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Human Relations

Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills

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Andrew J. DuBrin



ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

16

CHAPTER

Stress Management and Personal Productivity

Lynaia Lutes is taking time to focus. An account supervisor at a small Texas advertising and public relations agency, Lutes not long ago was a master of executing the details of work, without always focusing on strategy and long-term vision. Glued to her personal digital assistant, she shot off e-mails night and day, yet felt overwhelmed and sometimes did work that didn't pass muster with her bosses.

"A couple of times, I basically completed an assignment but didn't approach it strategically," admits Lutes. Now, taking the time to think and focus deeply has become one of Lutes' performance goals. And, she and the 14 other employees at the Blanchard Schaefer agency in Arlington are expected to make appointments with themselves just to contemplate, even daydream, for an hour. New on the premises, a "womb room," spartan and unwired, allows employees to retreat to let ideas flow without interruption.

"Our society has gotten to a place where we reward those who micromanage: Did I respond immediately on my BlackBerry; was I online at 11 p.m.," asserts agency president Ken Schaefer. "Having time to think is absolutely critical to creating good strategy. We view it as a competitive advantage."⁽¹⁾

The account supervisor just described is attempting to become more productive by spending time thinking instead of responding to small messages of the moment. At the same time, she is attempting to get over the stressor of feeling overwhelmed. Although this book is primarily about interpersonal skills, information about managing stress and enhancing personal productivity is relevant. Having your work under control and not being stressed out enables you to focus better on interpersonal relationships.

The first half of this chapter deals with the nature of stress and how it can be managed, whereas the second half describes various approaches to improving personal productivity. The two topics are as closely related as nutrition and health. When you effectively manage stress, you can be more productive. And when your work is under control, you avoid the heavy stress of feeling overwhelmed. A useful thought to keep in mind is that many readers of this book will become



LEARNING Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and doing the exercises, you should be able to

or are already **corporate athletes**, workers who engage in high-level performance for sustained periods.^[2] To be a corporate athlete, you have to manage your energy and stress well, in addition to having good work habits and time management.

corporate athletes

Workers who engage in high-level performance for sustained periods.

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING STRESS

A major challenge facing any worker who wants to stay healthy and have good interpersonal relationships is to manage stress effectively. Although *stress* is an everyday term, a scientific definition helps clarify its meaning. **Stress** is an adaptive response that is the consequence of any action, situation, or event that places special demands on a person. Note that stress, as used here, refers to a reaction to the situation, not the situation or force itself. A **stressor** is the external or internal force that brings about the stress.

Individual differences in the perception of an event play a key role in determining what events are stressful. Giving a presentation to management, for example, is stressful for some people but not for others. Some people perceive a presentation as a threatening and uncomfortable experience, while others might perceive the same event to be an invigorating challenge.

The term *special demands* is also critical because minor adjustments, such as an ink cartridge that runs dry, are usually not perceived as stressful. Yet piling on of minor adjustments, such as having 10 small things go wrong in one day, is stressful. This is true because stress is additive: A series of small doses of stress can create a major stress problem.

This textbook's approach to understanding stress centers on its symptoms and consequences, personality and job factors that contribute to stress, and methods and techniques for stress management. Managing stress receives more emphasis because the same techniques can be used to combat a variety of stressors.

Symptoms and Consequences of Stress

The physiological changes that take place within the body in response to stress are responsible for most stress symptoms. These physiological changes are almost identical for both positive and negative stressors. Ski racing, romantic attraction, and being downsized can make you feel about the same physically. The experience of stress helps activate hormones that prepare the body to run or fight when faced with a challenge. This battle against the stressor is referred to as the **fight-or-flight response**. It helps you deal with emergencies.

The brain is the organ that decides whether a situation is stressful and produces the behavioral and physiological responses. Yet, the brain's response is based on personal experience and culture. Eating seal meat would rarely be stressful for an Eskimo, yet might be for a Floridian. The brain senses stress as damage to well-being and therefore sends out a signal to the body to cope. The brain is thus a self-regulating system that helps us cope with stressors.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

fight-or-flight response

The body's physiological and chemical battle against a stressor in which the person tries to cope with the adversity head-on or tries to flee from the scene.

Physiological Reactions. The activation of hormones when the body has to cope with a stressor produces a short-term physiological reaction. Among the most familiar reactions is an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, blood glucose, and blood clotting. The stress hormone cortisol and other chemical responses to a stress can increase the cardiovascular function and the immune system in the short term. To help you recognize these symptoms, try to recall your internal bodily sensations the last time you were almost in an automobile accident or heard some wonderful news. Less familiar changes are a redirection of the blood flow toward the brain and large muscle groups and a release of stored fluids from places throughout the body into the bloodstream.

If stress is continuous and accompanied by these short-term physiological changes annoying and life-threatening conditions can occur. Damage occurs when stress levels rarely subside. Eventually the immune system is suppressed, and memory is impaired. When the immune system is impaired, the severity of many diseases and disorders increases. For example, people whose stress level is high recover more slowly from colds and injuries, and they are more susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases.

A stressful life event usually leads to a high cholesterol level (of the unhealthy type) and high blood pressure. Other conditions associated with stress are cardiac disease, migraine headaches, ulcers, allergies, skin disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, and cancer. People under continuous negative stress, such as having severe family problems or having a life out of control, also age more quickly partially because of cell damage.^[3] (Have you ever observed that stressed out friends of yours appear older looking than their chronological age?) A study of 812 Swedish workers conducted over a 25-year period found that work stress doubles the risk of dying from a heart attack. Seventy-three of the workers died from cardiac disease during the study. The major type of stress studied was having high work demands with little control over the work, combined with being underpaid.^[4]

Stress symptoms vary considerably from one person to another. A general behavioral symptom of intense stress is for people to exaggerate their weakest tendencies. For instance, a person with a strong temper who usually keeps cool under pressure may throw a tantrum under intense pressure. Some common stress symptoms are listed in Figure 16-1.

Job Performance Consequences. Stress has both negative and positive consequences. **Hindrance stressors** are those stressful events and thoughts that have a negative effect on motivation and performance. Many of these have already been mentioned. In contrast, **challenge stressors** have a positive direct effect on motivation and performance.^[5] A study with 215 employees across 61 offices of a state agency showed that when faced with challenge stressors, employees performed better on their regular tasks, citizenship behavior, and customer service. In contrast, performance on the three dimensions decreased when

hindrane stressors

Those stressful events that have a negative effect on motivation and performance.

challenge stressors

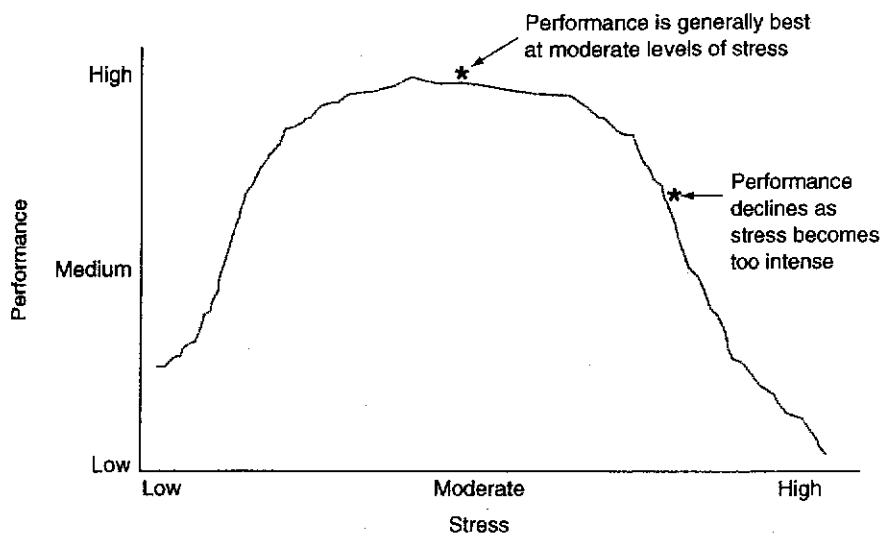
Stressful events that have a positive direct effect on motivation and performance.

FIGURE 16-1 A Variety of Stress Symptoms

Mostly Physical and Physiological	
Shaking or trembling	Mouth dryness
Dizziness	Upper and lower back pain
Heart palpitations	Frequent headaches
Difficulty breathing	Low energy and stamina
Chronic fatigue	Stomach problems
Unexplained chest pains	Constant craving for sweets
Frequent teeth grinding	Increased alcohol or cigarette consumption
Frequent nausea	Frequent need to eliminate
Mostly Emotional and Behavioral	
Difficulty concentrating	Anxiety or depression
Nervousness	Forgetfulness
Crying	Restlessness
Anorexia	Frequent arguments with others
Declining interest in sex	Feeling high strung much of the time
Frequent nail biting or hair tugging	Decrease in daily happiness

Note: Anxiety is a general sense of dread, fear, or worry not linked to a specific event, such as being anxious about your future.

FIGURE 16-2 Relationship between Stress and Job Performance



employees experienced hindrance stressors. An example of a challenge stressor was having high responsibility; having to deal with a lot of red tape to get the job done was an example of a hindrance stressor.^[6]

The right amount of stress prepares us for meeting difficult challenges and spurs us on to peak intellectual and physical performance. An optimum level of stress exists for most people and most tasks. In general, performance tends to be best under moderate amounts of stress. If the stress is too great, people become temporarily ineffective; they may freeze or choke. Under too little stress, people may become lethargic and inattentive. Figure 16-2 depicts the relationship between stress and job performance. An exception to this relationship is that certain negative forms of stress are likely to lower performance even if the stress is moderate. For example, the stress created by an intimidating supervisor or worrying about radiation poisoning—even in moderate amounts—will not improve performance.

Job stress can also lower job performance indirectly because distressed workers are more likely to be absent from the job, thereby not accomplishing as much work. A study of 323 health service workers in the United Kingdom found that job-related psychological distress, particularly depression, was associated with more days absent, and a greater number of times absent.^[7]

The optimum amount of stress is a positive force that is the equivalent of finding excitement and challenge. Your ability to solve problems and deal with challenge is enhanced when the right amount of adrenaline flows in your blood to guide you toward peak performance. In fact, highly productive people are sometimes said to be hooked on adrenaline.

Burnout and Stress. One of the major problems of prolonged stress is that it may lead to **burnout**, a condition of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion in response to long-term stressors. Burnout is also referred to as work exhaustion because fatigue is usually involved. Burned-out people are often cynical. Two other examples of burnout symptoms are irritability and impatience.

Burnout is a complex phenomenon with its causes centering on five factors. First is a feeling of limited autonomy or control in the workplace. Not being able to decide how to accomplish a task is significant, as well as having little say in choosing what tasks to do. Second is receiving insufficient recognition for accomplishments. Third is not having advancement opportunities and feeling stifled on the job. Fourth is having poor relationships with coworkers, including not getting much respect. Fifth is working in an organizational culture that is incompatible with your belief system, such as a vegetarian working for a poultry producer.^[8] A recent study with Dutch workers suggests that having a charismatic leader can help reduce some of the problems that lead to burnout.^[9] For example, a charismatic leader is likely to give ample recognition.

burnout

A condition of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion in response to long-term stressors.

FIGURE 16-3 Cause of Stress among the General Population

Source of Stress	People Affected
Work	67%
Money	78%
The economy	75%
Relationships (spouse, kids, girl/boyfriend)	59%
Family responsibilities	58%
Personal health concerns	58%
Health problems affecting my family	61%
Housing costs (e.g., mortgage or rent)	59%
Job stability	58%
Personal safety	42%

Source: APA (American Psychological Association) Stress in America Survey, published in Michael Price, "The Recession is Stressing Men More than Women," *Monitor on Psychology*, July/August 2009, p. 10.

The key symptom of burnout is the distancing that occurs in response to work over load. Burnout sufferers shift into a mode of doing the minimum as a way of protecting themselves. They start leaving work early and dehumanizing their clients, patients, and customers. People experiencing burnout may do their jobs, but their heart is not in it anymore.^[10]

A synthesis of dozens of studies shows that burnout often damages the physical health of workers. Partly because burnout is a consequence of stress, burnout increases the risk for cardiovascular disease as much as well-known risk factors such as smoking, an elevated body mass index, and too much bad cholesterol. Other potential links between burnout and health problems include poor health behaviors and sleep disorder.^[11]

Personality and Job Factors Contributing to Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2

Workers experience stress for many different reasons, including personal predispositions, factors stemming from the job, or the combined influence of both. If a person with an extreme negative predisposition has to deal with irate customers, he or she is more likely to experience substantial stress. Here we describe a sampling of important individual and organizational factors that contribute to job stress. Keep in mind, however, that a large number of potential stressors exist and that many of them overlap. For example, financial problems are a major source of stress, and they might contribute to relationship and health problems. Fighting about money harms relationships, and worrying about money can create health problems. Figure 16-3 lists some stressors facing the general population, and these sources of stress duplicate some of the stressors described in the following pages.

Personality Factors Predisposing People toward Stress. Individuals vary considerably in their susceptibility to job stress based on their personality traits and characteristics. Four such factors are described next.

perceived control

The belief that an individual has at his or her disposal a response that can control the negative aspects of an event.

Low Perceived Control A key factor in determining whether workers experience stress is how much they believe they can control a given adverse circumstance. **Perceived control** is the belief that an individual has at his or her disposal a response that can control the negative aspects of an event. A survey of over 100 studies indicated that people with a high level of perceived control had low levels of physical and psychological symptoms of stress. Conversely, people with low perceived control are more likely to experience work stress.^[12]

Low Self-Efficacy Self-efficacy, like perceived control, is another personal factor that influences susceptibility to stress. (Note that because self-efficacy is tied to a specific situation,

it is not strictly a personality trait.) When workers have both low perceived control and low self-efficacy, the stress consequences may be much worse. However, having high self-efficacy softens the stress consequences of demanding jobs.^[13] If you believe that you can successfully resolve a difficult problem, such as troubleshooting the reason for packages being sent to incorrect addresses, you will be less stressed.

Type A Behavior and Hostility A person with **Type A behavior** is demanding, impatient, and overstriving and is therefore prone to negative stress. Type A behavior has two main components. One is the tendency to try to accomplish too many things in too little time. This leads the Type A individual to be impatient and demanding. The other component is free-floating hostility. Because of this sense of urgency and hostility, trivial things irritate these people. People with Type A behavior are aggressive and hardworking.

Type A personalities frequently have cardiac diseases, such as heart attacks and strokes, at an early age, but only certain features of the Type A personality pattern may be related to coronary heart disease. The heart attack triggers are hostility, anger, cynicism, and suspiciousness, as contrasted to impatience, ambition, and being work driven. In fact, hostility is more strongly associated with coronary heart disease in men than smoking, drinking, overeating, or high levels of bad (LDL) cholesterol.^[14] A review of studies confirms that there is no significant association between Type A personalities and heart disease. However, there is a strong association between hostility and coronary heart disease. Hostility of the sort seen in habitual angry driving is also a heart disease risk factor.^[15] Note that the heart attack triggers also make for strained interpersonal relationships.

Negative Affectivity A major contributor to being stress prone is **negative affectivity**, a tendency to experience aversive emotional states. In more detail, negative affectivity is a pervasive disposition to experience emotional stress that includes feelings of nervousness, tension, and worry. The same disposition also includes such emotional states as anger, scorn, revulsion, guilt, self-dissatisfaction, and sadness.^[16] Such negative personalities seem to search for important discrepancies between what they would like and what exists. Poor interpersonal relationships often result from the frequent complaining of people with negative affectivity.

Job Sources of Stress. Almost any job situation can act as a stressor for some employees, but not necessarily for others. As just described, certain personality factors make it more likely that a person will experience job stress. Furthermore, other personal life stressors may spill over into the workplace, making it more likely that a person will experience job stress. In the words of human resource writer Pamela Babcock, "Employees' job-related anxieties such as deadline pressures and demanding bosses are compounded by recession-induced financial worries and domestic tensions that many workers find at home."^[17] Six frequently encountered job stressors are outlined in Figure 16-4 and described below.

Role Overload Including Extreme Jobs Having too much work to do, **role overload**, can create negative stress in two ways. First, the person may become fatigued and thus be less able to tolerate annoyances and irritations. Second, a person subject to unreasonable work demands may feel perpetually behind schedule, a situation that is itself a powerful stressor. Downsizing often creates overload because fewer people are left to handle the same workload as before. (If work is carefully streamlined, role overload is minimized.)

Work overload often takes the form of an **extreme job** in which the incumbent works at least 60 hours per week in a position that usually requires tight deadlines and heavy travel. Many of these jobs with long hours are found in information technology and financial services fields; yet, many business owners work comparable hours. The availability of work associates across the globe in different time zones facilitates extreme jobs. One financial analyst who immigrated to the United States from India reportedly works 120 hours per week, leaving only 48 hours for nonwork activities including sleep. Although many extreme job holders experience considerable job stress, many are exalted by the excitement and the high income.^[18]

In extreme form, role overload can kill. For example, death from too much work is so common in Japan that the word *karoshi* has been coined to label the situation. In a celebrated case, a Toyota chief engineer worked up to 114 hours of overtime a month in

Type A behavior

A behavior pattern in which the individuals is demanding, impatient, and overstriving, and therefore prone to negative stress.

negative affectivity

A tendency to experience aversive emotional states.

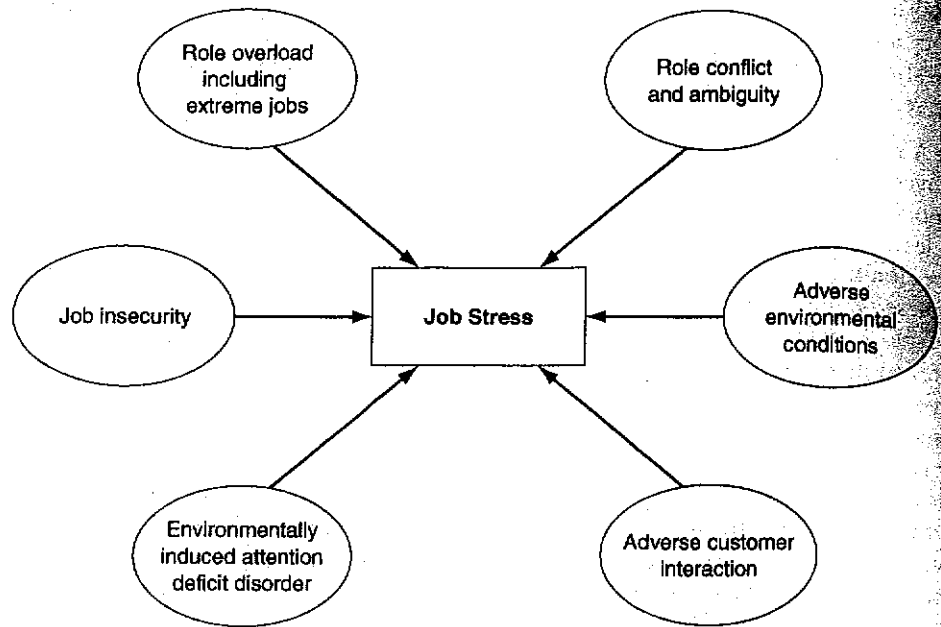
role overload

Having too much work to do.

extreme job

Job in which the incumbent works at least 60 hours per week in a position that usually requires tight deadlines and heavy travel.

FIGURE 16-4 Six Significant Sources of Job Stress



the six months before he died of heart failure. For decades, the Japanese government has been attempting without much success to set limits on hours of work. The consequences of role overload show up in claims for death and disability from overwork, and also in suicides attributed to work fatigue. Among 2,207 work-related suicides in Japanese companies in one year, the most frequent reason (672 suicides) was overwork.^[19]

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Role conflict, described in Chapter 9 as an important workplace conflict, is also a major workplace stressor. People experience stress when they have to choose between two sets of expectations. Suppose an accountant is asked by her manager to state company earnings in a way that conflicts with the professional norms of accountants. If she complies with her manager, she will feel that she is betraying her profession. If she does not comply with her manager, she will enter into dispute with the manager. The woman is likely to experience job stress.

Role ambiguity is a condition in which the jobholder receives confusing or poorly defined expectations. Workers in many organizations are placed in situations in which they are unsure of their true responsibilities. Some workers who are placed on a work team experience role ambiguity because they are asked to solve many problems by themselves. It is less ambiguous to have the manager tell you what to do. Many people experience stress symptoms when faced with role ambiguity.

role ambiguity

A condition in which the job holder receives confusing or poorly defined expectations.

Adverse Environmental Conditions A variety of adverse organizational conditions are stressors, as identified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Among these adverse organizational conditions are unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions, such as crowding, noise, air pollutions, or ergonomic problems. Enough polluted air within an office building can create a sick building in which a diverse range of airborne particles, vapors, molds, and gases pollute the indoor environment. The result can be headaches, nausea, and respiratory infections as well as the stress created by being physically ill.^[20]

Ergonomic problems refer to a poor fit between the physical and human requirements of a job. The demands of the modern workplace contribute to the development of musculoskeletal disorders. Working at a computer monitor for



prolonged periods of time can lead to adverse physical and psychological reactions. The symptoms include headaches and fatigue, along with eye problems. According to the Vision Syndrome Information Center, about 90 percent of people working on computers more than three hours a day have vision problems, with some 10 million a year seeking treatment. Common visual problems are dry eyes and blurred or double vision. Another vision-related problem is that people lean forward to scan the monitor, leading to physical problems such as back strain.

The repetitive-motion disorder most frequently associated with keyboarding and the use of optical scanners is **carpal tunnel syndrome**. The syndrome occurs when repetitive flexing and extension of the wrist causes the tendons to swell, thus trapping and pinching the median nerve. Carpal tunnel syndrome creates stress because of the pain and misery. About one in five computer users will suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome at some point.^[21] A less publicized problem is a sore thumb (overuse syndrome) related to continuous use of the space bar and mouse. The "BlackBerry thumb" stems from using the thumb to type on the very small keyboard.

The thoughts of having to permanently leave a job requiring keyboarding is another potential stressor. If ergonomic principles, such as erect posture, are incorporated into computer usage, these stress symptoms diminish. Office chairs developed in recent years allow for more flexibility of movement as workers shift rapidly between tasks such as moving toward the computer screen, placing feet on the desk, and then turning for a face-to-face conversation.^[22]

Commuting to and from work is a major stressor for many people that could be classified as an adverse environmental condition. We emphasize *for many people* because individual differences again come into play. Some people enjoy driving, or being on a train or bus, for such reasons as the opportunity to listen to the radio or read. A study with New Jersey–New York commuters found that train rides of over one hour are particularly stressful for commuters. Longer commutes were associated with elevated cortisol (a stress hormone) poorer performance on a proofreading task given the study participants, and high levels of perceived commuting stress. The researcher also observed that for many workers commuting is the most stressful aspect of work.^[23]

To avoid the stress of commuting in rush hour traffic, some workers leave home several hours before work, and then use the early arrival time to have breakfast, read the newspaper, or visit an athletic club near the work site.^[24] Furthermore, a major reason many people work from home is to avoid the stresses associated with commuting.

Adverse Interaction with Customers and Clients and Emotional Labor Interactions with customers can be a major stressor. Part of the problem is that the sales associate often feels helpless when placed in conflict with a customer. The sales associate is told that "the customer is always right." Furthermore, the store manager usually sides with the customer in a dispute with the sales associate. Unreasonable demands by clients and customers can also be stressful, such as customers who offer to buy a product or service below cost. During the Great Recession, many potential customers would frustrate car dealer sales reps by making offers 50 percent below sticker price, with an attitude of "take it or leave it." Being subjected to sexual harassment by clients and customers is another stressor widely experienced by store sales associates, especially young women.

Related to adverse customer interaction is the stressor of having to control the expression of emotion to please or to avoid displeasing a customer. Imagine having to smile at a customer who belittles you or your employer. Alicia A. Grandey, associate professor of psychology at Penn State University, defines **emotional labor** as the process of regulating both feelings and expressions to meet organizational goals.^[25] The process involves both surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting means faking expressions, such as smiling, whereas deep acting involves controlling feelings, such as suppressing anger toward a customer you perceive to be annoying.

A study with 285 pairs of employees and customers suggests that deep acting, rather than maintaining an artificial smile, leads to better customer service.^[26] As a result of the better customer service, it is possible that the customer will treat the associate better resulting in less stress for the latter.

carpal tunnel syndrome

A condition that occurs when repetitive flexing and extension of the wrist causes the tendons to swell, thus trapping and pinching the median nerve.

emotional labor

The process of regulating both feelings and expressions to meet organizational goals.

Sales workers and customer service representatives often experience emotional labor because so often they have to fake facial expressions and feelings so as to please customers. Nevertheless, according to one study, the top five occupations in terms of emotional labor demands are (1) police and sheriff's patrol officers, (2) social workers, (3) psychiatrists, (4) supervisors of police and detectives, and (5) registered nurses. Bill and account collectors ranked 15!¹²⁷

Engaging in emotional labor for prolonged periods of time can lead to job dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout. Surface acting creates more dissatisfaction. A contributing cause is that faking expressions and emotions takes a physiological toll, such as the intestines churning. Workers who engage in emotional labor may also develop cardiovascular problems and weakened immune systems. The good news is that being extraverted helps reduce some of the stress associated with both surface acting and deep acting.¹²⁸ (Perhaps if you like people, you can better tolerate their unruly behavior.)

Environmentally Induced Attention Deficit Disorder According to psychiatrist Edward Hallowell, many people suffer from an attention deficit disorder brought on by technology and activity overload. (The condition is similar to communication or information overload.) This problem appears to be a combination of the environment and the individual who chooses to overuse information technology devices. The symptoms of environmentally induced attention deficit disorder include frequently feeling rushed and impatient, being easily distracted, forgetfulness, and having little time for creative thought. In short, the person feels frazzled. A major cause of this type of attention deficit disorder is attempting to do more in less time.¹²⁹ Many of the suggestions about work habits and time management described later are useful in coping with environmentally induced attention deficit disorder.

Job Insecurity and Job Loss Worrying about losing your job is a major stressor. Even when jobs are plentiful, having to search for another job and facing the prospect of geographic relocation are stressors for many people. Downsizing and corporate mergers (which usually result in downsizing) have contributed to job insecurity. The anticipation of layoffs among employees can increase negative stress and lower job performance. In addition, the survivors of a downsizing often experience pressure from the fear of future cuts, loss of friends, and worry about a sudden increase in workload.

Job loss is usually a more intense stressor than worrying about losing one's job. Losing a job often leads to the stressors of financial problems and relationship conflict. Some people who lose their job become so stressed and depressed that they commit suicide. An unfortunate example is that between 2006 and 2008, France Télécom laid off approximately 22,000 workers. Twenty-four laid off workers committed suicide, with the labor union blaming the layoffs for most of the suicides.¹³⁰ We hypothesize here that workers with good resources, such as supportive friends and family, good professional contacts, and effective job search skills are the least likely to commit suicide after job loss.

So which of the job stressors described have the most adverse effect on job performance? An analysis of 69 groups, comprising 35,265 employees indicated that role ambiguity and situational constraints are the most negatively related to job performance. A *situational constraint* refers to a situation in which conditions in an employee's job setting inhibit or constrain performance, such as improper machinery or inadequate supplies.¹³¹ The job stressor, adverse environmental conditions, includes a few situational constraints.

Methods and Techniques for Stress Management

Unless stress is managed properly, it may lead to harmful long-term consequences, including disabling physical illness and career retardation. Managing stress refers to controlling stress by making it a constructive force in your life. Managing thus refers to both preventing and reducing stress. However, the distinction between methods of preventing and reducing stress is not clear-cut. For example, physical exercise not only reduces stress, it also contributes to a relaxed lifestyle that helps you prevent stress.

A key principle about managing stress is that you are less likely to experience distress from stressors if you have the right resources. Having the right personality characteristics

such as high perceived control, high self-efficacy, and not being hostile helps ward off stress. External resources to help ward off negative stress include having a network of friends who provide support, an encouraging manager, and programs for helping distressed employees.^[32] Assume, for example, that a worker is heavily stressed by a long rush hour commute. If the company provides flexible working hours that help decrease commuting during rush hour, the worker experience less of a hindrance stressor.

Coping with, or managing, stress includes hundreds of activities, with substantial individual differences in which technique is effective. Running is a case in point. For many people, running or jogging is an excellent method of stress reduction. Others find that running creates new stressors, such as aching knees, shin splints, dizziness from breathing in vehicle exhausts, and worrying about being hit by vehicles. In general, coping efforts involve cognitions and behaviors aimed at managing the stressor and its associated emotions. For example, you might have to decrease the troublesome elements in your job (such as role overload) and also deal with the tension generated by overwork. The following subsections describe eight methods for managing stress, including a list of everyday stress busters.

Eliminate or Modify the Stressor. The most potent method of managing stress is to eliminate or modify the stressor giving you trouble. One value of relaxation techniques and tranquilizing medication is that they calm a person enough so that he or she can deal constructively with the stressor. A helpful way to attack the cause of stress is to follow the steps in problem solving and decision making. You clarify the problem, identify the alternatives, weigh the alternatives, and select one alternative. One difficulty, however, is that your evaluation of the real problem may be inaccurate. There is always a limit to self-analysis. For example, a person might think that work overload is the stressor when the true stressor is low self-efficacy.

A major strategy for modifying a stressor is to rethink your belief about a challenging situation. According to the **cognitive behavioral approach to stress management**, people learn to recognize how pessimistic and distorted thoughts of gloom and doom create stress. After recognition of the problem, the person learns to replace the overly pessimistic thinking with more realistic or optimistic thinking. Assume that Mandy is stressed about the prospects of losing her job. Using a cognitive-behavioral approach to stress management, she begins to think, "Would losing this job really be that bad? If this job folds, I could move to Denver where I've always wanted to live, and restart my career." Mandy is right on target because a synthesis of many studies found that cognitive-behavioral approaches are the most effective method of combating workplace stress.^[33]

cognitive behavioral approach to stress management

A method by which people learn to recognize how pessimistic and distorted thoughts of gloom and doom create stress.

Get Appropriate Physical Exercise. A moderate amount of physical exercise is a cornerstone of managing stress and achieving wellness. To manage stress, it is important to select an exercise program that is physically challenging but does not lead to overexertion and muscle and bone injury. Competitive sports, if taken too seriously, can actually increase stress. Aerobic exercises are most beneficial because they make you breathe faster and raise your heart rate. Walking is highly recommended as a stress reducer because it is inherently relaxing, and offers many of the benefits of other forms of exercise with a minimum risk of physical danger. Doing housework, yard work, and washing and waxing a vehicle are examples of everyday forms of gentle exercise that offer the side benefits of getting tasks accomplished. A major mental and emotional benefit of physical exercise stems from endorphins produced in the thalamus portion of the brain. The endorphins are associated with a state of euphoria referred to as "runner's high." Endorphins also work like pain killers, adding to their stress-reduction value.

Physical exercise directly reduces stress, and also reduces the risk of disorders that are both debilitating themselves, and as a result become intense stressors. As researched by the American College of Sports Medicine, among the benefits of exercise are (a) a 50 percent reduction in the incidence of diabetes, (b) a 40 percent reduction in the incidence of high blood pressure, (c) a 40 percent reduction in the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, and (d) a decrease in depression as effective as Prozac or behavioral therapy.^[34]

Millions of people seek to reduce and prevent stress through yoga, which is both physical exercise and a way of developing mental attitudes that calm the body and

mind. One of yoga's many worthwhile goals is to solder a union between the mind and body, thereby achieving harmony and tranquility. Another benefit of yoga is that it helps people place aside negative thoughts that act as stressors. A caution about Yoga is that too much bending too soon can lead to injured hamstring muscles and torn blood vessels.

Rest Sufficiently. Rest offers benefits similar to those of exercise, such as stress reduction, improved concentration, improved energy, and better tolerance for frustration. Achieving proper rest is closely linked to getting proper exercise. The current interest in adult napping reflects the awareness that proper rest makes a person less stress prone and enhances productivity. A study was conducted of 23,681 healthy Greek adults over a six-year period, many of whom napped for about 30 minutes three times a week. Study participants who napped had 37 percent lower risk of dying from a heart attack than the people who did not. A criticism offered of this study is that the people who napped may also take better care of their bodies and mind in general.¹³⁵¹ The connection of this study to stress management is that many heart attacks are stress induced.

A growing number of firms have napping facilities for workers, and many workers nap at their desks or in their parked vehicles during lunch breaks. Naps of about 15 minutes duration taken during the workday are used both as energizers and as stress reducers. Napping can help a worker become less stressed as well as more productive. A rested brain is a more effective brain. To keep the effectiveness of workday napping in perspective, workers who achieve sufficient rest during normal sleeping hours have less need for a nap during working hours.¹³⁶¹

Maintain a Healthy Diet. Another practical method of stress reduction and prevention is to maintain a well-balanced, and therefore healthy, diet. Nutritious food is valuable for physical and mental health, making it easier to cope with frustrations that are potential stressors. Some non-nutritious foods, such as those laden with caffeine or sugar, tend to enhance a person's level of stress. According to the Dietary Guidelines of the United States Department of Agriculture, a healthy diet is one that

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts
- Is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

These recommendations are for the general public over two years of age. Using MyPyramid, the government personalizes a recommended diet, taking into account our age, sex, and amount of physical exercise. Consult <http://www.mypyramid.gov>, as shown in Figure 16-5. Also, nutritionists highly recommend fibers found in whole-grain breads, rolls and cereals, and brown rice.

FIGURE 16-5 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Food Groups

Grains

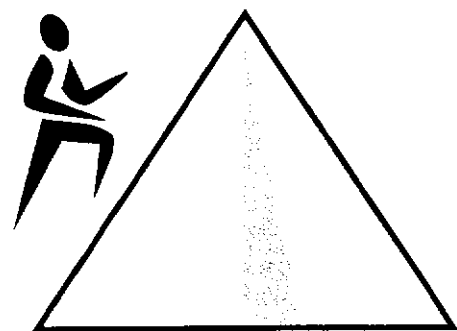
Vegetables

Fruits

Milk

Meat & Beans

Oils



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, <http://www.mypyramid.gov>.

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 16-1

Visualization for Stress Reduction

A standard, easy-to-use method for reducing stress symptoms is to visualize a pleasant and calm experience. You need to concentrate carefully on your object or scene, otherwise stress reduction is unlikely to take place. If you are experiencing stress right now, try the technique. Otherwise, wait until the next time you perceive your body to be experiencing stress. In this context, visualization means to picture yourself doing something that you would like to do. Whatever fantasy suits your fancy will work, according to the advocates of this relaxation technique. Visualizations that work for some people include smiling at a loved one, floating on a cloud,

caressing a baby, petting a kitten or puppy, and walking in the woods. Notice that all of these scenes are relaxing rather than exciting. What visualization would work for you?

To implement the technique, close your eyes and bring the pleasant image into focus in your mind. Think of nothing else at the moment (as in meditation). Imagine that a DVD of the pleasant experience is playing on the television screen in your brain. Breathe softly and savor the experience. Slowly return to reality, refreshed, relaxed, and ready to tackle the challenges of the day.

Build a Support Network. A support network is a group of people who can listen to your problems and provide emotional support. These people, or even one person, can help you through your difficult episodes. Members of your network can provide you with a sense of closeness, warmth, and acceptance that will reduce your stress. Also, the simple expedient of putting your feelings into words can be a healing experience. The way to develop this support network is to become a good listener so that the other person will reciprocate. A support network is therefore a method of stress management based squarely on effective interpersonal skills.

support network

A group of people who can listen to your problems and provide emotional support.

Practice Visualization and Meditation. Perhaps the most effortless and enjoyable relaxation technique for managing stress is to visualize a pleasant experience, as explained in Skill-Building Exercise 16-1. Visualization, like so many stress-reduction techniques, including meditation, requires concentration. Concentrating helps slow down basic physiological processes, such as the heartbeat and dissipates stress. Visualization, meditation, prayer, and chanting all appear to offer such advantages as lowering heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen consumption. These techniques also alleviate symptoms associated with such conditions as hypertension, insomnia, depression, and anxiety.^[37] Forcing yourself to concentrate is also valuable because a key stress symptom is difficulty in concentrating.

Meditation is a relaxation technique used to quiet the mind, as well as to relieve stress, and is more complicated than simple visualization. (The well-known relaxation response is essentially a form of meditation.) A typical meditation technique proceeds as follows: Hold your back straight, and relax the body. Take three gentle breaths, breathing in and out through the nostrils. Let the respiration follow its natural flow. Your body breathes as if it was fast asleep, yet you remain vigilant. If you become distracted, simply let go of the thought, and return to the breath. It is helpful to count each inhale up to 21. Each time your mind wanders, return back to one. Practice meditating about 20 minutes a day, and meditate on the spot after a stressful event or thought.^[38] The breathing part of meditation is so important that it is an everyday method of stress reduction itself.

Practice Everyday Methods of Stress Reduction. The simple expedient of learning how to relax is an important method of reducing the tension and anxiety brought about by both challenge and hindrance stressors. Visualization of a pleasant experience is one such method. A sample of everyday suggestions for relaxation and other methods of stress reduction are presented in Figure 16-6. If you can accomplish these, you are less likely to need tranquilizing medication to keep you calm and in control. Your stress symptoms will ordinarily return, however, if you do not eliminate and modify the stressor. If the stress is an emotional conflict you do not see or understand, assistance from a mental health professional is recommended.

Now that you have studied various method of managing stress, reinforce your thinking by doing Skill-Building Exercise 16-2.

FIGURE 16-6 Stress Busters

- ④ Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Inhale and your heart beats faster. Exhale and your heart beats more slowly, and slow down the cardiac muscle.^[31]
- ④ Place your thumbs behind your ears and spread your fingers on the top of your head. Move your scalp back and forth gently by rotating your fingers for 15-20 seconds.
- ④ Give in to your emotions. If you are angry, disgusted, or confused, admit your feelings. Suppressing your emotions adds to stress.
- ④ Take a brief break from the stressful situation and do something small and constructive, such as washing your car, emptying a wastebasket, or getting a haircut.
- ④ Get a massage, because it can loosen tight muscles, improve your blood circulation, and calm you down.
- ④ Get help with your stressful task from a coworker, supervisor, or friend.
- ④ Concentrate intensely on reading, surfing the Internet, a sport, or a hobby. Contrary to common sense, concentration is at the heart of stress reduction.
- ④ Have a quiet place at home and have a brief idle period there every day.
- ④ Take a leisurely day off from your routine.
- ④ Finish something you have started, however small. Accomplishing almost anything reduces some stress.
- ④ Stop to smell the flowers, make friends with a young child or elderly person, or play with a kitten or puppy.
- ④ Strive to do a good job, but not a perfect job.
- ④ Work with your hands, doing a pleasant task.
- ④ Find somebody or something that makes you laugh, and have a good laugh.
- ④ Minimize drinking caffeinated or alcoholic beverages, and drink fruit juice or water instead. Grab a piece of fruit rather than a can of beer.
- ④ Help somebody less fortunate than you. The flood of good feelings will act like endorphins.

Personal Stress Management Action Plan

Most people face a few powerful stressors in their work and personal life, but few people take the time to clearly identify these stressors or develop an action plan for remedial action. The purpose of this exercise is to make you an exception. Here is an opportunity

to develop an inventory of your stressors, think through the problems they may be causing you, and develop action plans you might take to remedy the situation. Use the form below or create one with a word processing table or a spreadsheet.

<i>Work or School Stressor</i>	<i>Symptoms This Stressor Is Creating for Me</i>	<i>My Action Plan to Manage This Stressor</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
<i>Personal Life Stressor</i>	<i>Symptoms This Stressor Is Creating for Me</i>	<i>My Action Plan to Manage This Stressor</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		

Seven days after preparing this work sheet, observe if any of your stress symptoms have diminished. Also, identify those stressors for which only a long-term solution is possible. One student reported that a major work stressor he faced is that he wanted to work in international business, and emphasize doing business with Italian fashion companies. Yet he was experiencing stress because he had almost zero knowledge of the Italian language or culture. (By the way, can you offer this man any suggestions?)

IMPROVING PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Achieving personal productivity is more in vogue than ever. Companies strive to operate with smaller staffs than in the past by pushing workers to achieve higher productivity. Particularly during a recession, workers pressure themselves to produce more per hour of work because many of them fear for their jobs. At the same time, there is a movement toward simplifying personal life by reducing clutter and cutting back on tasks that do not add much to the quality of life. Personal productivity refers to the amount of resources, including time, you consume to achieve a certain level of output. We approach productivity improvement from four perspectives: (1) dealing with procrastination, (2) attitudes and values that enhance personal productivity, (3) work habits and skills that enhance personal productivity, and (4) overcoming time wasters.

Dealing with Procrastination

The person who procrastinates delays action for no good reason on tasks that need to be done. Procrastination results in a gap between intention and action. A major reason why people procrastinate is that they want to feel good at the moment rather than reap future rewards. As such, procrastination is a form of impulsivity.^[39] Why bother getting in touch with my boss to discuss my prospects for promotion when I can send a Tweet to 500 people right now?

Procrastination lowers productivity because it wastes time and many important tasks never get done. Another serious problem is that undone tasks rumble around in the back of your consciousness, thereby decreasing your concentration. Chronic procrastination can even lead to debt, divorce, and job loss. Even productive people sometimes procrastinate. If these people did not procrastinate, they would be even more productive.

Many people regard procrastination as a laughable weakness, particularly because procrastinators themselves joke about the problem. Yet procrastination has been evaluated as a profound, debilitating problem, with between 20 and 25 percent of working adults identifying themselves as chronic procrastinators.^[40] Approximately 90 percent of college students report problems with overdue papers and delayed studying. About 25 percent are chronic procrastinators, and many of them drop out of school.^[41] The enormity of the procrastination problem makes it worthwhile to examine methods for bringing it under control. Do Self-Assessment Quiz 16-1 to think through your own tendencies toward procrastination—and don't wait until tomorrow.

Choose from among the following suggestions for controlling procrastination, based on those that appear to best fit your type of procrastination. A combination of techniques is likely to be the most effective.

1. **Commit to what you want in life.** If you are not committed to something you want in life, you are likely to be chronic procrastinator. The reason is that it is difficult to prioritize and take action. (See the later discussion about a personal mission and work habits.)^[42] Your commitment to what you want in life will often translate into forgoing short-term pleasure, such as stopping by a café, in order to finish a project due today.
2. **Calculate the cost of procrastination.** You can reduce procrastination by calculating its cost. You might lose out on obtaining a high-paying job you really want by not having your résumé and cover letter ready on time. Your cost of procrastination would include the difference in compensation between the job you do find and the one you really wanted. Another cost would be the loss of potential job satisfaction.

personal productivity

The amount of resources, including time, you consume to achieve a certain level of output.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4

procrastination

Delaying action on tasks that need to be done for no good reason.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZ 16-1

Procrastination Tendencies

Directions: Circle yes or no for each item:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I usually do my best work under the pressure of deadlines. | Yes | No |
| 2. Before starting a project, I go through such rituals as sharpening every pencil, straightening up my desk more than once, and reading and responding to all possible e-mail. | Yes | No |
| 3. I crave the excitement of the "last-minute rush," such as researching and writing a paper right before the deadline. | Yes | No |
| 4. I often think that if I delay something, it will go away, or the person who asked for it will forget about it. | Yes | No |
| 5. I extensively research something before taking action, such as obtaining three different estimates before getting the brakes repaired on my car. | Yes | No |
| 6. I have a great deal of difficulty getting started on most projects, even those I enjoy. | Yes | No |
| 7. I keep waiting for the right time to do something, such as getting started on an important report. | Yes | No |
| 8. I often underestimate the time needed to do a project, and say to myself, "I can do this quickly, so I'll wait until next week." | Yes | No |
| 9. It is difficult for me to finish most projects or activities. | Yes | No |
| 10. I have several favorite diversions or distractions that I use to keep me from doing something unpleasant, such as a difficult homework assignment. | Yes | No |

Total Yes Responses _____

Scoring and Interpretation: The greater the number of "yes" responses, the more likely it is that you have a serious procrastination problem. A score of 8, 9, or 10 strongly suggests that your procrastination is lowering your productivity.

3. Follow the WIFO principle, which stands for "worst in, first out."^[43] If you tackle the worst task on your list first, doing the other tasks may function like a small reward. You get to do what you dislike the least by doing first what you dislike the most. WIFO is particularly effective when faced with a number of tasks simultaneously.
4. Break the task into manageable chunks. To reduce procrastination, cut down a task that seems overwhelming into smaller projects that seem less formidable. If your job calls for preparing an enormous database, begin by assembling some readily available information. Then take the next step by assembling another small segment of the database—perhaps all customers whose last names begin with Z. Think of your task as pulling together a series of small databases that will fit into a master database.
5. Make a commitment to other people. Try to make it imperative that you get something done on time by making it a commitment to one or more other people. You might announce to coworkers that you are going to get something accomplished by a certain date. If you fail to meet this date, you are likely to feel embarrassed.
6. Remove some clutter from your mind. Procrastination escalates when people have many unfinished projects in the back of their mind, draining their concentration. Having too much to do can freeze us into inaction. Just eliminating a few trivial items from your to-do list can give you enough mental energy to overcome procrastination on a few major tasks. This approach to overcoming procrastination requires that you apply enough self-discipline to take the first step. Notice the unfortunate cycle: Procrastination leads to poor concentration (as described above), and procrastination hampers concentration.
7. Satisfy your stimulation quota in constructive ways. If you procrastinate because you enjoy the rush of scrambling to make deadlines, find a more constructive way of using busyness to keep you humming. If you need a high level of stimulation,

enrich your life with extra projects and learning new skills. The fullness of your schedule will provide you the stimulation you had been receiving from squeezing yourself to make deadlines and reach appointments on time.^[44]

8. **Eliminate tangible rewards you are giving yourself for procrastinating.** If you are procrastinating through socializing with coworkers, taking a walk to obtain a beverage, surfing the Internet, or any other pleasant experience—stop rewarding yourself. Just sit alone in your work area doing nothing while procrastinating. If you remove the pleasant activities from your stalling routine, you may be able to reduce procrastination.

Enhancing Personal Productivity through Attitudes and Values

Developing good work habits and time management practices is often a matter of developing the right attitudes toward your work and toward time. If, for example, you think that your schoolwork or job is important and that time is a precious resource, you will be on your way toward developing good work habits. In this section, we describe a group of attitudes, values, and beliefs that can help a person become more productive through better use of time and improved work habits.

Begin with a Mission and Goals. A mission, or general purpose, propels you toward being productive. Assume that a person says, "My mission is to be an outstanding professional in my field and a loving, constructive spouse and parent." The mission serves as a compass to direct your activities, such as being well organized in order to accomplish more work and be highly valued by your employer. Goals are more specific than mission statements; they support the mission statement, but the effect is the same. Being committed to a goal also propels you toward good use of time. If you know that you can obtain the position in international business that you really want by mastering a second language, you are likely to work diligently on learning that language. Consultant Dean Fuhrman supports our point with this advice:

If you really want to manage your time and get stuff done, have a burning life and work purpose that is a beacon for what you do. While they are useful, the lists, the shortcuts—all that stuff—pales in comparison to purpose for time management.^[45]

Skill-Building Exercise 16-3 gives you the opportunity to establish a mission statement and supporting goals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5

SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 16-3

Using a Mission Statement and Goals to Power Work Habits

People with a well-defined mission statement and supporting goals tend to have better work habits and time management than those who do not. The following exercise is designed to help you establish a mission statement and goals so that you will be energized to be more productive.

- Mission Statement:** To help develop your mission statement, or general purpose in life, ask yourself, "What are my five biggest wishes in life?" These wishes give you a hint to your purpose because they point toward an ideal purpose in life. Feel free to think big, because mission statements tend toward being idealistic.
- Long-Range Goals to Support Mission Statement:** Now write down what long-range goals would support your mission statement. Suppose your mission statement related to "creating a better life for people who are disadvantaged." Your long-range goals might include establishing a foundation that would fund your efforts. You would also need to be successful enough in your career to get the foundation started.
- Intermediate-Range Goals to Support Long-Range Goals:** Write down the intermediate-range goals needed to support the long-range goals. You will probably need to complete your education, obtain broad experience, and identify a lucrative form of self-employment.
- Weekly Goals to Support Intermediate-Range Goals:** Write down what you have to do this week to help you complete your education, such as researching and writing a paper for a particular course, registering for courses for next term, and inquiring about career opportunities in your field.
- Today's Goals to Support Weekly Goals (My To-Do List):** Here's where your lofty purpose in life gets translated into reality. What do you have to do today to get that paper written? Do you need to get your car battery replaced, so you can get to the library, so you can write your paper, so you can graduate, so you can become rich, so you can ultimately help all those people who are disadvantaged? Get going.

Work Smarter, Not Harder. People caught up in trying to accomplish a job often wind up working hard, but not in an imaginative way that leads to good results. Much time and energy are therefore wasted. A working-smart approach also requires that you spend a few minutes carefully planning how to implement your task. An example of working smarter, not harder, is to invest a few minutes of critical thinking before conducting a telemarketing campaign for home replacement windows. Develop a list of homeowners of houses of at least 15 years old. People with relatively new homes are poor prospects for replacing their windows.

deliberate practice

Strong effort to improve target performance over time.

A new perspective on working smarter, not harder, is to keep perfecting your skills through deliberate practice—strong effort to improve target performance over time. Practice alone does not lead to nearly as much improvement as thinking through what you have done to look for areas for improvement.^[46] Feedback from others is also helpful. Assume that a loan officer at a bank signs off on loans to small business owners. She engages in deliberate practice by following the history of these loans to evaluate which business owners proved to be good risks, and those that proved to be poor risks. She frequently asks herself, “What did I miss here? “What did I do right here?” In this way, the loan officer is working smarter by honing her risk-evaluation skills.

Value Orderliness and Cleanliness. An orderly desk, work area, briefcase, hard drive, or storage drive does not inevitably indicate an orderly mind. Yet, it does help most people become more productive because they can better focus their mind. Being surrounded by a collection of small, unfinished tasks interferes with your ability to focus on major tasks. Also, less time is wasted and less energy is expended if you do not have to hunt for information that you thought you had on hand. The central message of the best-seller *Getting Things Done* by David Allen is that to achieve maximum efficiency and relaxation is to clear clutter both outside and inside your mind.^[47] One way of clearing clutter from your mind is to write down your tasks on to-do lists. If you are orderly, you clear clutter.

Knowing where information is and what information you have available is a way of being in control of your job. When your job gets out of control, you are probably working at less than peak efficiency. Valuing cleanliness improves productivity in several ways. According to the Japanese system, cleanliness is the bedrock of quality. Also, after you have thoroughly cleaned your work area, you will usually attain a fresh outlook.

As with any suggestions about human behavior, individual differences exist with respect to the impact of clutter on productivity. Internet guru Esther Dyson has a work area so cluttered that she gives the impression of being an exaggerated case of a person needing help from a personal productivity consultant. It has also been argued that focusing too much on tidiness might detract from creative thinking, and that many messy people, such as Albert Einstein, believe that a messy work area facilitates their creative thinking. To quote the great man, “If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what the, is an empty desk?”^[48]

Value Good Attendance and Punctuality. Good attendance and punctuality are expected of both experienced and inexperienced employees. You cannot be productive unless you are physically present in your work area. The same principle applies whether you work on company premises or at home. One exception is that some people can work through solutions to job problems while engaged in recreation. Keep in mind, too, that being late for or absent from meetings sends the silent message that you do not regard the meeting as being important. Also, being late for a meeting, whether face-to-face or virtual, is regarded quite negatively by many managers. Some managers even lock the door to the meeting room after the meeting has begun. Whether the person is late or absent for work, or just for a meeting, the behavior is interpreted by many as demonstrating irresponsibility.

Attain a Balance in Life and Avoid Being a Workaholic. A productive attitude to maintain is that overwork can lead to negative stress and burnout. Proper physical rest and relaxation can contribute to mental alertness and an improved ability to cope with frustration. Many people do not achieve enough rest and relaxation as inferred from the

avoidance of vacations. A recent survey by Right Management showed that 66 percent of 667 surveyed workers had not used all their vacation time in the year studied.^[49] During a recession, the tendency increases to not take all the vacation time allotted to the employee.

The environmentally induced attention deficit disorder and extreme jobs described above represent a life out of balance. A strategy for preventing overwork is to strive for a balance in which you derive satisfaction from various spheres of life. Major spheres in addition to work include family life, romance, sports, the arts and music, faith, and intellectual growth.

A strongly recommended technique for attaining balance between work and other spheres of life is to learn how to say no diplomatically to your boss and family members.^[50] For example, your boss might ask you to take on a project when you are already overloaded. It would be necessary to *occasionally* explain that you are so overloaded that you could not do a good job with the new assignment. And, you might have to *occasionally* turn down your family's or friend's request to take a weekend vacation when you face heavy work demands.

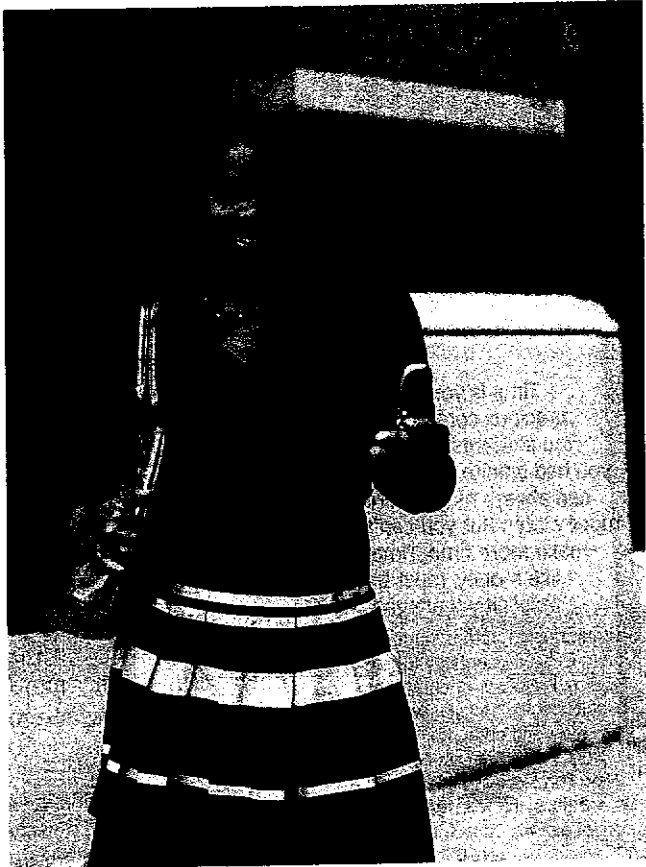
Neglecting the normal need for rest and relaxation can lead to workaholism, an addiction to work in which not working is an uncomfortable experience. Some types of workaholics are perfectionists who are never satisfied with their work and therefore find it difficult to leave work behind, and have no real hobbies outside of the office. In addition, the perfectionist-type workaholic may become heavily focused on control of people and information, leading to rigid behavior and strained interpersonal relationships. Many workaholics take laptops to bed, and leave their cell phones on during the night to catch any potential calls from distant time zones. However, some people who work long and hard are classified as achievement-oriented workaholics who thrive on hard work and are usually highly productive.^[51] For example, a person with strong family values might nevertheless work 65 hours per week for one year while establishing a new business. In contrast, giving up on the income and status you are striving for to avoid working long hours may not be a good idea.

workaholism

An addiction to work in which not working is an uncomfortable experience.

Increase Your Energy. According to Tony Schwartz, the founder of the Energy Project in New York City, increasing your energy is the best way to get more done faster and better. Becoming more energetic leads to more productivity gains than merely working longer hours. Schwartz believes that energy has four wellsprings—the body, emotions, mind, and spirit. Rituals can be established to build energy in the four areas, highlighted as follows:

1. **Body.** Increasing bodily energy closely follows some of the guidelines for stress management described above. Proper nutrition, moderate physical exercise, adequate rest, and taking brief breaks from work all enhance a person's energy level.
2. **Emotions.** Positive emotions bring us much more energy than do negative ones. Being in the fight-or-flight mode too frequently lowers emotional energy. Deep abdominal breathing can help ward off negative emotion. A powerful ritual that helps generate positive emotion is to express appreciation to others, following the suggestions for giving recognition presented in Chapter 11. Overcoming the idea that you are a victim can also bring about positive energy.
3. **Mind.** To enhance mental energy, it is particularly important to minimize distractions that lead to constant multitasking. Switching to another task increases the amount of time required to complete the primary tasks by up to 25 percent, a phenomenon known as *switching time*.



We recognize, however, that you still have to live in a modern world. If you are preparing a report, and your boss sends you an urgent IM, or your sick parent or child sends you a text message, it is natural to be distracted away from your primary task. The sensible strategy is to minimize distractions, not eliminate them completely.

4. **Spirit.** Participating in activities that give you a sense of meaning and purpose, such as coaching and mentoring others, boosts the energy of the spirit. Being attentive to your deeper needs, such as being concerned about human or animal welfare, can boost your effectiveness and satisfaction on the job.^[52]

You may have observed that this energy program for business executives is quite similar to what you have been studying in relation to developing interpersonal skills.

Enhancing Personal Productivity through Work Habits and Skills

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6

Overcoming procrastination and developing the right attitudes contribute to personal productivity. Effective work habits and skills are also essential for high productivity. Six key work habits and skills are described next. They represent a mixture of traditional productivity boosters and those geared toward information technology.

Prepare a To-Do List and Set Priorities. At the heart of every time management system is list making, whether the list is placed on an index card, in a leather-bound planner, or in a personal digital assistant, or smart phone. The to-do list is the basic tool for achieving your daily goals, which in turn helps you achieve bigger goals and your mission. Almost every successful person in any field composes a list of important and less important tasks that need to be done. Many business executives stick a to-do list in their jacket pocket each morning. Before you compose a useful list, you need to set aside a few minutes of quiet time every day to sort out the tasks at hand. This is the most basic aspect of planning.

The “Getting Things Done” system of time management guru David Allen is built on a base of a to-do list. First, you transfer all the tasks floating around in your head onto paper or into software, and sort them into a system of prioritized lists. Second, you take the items on the to-do lists (such as “sanitize the bakery”) into “next actions,” or necessary steps to accomplish the goal.^[53] For the task in question, you might send an e-mail to a commercial cleaning company in your area.

As is well known, it is helpful to set priorities for items on the to-do list. A typical system is to use A to signify critical or essential items, B to signify important items, and C for the least important ones. Although an item might be regarded as a C (e.g., emptying the wood shavings from the electronic pencil sharpener), it still makes a contribution to your management of time and sense of well-being. Accomplishing anything reduces some stress. Also, many people obtain satisfaction from crossing off an item on their list, however trivial. If you are at all conscientious, small, unaccomplished items will come back to interfere with your concentration.

To-do lists contribute enormously to productivity, yet a to-do list may have to be revamped to meet the changing demands of the day. Marissa Mayer, vice president, Search Products and User Experience, at Google, explains that she keeps a task list in a text file. She uses the list as high-priority things to focus on. “But at Google things can change pretty fast. This morning I had my list of what I thought I was going to do today, but now I’m doing entirely different things,” says Mayer.^[54] As a result, she quickly prepares a new to-do list.

Preparing to-do lists should not become an end in itself, with so much time devoted to list making that accomplishing some of the tasks are neglected. The compulsive list maker sometimes neglects seeing the big picture of what needs to get done. Another danger is filling the to-do list with items you would have to accomplish anyway, such as “check e-mail” or “handle customer inquiry.” The to-do list can become so long that it becomes an overwhelming task.

Streamline Your Work and Emphasize Important Tasks. As companies continue to operate with fewer workers than in the past despite prosperity, more unproductive work must be eliminated. Getting rid of unproductive work is part of *business process improvement* in which work processes are radically redesigned and simplified. Every employee is expected

“ Time is your most precious commodity. You students live as if you had infinite time. You can always make more money later. But you can’t make more time. Time, like money, must be explicitly managed.”

—Paraphrased from comments made to his students by Randy Pausch, Professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, and co-author of the best-seller, *The Last Lecture* (New York: Hyperion, 2008).^[55] Before and after his death at age 47, Pausch attained a cult following.

to get rid of work that does not contribute to productivity or help customers. In general, to streamline your work, look for duplication of effort and waste. An example of duplication of effort would be to routinely send people e-mail and voicemail messages covering the same topic. An example of waste would be to call a meeting for disseminating information that could easily be communicated by e-mail.

Emphasizing important tasks means that you make sure to take care of A items on your to-do list. It also implies that you search to accomplish a few work activities that, if done well, would make a big difference in your job performance. Although important tasks may take less time to accomplish than many routine tasks, they can represent the difference between success and failure. Five minutes of telephone conversation with a major customer might do more good for your company than three hours of arranging obsolete inventory in the warehouse.

Concentrate on One Important Task at a Time Instead of Multitasking. While working on important tasks, concentrate on what you are doing. Effective executives and professionals have a well-developed capacity to concentrate on the problem or person facing them, however surrounded they are with other obligations. Intense concentration leads to sharper judgment and analysis and also minimizes major errors. Another useful by-product of concentration is that it helps reduce absentmindedness. If you really concentrate on what you are doing, the chances diminish that you will forget what you intended to do.

While concentrating on an important task, such as performing analytical work or writing a report, avoid multitasking, or performing more than one activity simultaneously. Common forms of multitasking include surfing the Internet or reading e-mail while engaged in a phone conversation with a coworker or customer. Both experimental evidence and opinion have accumulated that multitasking while performing important tasks leads to problems in concentration, along with significant errors—for most people. The information about mental energy described above applies here. Multitasking on routine tasks has less negative consequences, and can sometimes be a legitimate time saver. For example, waiting in line at the airport during business travel provides a good opportunity to review company documents or catch up on work-related news.

David E. Meyer, the director of the Brain, Cognition and Action Laboratory at the University of Michigan, notes that when people attempt to perform two or more related tasks at the same time or alternating rapidly—instead of doing them sequentially—two negative consequences occur. Errors increase substantially, and the amount of time to perform the task may double.^[56] Also, according to recent research about the brain, few people can concentrate on more than four tasks at once.^[57]

Multitasking has enormous potential negative consequences when the lives of others are at stake, such as when driving a car, truck, or flying an airplane. In a celebrated case, two Northwest airline pilots lost their job because they used their personal laptops while in flight. As a result, they lost track of their responsibilities, and neglected frantic messages from air-traffic controllers, and flew past their destination airport in Minneapolis. The two pilots failed to establish radio contact with controllers for 78 minutes, and overrode their destination by more than 100 miles.^[58]

Place the potential dangers of multitasking on a personal level. Would you want a cardiac surgeon to operate on a loved one while she was receiving personal calls on her cell phone? Would you want your commercial airline pilot to be sending text messages to friends on a social network while he was flying through a storm? (Using personal laptops while in flight is not reassuring either.)

BACK TO THE OPENING CASE

Lynal Lutes and her coworkers at the advertising agency in Arlington, Texas, are prospering. One of the reasons for their success is that they do not subscribe to the idea that workers at a small firm are too busy to spend time thinking, and instead must chase after details continuously. Instead, the group invests

enough time in quiet reflection to find creative solutions for their clients. Also, the time devoted to concentrating on one major task helps reduce stress.



Stay in Control of Paperwork and Electronic Work. Although it is fashionable to complain about paperwork in responsible jobs, the effective career person does not neglect paperwork. (Paperwork includes electronic work, such as electronic mail and voicemail.) Paperwork involves taking care of administrative details such as correspondence, invoices, human resource reports, expense reports, and inventory forms. A considerable amount of electronic work results in paperwork because many e-mail messages and attachments wind up being printed. Unless paperwork and electronic work are attended to, a person's job may get out of control. A small amount of time should be invested in paperwork every day. Nonprime time (when you are at less than your peak of efficiency but not overfatigued) is the best time to take care of paperwork.

An effective technique is to respond quickly to high-priority e-mail messages, and permanently delete those you will most likely not need to refer to again. Print and file only those e-mail messages of high importance to avoid being overwhelmed with piles of old messages. For many types of work, it is important to be able to access old e-mails. However, some workers complain (brag?) of having 6,000 e-mails in their inbox. In addition to clogging the servers, this large accumulation of e-mails is distracting, thereby lowering productivity. Old e-mails should be archived, and others moved to appropriate folders.^[59]

Communicating by e-mail or telephone with coworkers in distant time zones creates special challenges in terms of staying in control of electronic work. Assume that Pedro working in Washington DC has clients in London who want to have telephone conferences at 9 a.m. their time. Pedro has to be on the phone at 3 a.m. his time, so it is best to make all his 3 a.m. calls one morning per week rather than having a life out of control because he has to be on the phone many mornings at 3 a.m.

Work Productively from Your Home Office or Virtual Office. A growing segment of the workforce works either full or part time from home or from a virtual office. Estimates vary considerably, but it appears that about 4 percent of corporate employees work primarily from the home. Such an office is a place of work without a fixed physical location from where the worker or workers communicate their output electronically. A virtual office might be in a car, train, airplane, or hotel room; on a park bench; or wherever the worker happens to be at the time. Many people adapt well to working at home and from virtual offices because they are self-starters and self-disciplined. Many other workers lack the self-discipline and effective work habits necessary to be productive outside of a traditional office. Following is a list of representative suggestions for being productive while working independently.^[60]

virtual office

A place of work without a fixed physical location, where the output is communicated electronically.

- Act as if you work in a traditional office. Set specific working hours, get dressed, go outside the house for a few minutes, then return and get to work. Also, close your office at home or virtual office at some regular time. Otherwise, you are open for business all the time. If you work at home, establish a clear workspace and let your family and friends know when you cannot be disturbed.
- Stay in touch with teammates to enhance your team player skills and not lose out on important information that could lower your effectiveness (such as missing an appointment at the traditional office). Stay in touch with other workers also, such as visiting an office supply store or attending networking meetings. In this way, you will feel less isolated from the workforce—assuming feeling isolated is a problem for you.
- Minimize conducting your personal life at the same time as working (e.g., working while watching television, talking to neighbors, or shopping over the Internet).
- Schedule regular times for meals and snacks; otherwise, you will lose many minutes and gain many pounds taking food and beverage breaks.

The practice of working at home or from virtual offices is increasing rapidly, so these suggestions merit careful consideration. Several of the productivity ideas also fit the conventional office. Best Buy is attempting to foster the virtual office movement with its results-only work environment (ROWE). The idea is that workers are free to do whatever they want, wherever they want, so long as the work gets done.^[61] Of course, sales associates

Productivity Boosting through Work Habits

The chapter has already given you ideas about using work habits to increase productivity. Here is a chance to make some personal applications of your own. Gather into small teams or work individually to identify 10 ways in which good work habits, as well as

using the Internet, can increase personal productivity either on the job or at home. To supplement your own thinking, you might search the Internet for ideas on how the Internet is supposed to boost productivity.

do not fit this system because a worker cannot demonstrate HDTVs to customers while at an Internet café. Also, if part of your job is to help other workers in person, or answer their spontaneous questions, a virtual office is not an effective option.

Enhance Your Internet Search Skills. An important job skill is searching the Internet for a variety of information. It follows that if you develop your Internet search skills, you will be more productive by obtaining the results you need within a reasonable time. First, it is helpful to rely on several search engines to seek needed information. Several meta-search engines claim to be so comprehensive that no other engine is required. Such claims are exaggerated, because the same search word entered into several different comprehensive engines will reveal a different list of sources. Millions of people believe that conducting an Internet search means only that you google your search term.

Second, give careful thought to the search word or phrase you use. The more specific you are, the better it is. Assume that you wanted to find software to enhance your productivity, and that you enter the word “software” into a search engine. You will probably receive a message indicating that approximately one billion entries have been located in response to your personal inquiry. You are better advised to use the search phrase “Software for increasing personal productivity.”

Third, for many searches, framing the query as a phrase by enclosing it in quotation marks refines the number of hits (or sites) returned. Place quotation marks before and after the search word, such as “software for improving work habits.” Fourth, if you don’t find what you want in your initial search, reframe your question in another way or change the terms. How about “software for time management” or “computer programs for increasing personal efficiency”? Skill-Building Exercise 16-4 will help you make better use of the Internet to enhance your personal productivity.

Overcoming Time Wasters

Another basic thrust to improve personal productivity is to minimize wasting time. The average U.S. worker wastes 28 percent of the day with interruptions, such as checking e-mail, responding to an instant message, clicking on YouTube, or posting a personal message on Twitter or Facebook. The wasted time includes doing the task and recovery time, with the combination resulting in an estimated productivity drain of \$650 billion per year.^[62] Recognize, however, that answer the phone or responding to an e-mail with a legitimate work purpose is not an interruption—it is part of your job.

Many of the techniques already described in this chapter help save time, such as eliminating nonessential work. Whether or not an activity is a time waster depends on the purpose of the activity. Suppose you play computer solitaire for 10 minutes to reduce stress and then return to work refreshed and more productive. In contrast, another worker who spends 10 minutes playing solitaire just for fun is wasting time.

Figure 16-7 presents a list of common time wasters. Being aware of time wasters will help sensitize you to the importance of minimizing them. Even if you saved just 10 minutes per workday, the productivity gain over a year could be enormous.

To analyze whether you might be wasting time, do Skill-Building Exercise 16-5 Self-Assessment Quiz 16-2 gives you an opportunity to think through your tendencies toward a subtle type of time wasting.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7

FIGURE 16-7 Ways to Prevent and Overcome Time Wasting

1. Get your desk, as well as your work space (usually a cubicle or office) in order for good because sorting through disorder wastes so much time. Also, keep track of important names, places, and things to avoid wasting time searching for them.
2. Use a time log for two weeks to track time wasters. (See Skill-Building Exercise 16-5.)
3. Avoid the computer as a diversion from work, such as sending jokes back and forth to work members, playing video games, and checking out recreational Web sites during working hours.
4. Cluster together tasks such as returning phone calls or responding to e-mail messages. For example, in most jobs it is possible to be polite and productive by reserving two or three 15-minute periods per day for taking care of e-mail correspondence.
5. Socialize on the job just enough to build your network. Chatting with coworkers is a major productivity drain.
6. Be prepared for meetings by, for example, having a clear agenda and sorting through the documents you will be referring to. Make sure electronic equipment is in working order before attempting to use it during the meeting.
7. Set a time limit for tasks after you have done them once or twice.
8. Prepare a computer template for letters and computer documents that you send frequently. (The template is essentially a form letter, especially with respect to the salutation and return address.)
9. When you arrive at work, be ready to get started working immediately. Greet people quickly, avoid checking your personal e-mail, and shut off your cell phone.
10. Take care of as much e-mail correspondence as you can after you have finished your other work, unless a key part of your job is dealing with e-mail. It consumes substantial time.
11. Avoid perfectionism, which leads you to keep redoing a project. Let go and move on to another project.
12. Make use of bits of time—for instance, five minutes between appointments. Invest those five minutes in sending a work-related e-mail message or revising your to-do list.
13. Minimize procrastination, the number one time waster for most people.
14. Avoid spreading yourself too thin by doing too many things at once, such as having one project too many to handle. When you are overloaded, time can be wasted because of too many errors.
15. Manage interruptions by letting coworkers know when you are available for consultation, and when you need to work independently—except for emergencies. Respond to instant messages only if your job requires responding immediately. Batch your instant messages just as you would other e-mails.

Sources: Suggestion 1 is from Toddi Gutner, "Beat the Clock," *Business Week*, February/March 2008, p. 58; Suggestions 6, 7, and 7 are based on Stephen R. Covey with Hyrum Smith, "What If You Could Chop an Hour from Your Day for Things That Matter Most?" *USA Weekend*, January 22–24, 1999, pp. 4–5; suggestion 10 is from Anita Bruzzese, "Tips to Avoid Wasting Time," Gannet News Service, August 9, 2004. Support for suggestion 13 is found in Vince Thompson, "Make the Most of Your White Space," *jobs@UpLadder.com*, October 3, 2007. Data about the productivity drain of interruptions are analyzed in Quintus R. Jett and Jennifer M. George, "Work Interrupted: A Closer Look at the Role of Interruptions in Organizational Life," *Academy of Management Review*, July 2003, pp. 494–507.

Maintaining a Time Log

An effective starting point to avoid wasting time is to identify how you spend the 168 hours you have each week (24 hours \times 7 days). For two weeks, catalog all the time you spend, down to as much detail as you can tolerate. Include the large obvious items, as well as the small items that are easy to forget. Keep track of any activity that requires at least five minutes. Major items would include working, attending class, studying, reading, watching television, sleeping, eating, going places, and time with loved ones and friends (hanging out). Small items would include visiting the coffee shop or vending machine, purchasing gum, and clipping your nails.

If you multitask, such as walking and listening to music, do not double-count the time.

When your time logs have been completed, search for complete wastes of time, or activities that could be shortened. You might find, for example, that you spend about 45 minutes per day in the pursuit and consumption of coffee. If you reduced that time to 30 minutes, you would have an additional 15 minutes per day that you could invest in your career. However, if coffee time includes forming alliances with people or maintaining relationships, maybe the 45-minute-per-day investment is worthwhile.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZ 16-2

Tendencies toward Perfectionism

Directions: Many perfectionists hold some of the behaviors and attitudes described below. To help understand your tendencies toward perfectionism, rate how strongly you agree with each of the statements below on a scale of 0 to 4 by circling the appropriate number. 0 means disagree, 4 means agree.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Many people have told me that I am a perfectionist. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I often correct the speech of others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. It takes me a long time to write an e-mail because I keep checking and rechecking my writing. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I often criticize the color combinations my friends are wearing. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. When I purchase food at a supermarket, I usually look at the expiration date so that I can purchase the freshest. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I can't stand when people use the term "remote" instead of "remote control" or "cell" instead of "cell phone." | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. If a company representative asked me "What is your social," I would reply something like, "Do you mean my social security number?" | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I hate to see dust on furniture. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. I like the Martha Stewart's idea of having every decoration in the home just right. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. I never put a map back in the glove compartment until it is folded just right. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Once an eraser on a pencil of mine becomes hard and useless, I throw away the pencil. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. I adjust all my watches and clocks so that they show exactly the same time. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. It bothers me that clocks on personal computers are often wrong by a few minutes. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. I clean the keyboard on my computer at least every other day. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. I organize my e-mail messages and computer documents into many different, clearly labeled files. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. You won't find old coffee cups or soft drink containers on my desk. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. I rarely start a new project or assignment until I have completed my present project or assignment. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. It is very difficult for me to concentrate when my work area is disorganized. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. Cobwebs in chandeliers and other lighting fixtures bother me. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. It takes me a long time to make a purchase such as a digital camera because I keep studying the features on various models. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. When I balance my checkbook, it usually comes out right within a few dollars. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. I carry enough small coins and dollar bills with me so that when I shop I can pay the exact amount without requiring change. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. I throw out any underwear or T-shirts that have even the smallest holes or tears. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. I become upset with myself if I make a mistake. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. When a fingernail of mine is broken or chipped, I fix it as soon as possible. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. I am carefully groomed whenever I leave my home. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. When I notice packaged goods or cans on the floor in a supermarket, I will often place them back on the shelf. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. I think that carrying around antibacterial cleaner for the hands is an excellent idea. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

(Continued)

29. If I am with a friend, and he or she has a loose hair on the shoulder, I will remove it without asking. 0 1 2 3 4
30. I am a perfectionist. 0 1 2 3 4
- Total Score _____

Scoring and Interpretation: Add the numbers you circled to obtain your total score.

91 or over You have strong perfectionist tendencies to the point that it could interfere with your taking quick action when necessary. Also, you may annoy many people with your perfectionism.

61–90 You have a moderate degree of perfectionism that could lead you to produce high-quality work and be a dependable person.

31–60 You have a mild degree of perfectionism. You might be a perfectionist in some situations quite important to you, but not in others.

0–30 You are not a perfectionist. You might be too casual about getting things done right, meeting deadlines, and being aware of details.

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZZES IN OVERVIEW

Self-Assessment Quiz 16-1 measures tendencies toward procrastination. Thinking about the extent of your procrastination, and overcoming excessive amounts, can help you develop career thrust. You might be able to get by procrastinating small tasks, but delaying the completion of large, complex tasks like preparing a budget or developing a report about customer service will eventually result in low performance. Self-Assessment Quiz 16-2 measures perfectionism which in large doses can lead to procrastination and not getting things done. However, like fat in the diet, a healthy dose of perfectionism is an asset because it can lead to high levels of performance. Oprah Winfrey and Donald Trump are both perfectionists without being obsessed over details.

Concept Review

Reinforcement

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A major challenge facing any worker who wants to stay healthy and have good interpersonal relationships is to manage stress effectively. Individual differences play a big role in determining whether an event will lead to stress. The physiological changes that take place within the body in response to stress are responsible for most of the stress symptoms. The fight-or-flight response is the battle against the stressor.

The activation of hormones, such as cortisol, when the body has to cope with a stressor produces short-term physiological reactions, including an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. When stress levels rarely subside, the physiological changes create damage. People under continual negative stress age quickly. Hindrance stressors have a negative effect on motivation and performance. However, the right amount of stress (challenge stressors) prepares us for meeting difficult challenges and improves performance. An optimum level of stress exists for most people and most tasks. In general, performance tends to be best under moderate amounts of stress.

One of the major problems of prolonged stress is that it may lead to burnout, a condition of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion in response to long-term stressors. Feelings of having limited control and not being recognized are major contributors to burnout. Burnout also creates cynicism and a distancing from tasks and people. Workers who perceive the cause of burnout to be external are more likely to become less committed to the firm and more cynical. Burnout also damages the physical health of workers.

Four personality factors predisposing people toward stress are low perceived control, low self-efficacy, Type A

behavior and hostility, and negative affectivity. The heart attack triggers associated with Type A behavior are hostility, anger, cynicism, and suspiciousness, with hostility having the biggest impact. Frequently encountered job stressors are role overload including extreme jobs, role conflict and ambiguity, adverse environmental conditions including carpal tunnel syndrome and long commutes, environmentally induced attention deficit disorder, and job insecurity and job loss. Another frequent job stressor is adverse interactions with customers and clients and emotional labor.

Managing stress refers to controlling stress by making it become a constructive force in your life. Coping with, or managing, stress includes hundreds of activities, with substantial individual differences in which technique is effective. Seven representative stress management methods are to eliminate or modify the stressor, get appropriate physical exercise, rest sufficiently, maintain a healthy diet, build a support network, practice visualization and meditation, and practice everyday methods of stress reduction.

Achieving high personal productivity on the job is more in demand than ever. A starting point in improving productivity is to minimize procrastination, an enormous problem for many people that can be approached as follows: Commit to what you want in life; calculate the cost of procrastination; follow the worst in, first out (WIFO) principle; break the task into manageable chunks; make a commitment to other people; remove some clutter from your mind; satisfy your stimulation quota in constructive ways; and eliminate rewards for procrastinating.

Developing good work habits and time management practices is often a matter of developing the right attitudes toward your work and toward time, as follows: (1) Begin with a mission and goals; (2) work smarter, not harder including the use of deliberate practice (3) value orderliness and cleanliness; (4) value good attendance and punctuality; (5) attain a balance in life and avoid being a workaholic, and (6) increase your energy (body, emotions, mind, and spirit).

Effective work habits and skills are essential for high productivity, including the following: (1) Prepare a to-do

list and set priorities, (2) streamline your work and eliminate important tasks, (3) concentrate on one important task at a time instead of multitasking, (4) stay in control of paperwork and electronic work, (5) work productively from your home office or virtual office, and (6) enhance your Internet search skills.

Another basic thrust to improved personal productivity is to minimize time wasting. Whether or not an activity is a time waster depends on its purpose. Being aware of time wasters such as those presented in Figure 16-6 sensitizes you to the importance of minimizing them.

Questions for Discussion and Review

1. Why might it be true that people who love their work live much longer than people who retire early because they dislike working?
2. Why might having your stress under control improve your interpersonal relationships?
3. Give an example of adverse interaction with a customer that you have personally experienced, or that you have witnessed. What could the worker have done to decrease some of the stress in the situation?
4. Interview a person in a high-pressure job in any field. Find out whether the person experiences significant stress and what method he or she uses to cope with it.
5. Provide an example from your own or somebody else's life of how having a major goal in life can help a person be better organized.
6. Executives at Toyota, among many other Japanese companies, emphasize that clean work areas in the factory enhance productivity. What might explain the relationship between cleanliness and productivity?
7. Describe any way in which you have used information technology to make you more productive.
8. Use information in this chapter to explain how a person might be well-organized yet still not get very far in his or her career.
9. For many young corporate professionals, a date often consists of the two people getting together in his or her place to spend three hours doing office work on their laptop computers, followed by a take-out meal. What is your evaluation of this approach to boosting personal productivity?
10. With millions of workers making regular use of personal digital assistants and smart phones throughout the world, why hasn't productivity in organizations taken a dramatic leap forward?

The Web Corner

<http://www.stress.org>
(Institute for Stress Management)

<http://stress.about.com>
(Considerable information about stress plus several self-quizzes)

<http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/stressprocrast.shtml>
(Overcoming procrastination for students)

Internet Skill Builder: Getting Personal Help from Your Employer

Use your favorite search engines to learn about an Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). After visiting several sites, answer these questions: (1) What type of help can an employee expect to receive from an EAP? (2) How does an EAP help with stress management? (3) Does the EAP counselor typically tell the company the nature of the problem facing the employee who sought assistance? (4) What benefits do companies expect from offering an EAP to employees? (5) What would I tell the company if I needed help with problems that are causing me severe stress?

Internet Skill Builder: What Are You Doing with Your Time?

Go to www.getmoredone.com/tabulator.html to find the Pace Productivity Tabulator. This interactive module enables you to enter the time you spend on 11 major activities (such as employment, eating, sleeping, and television watching) and compare your profile to others. You are also able to enter your ideal profile to see where you would like to be. You just follow the straightforward instructions. After arriving at your personal pie chart, ask yourself, "What have I learned that will enhance my personal productivity?"



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