to suffer.

When they have to take work home, they have less quality time to share with their family.

That affects everyone concerned and the negative effects will just continue to increase.

Sleeping Problems

Making time for the extra work they take home and still trying to fit in some time for their family, many people sacrifice significant amounts of their sleeping time.

The rising stress also causes more interruptions to their sleep cycles.

It is not just the amount of sleep we get which is important. Our bodies must be able to relax through full multi-stage sleep cycles every night or the essential rest and repair activities cannot be completed.

We need to ensure an average of about eight hours each night. The sleep we get before midnight is especially important.

Avoid snacks and drinks at bedtime.

Give yourself the best chance to sleep well. Keep the bedroom free of TV's etc.

Leave your work and reading material outside the bedroom. Concentrating on any of that material does not encourage a restful sleep.

Eat Healthy and Well

Our full-on lifestyle also reduces the ability of many people to properly deal with the food we consume. Many people have more low-nutrition snacks or skip meals altogether.

Then we probably reduce the amount and quality of exercise which we get.

A Better Lifestyle is Like Insurance

When you adopt simple steps in this chapter, you will enjoy your life more and also increase your body’s ability to protect you from the risk of burnout.

These suggestions can have significant benefits for you now and right through the rest of your life. It is a type of health insurance.

Maintain Communication: This is essential for all types of relationships.

Poor communication in the workplace can cause resentment, missed opportunities and poor productivity.

In the home, lack of effective communication will affect everybody, not just those directly involved. The most important component in any relationship is trust and good communication is critical for that to be maintained.

Maintain Balance with Social and Work Time: You do your job to help provide a better lifestyle for you and your family. You do not live for your job because you cannot afford to die or get sick because of it. My cousin said, “The most important reason for doing your work is not in the office, it’s the home of the people you go home to.”

When anyone tips the balance of their life to favor their work responsibilities, everyone loses.

Balance is a good guide in other areas as well.

If your doctor recommends you eat more healthy food and to avoid sugary or fatty snacks, he or she is giving you advice which might actually save your life.

But, unless you have certain specific risk factors, you can usually have an occasional fizzy drink or whatever just for fun. If you feel guilty, add ten minutes the next time you walk your dog or take your child to the park.

Get More Exercise easily: Exercise does not have to involve trips to an expensive gym and paying the fees. You can start with a neighborhood walk or ride if the vehicle is one you power with your own energy.

Walk at a reasonable pace. Just crawling along will not deliver much of the acknowledged benefits. But, don’t overdo it even if your dog wants you to.

The experts recommend a minimum of three sessions of walking (or running if you are up to it) a week. But, it’s okay to do more – if you are up to it.

Get a dog and you will have an excuse to walk alone or with other family members regularly. Having a dog on a lead is often a good way to connect briefly with other people in the public park. They may have a dog with them or they may just ask about or comment on your pet.

I’ve actually had some of my best ideas waking with only a dog for company. And they don’t argue about the quality of the ideas I have.

Smiling is not just a friendly gesture: it is a way to open communication with just about anyone.

If they don’t smile back at you, don’t feel offended. They may have had a bad experience in the past or they may feel they are all out of smiles.

Just leave one of your best with them.

It might improve the rest of their day and won’t cost either of you anything.

Dealing with Burnout

If you have developed significant levels of the various burnout factors mentioned in this ebook, you will be finding work very difficult to handle.

Ask your employer and some of your colleagues for understanding and support.

At this stage, you also need to get whatever professional help is available to you.

Consult your doctor or other medical professional for a thorough examination and professional advice if you have not already done so.

Talk with your employer and the Human Resources section at the company if they have one.

Some people fear that their prospects or even their actual job will be at risk if they ask for help within the company.

But, most businesses recognize that helping an experienced and loyal employee through a temporary problem can be good business because:

- ✓ They don't have to look for and train someone new.
- ✓ There is less disruption for them as well as the employee.
- ✓ The morale of all employees is likely to be lifted when they see support is readily available for the employee.

First Steps toward Recovery

The effects of burnout affect people to different levels.

- Some people get to a stage where they are unable to work for some time. Others cannot work at the same place again.
- Some people have to make a greater adjustment and look for a different kind of work entirely.

But, every individual person’s burnout and their path to recovery is different.

Each person will need as much support as possible from their family and close friends.

They need to be guided by the professionals involved who can recognize the stage of burnout they are at, understand the effects they are dealing with and are aware of the person’s individual needs and situation.

It is very important to remember that burnout does not usually mean that you cannot build a career and reach higher levels of success in time.

The first stage is to review everything with the professionals.

They may help you to review the development of your burnout condition to see if there are lessons there which you can use to help avoid a similar path in the future.

You will probably find you made some mistakes, but don’t think that you failed and cannot do better in the future.

Remember that there were many external factors which influenced your thoughts and actions.

Take what lessons you can find in the experience and resolve that you will not repeat them.

The most important thing is to ensure that you close off the regrets and disappointments which you can no longer do anything about.

If you let them continue to be part of your daily thoughts, they will keep you in a negative mode which could make it almost impossible to achieve the level of success you are capable of and deserve.

Some people will find this step harder than other people will.

But, the effort and time needed to get out from under their burden will be a small price for the positive benefits they get over the rest of their lives.

The knowledge of the effects they suffered will help to ensure that they don't let themselves take that line of destructive thought again.

Tips to Reduce Stress and Conflict

Stress and conflict are two of the main factors which can drive us toward burnout.

Here are some simple and free tactics which can help to reduce the stress which encourages burnout. They are all worth considering but results will vary because of your individual circumstances.

The Non-vacation

Just taking a real break of even just an hour from your routine during the day, can really help.

If stress is affecting your relationship with your partner, ask them to walk with you through a park or anywhere that is a physical and visual change from your usual surroundings.

They will probably appreciate your effort.

The open air and the privacy can help you both to start to talk.

Keep it gentle. Let them do the talking if they want to.

Saying “No.”

Are you a person who finds it hard to say, “No” when people ask you to take on some small task?

Then, after a while, do you find that your enthusiasm for some of these tasks fade because you have too many other demands on your time or you find that the people you help don’t seem to have any appreciation of your contribution?

I had to realize that it was alright to say, “no” or “not at this time,” when it really wasn’t convenient or when you felt it wasn’t necessary any longer.

We may find that people suggest that we’re letting them down. But, if we don’t take care of our own needs we will soon be unable to give effective help to anyone else. It may be just as important to your well-being to get that time and other resources back.

Say, “No” sometimes and give yourself more control of your own life and more time to say, “yes” to things which are more interesting, inspirational or enjoyable for you.

Use it or Lose it

This is a well-worn saying which still has value.

Look around your home for the remnants of hobbies or projects which you lost interest in or found you didn’t have time for in the past.

If you find that your old enthusiasm is still there, give yourself some time each week to take another look at that. You could use it as a break from your high-pressure tasks.

But, when you decide that you don’t have any remaining interest, pass it on to a relative or friend, sell the materials on eBay or give it to your local charity shop where it would make a few needed dollars for them and find a more enthusiastic owner.

One Bite at a Time: When we are going through a period of depression, it can be a real struggle to keep things organized and tidy. As time goes on, the clutter increases and that can add to our general feeling of being overwhelmed.

A local life-coach suggested that we could regain control of such boring and time-consuming tasks in either of two ways.

Rather than invest a whole afternoon to try to quickly resolve the situation when we didn’t actually have much motivation or energy to spare, just do little things as the opportunity arose.

Cleaning out a drawer, rather than ignoring it because you don’t have time to do the whole cupboard, will produce noticeable results over time.

The best result may be that you start to see an improvement in your situation and build some enthusiasm to tackle a bigger project next time.

Add a new Focus point: Adding a new point of focus to your work area, such as a pot plant, fish tank or a colorful poster of your next holiday destination, can help you be calmer and optimistic.

You can use it to take your mind off the current work pressures for just a few minutes and relax.

Really use your Diary.

Many people keep their dreams and aspirations locked inside their heads. You might want to put details in your diary on what you are aiming to achieve and then check what progress you have made.

This will be a help to find any steps which are causing trouble, anything which has been not given sufficient attention or resources and where you may need to get other people's input.

Do a report which you might share with others and one just for you to review, so that you can see the actual situation on paper or your screen.

This can help refresh your dormant enthusiasm when the review shows that you have possibly achieved more than you thought.

Things which seemed major obstacles can be larger in our minds than reality.

If you need help, getting other people's cooperation will be easier. When you have everything clearly laid out, it will make everything easier to explain and to justify their involvement in terms of the project with their own goals and responsibilities.

Being more Creative and Enthusiastic

I have already mentioned that renewing your interest in a hobby or other interest which you put aside earlier can be one way to add some enthusiasm to your life and raise your level of creative energy.



You will also find that giving yourself some more mental stimulation from reading or watching material which interests you and some which is outside of your usual areas of interest can be useful.

Many of us focus our reading on those areas we already are quite knowledgeable about. But, I know a few people that scan news reports about other industries because they find innovative ideas and methods which they can profit from by adapting to their own business activities.

These ideas may be common knowledge in the other area but can be a unique advantage for the first to adapt and use them in your industry.

There are many sources of inspirational material on the Internet. One which almost everyone has free access to is Ted.com where there are hundreds of video reports about innovations and ideas from many amazing people, most of whom you have never even heard of along with many famous names.

Keep this idea of applying what you are learning about to your industry or even your social activities and you will start to have more ideas more often. Research has proven that you will usually get better ideas and more of them if you follow some tactic like this instead of waiting until you need some new ideas to deal with a problem.

Encourage your subconscious to filter ideas from the wide range of material which you absorb almost without thinking every day.

When we are under pressure, our natural reaction is to stay with tried and tested methods. But, they may not be what are needed when we are wanting to move forward more quickly or deal with increased competitive pressures.

Group brainstorming can be useful but many people find that some in the group will not produce much of value because they will leave the brain work to their colleagues. Sometimes, the best brainstorming group is just one or two people.

You will get your best results when you are relaxed and comfortable. Give your imagination free rein and record every idea without filtering it first.

This is something I found when I started to write stories. I got better results if I put everything into the computer or on paper without editing. Then, I went back and picked out the parts which were most useful for whatever I was working on at the time.

But, the other half-formed or slightly crazy ideas went into a file as a resource for those times when I could not easily think of something new.

Even an idea which is physically impossible might be more valuable when new resources are purchased or invented. Maybe you will discover something which you can help to develop yourself.

It is important for our brains and all aspects of our health that we remain flexible as possible in mind and body.

If you want to see real creative thinking start talking to more six year old children!

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