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WHAT'S OFFLINE

Don't Stress Over Stress

By PAUL B. BROWN

THE e-mail messages marked “urgent” fill your in-box. Your most profitable client has moved up the deadline. The boss is yelling, and the computer system has crashed — again.

Pressure comes with the job, of course. But some deal with it better than others.

Nicole Cusick, writing in Men's Journal, suggests the following to use stress to your advantage:

- Embrace the pressure. “At the right levels, stress is a good thing,” she writes. It shows you care and can cause you to work harder. “It may seem obvious, but being conscious” of the symptoms of stress is the first step, she says, in calming down.

- Work out. People in better shape have more confidence at crunch time.

- Try meditation. “Researchers from the University of Wisconsin found that meditation can improve your focus — beneficial when preparing for a stressful event.”

- Prepare. No surprise here. The more you have practiced, the more confidence you will have.

- Think positive thoughts. If you visualize success, the odds of its occurring increase. “Negative ruminating may prime you to fail.”

- Learn from mistakes. For those who still let their nerves get the better of them, take solace in this:

  “Ironically, it’s people with more cognitive ability, more working memory, who tend to choke under pressure,” says Sian L. Beilock, a University of Chicago professor.

GOOD ENOUGH “Perfectionism may be the ultimate self-defeating behavior,” Psychology Today writes. “It turns people into slaves of success — but keeps them focused on failure, dooming them to a lifetime of doubt and depression. It also winds up undermining achievement.”

Perfectionists, writes Hara Estroff Marano, are made, not born, and their number is increasing. “One reason: Pressure on children to achieve is rampant, because parents now seek much of their status from the performance of their kids,” she writes. “And, by itself, pressure to achieve is perceived by kids as criticism for mistakes; criticism turns out to be implicit in it.”

Perhaps worse, because perfectionism reduces willingness to take risks — one way to minimize the chances of performing less than optimally — “it reduces creativity and innovation,” skills that are in huge demand.
FLYING HIGH They signed autographs. The hot fashion designers of the day created their uniforms. And they were prominently featured in ads for their companies.

They were the flight attendants “during aviation’s golden age,” as Departures puts it.

Mark Ellwood interviewed six flight attendants — five of them women — who are still working and have the distinction of being the longest-serving flight attendants for their airlines. Their recollections may make it a bit easier for you to get through your next “ground hold.”

Norma Heape, 69, who has been flying for Continental for 50 years, recalls, for example, that the airline used to have stewardesses, as they were then called, dress in “red velvet berets and V-neck fitted dresses” and carry hatboxes instead of luggage. “It gave us the appearance of being models.”

Marlene Evans, 71, said she was rejected by American Airlines because she had “a separation in my teeth.” She had it corrected and spent the next 51 years flying for Pacific Northern, Western and Delta.

And Robert Reardon, 83, who has been flying for Northwest for 56 years, recalled that his airline “began hiring male flight attendants because it sold liquor, something the other airlines didn’t do.” People at that time “drank more than they do now,” he said.

FINAL TAKE. “In the spring,” Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote, “a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.” That’s a fact which apparently also makes them less productive at work.

When asked on Cosmopolitan’s Web site “Can falling in love affect your job performance?,” some 73 percent of the men who responded said yes. PAUL B. BROWN