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**CHUKUNI**  
*Communities Development Corporation*



*Serving the Red Lake  
and Ear Falls Area of  
Northwestern Ontario*



## Small Business Newsletter

*Take time to  
remember!*





### **Turn the Flame Down on Your Stress**

Stress is a natural condition; it is how your body reacts to challenges and demands. Heightened stress levels can help you avoid danger or meet a crucial deadline in a work setting. The problem we face as businesspeople is that stress becomes a constant and eventually all-consuming.

It is unrealistic to think you can make stress magically disappear. Even Buddhists suffer from anxiety; they just cope with it differently using traditional practices. In this article, we're going to discuss various techniques that will help you turn your "stress-flame" down a little.

The problem with stress is that it has a habit of building on itself. A minor stressor can lead to a larger one, which causes another stressor to appear – you get the idea – it's a downward spiral. All this stress can lead to sleep loss, poor eating habits, increased alcohol intake, less exercise, dehydration, lack of energy, and demotivation.

Once in this state, you tend to work harder to keep up and keep your chin above water. It is a fallacy that the more you work, the more you will achieve. Studies have shown that meditating, even for very short periods, enhances productivity. A Zen proverb states, "If you don't have time to meditate for an hour every day, you should meditate for two hours."

At this point, you may think that this meditation malarkey is not for you but don't worry; we won't ask you to start uttering mantras in the boardroom.

Self-awareness is one of the keys to turning the flame down on stress. Pause when you begin to feel stressed, notice it, take a deep breath and ask yourself why you are feeling stressed. What precisely is causing you concern right now? Is it a single stressor, or is it a culmination of things that together feel like they are the last straw?

If you can identify your stressors, you may be able to confront and mitigate them. For example, perhaps another deadline has been dumped into your lap, and you are pulling out your hair in exasperation. Stop, take a breath, actually, take ten breaths in and ten out. Count, in-breath one, out-breath one, in-breath two, out-breath two – you get the idea. This 30-second exercise will allow you to distance yourself from the emotion you are feeling (the stress) and discover a more balanced reality. Look at the situation rationally. Prioritize each deadline and choose the least urgent. Now, calmly analyze what you might do to reduce the stress it is causing. Can you negotiate an extension? Can you delegate the project as a whole or in part? If you are out of options, look at the next least urgent. You may not think it, but there is always something you can do to ease the pressure you feel.

Identifying the exact cause of your stress is the first step to alleviating that pressure. Be realistic. There is no magic wand to make all anxiety instantly disappear; your goal should be just to lower the flame.

Here are a few other ways to help you turn down the flame.

- **Meditation.** A few minutes of meditation can make you more productive and focused. We're all busy people, but even 30-seconds of deep breathing before you start work or during the day will produce incredible results.
- **Mindfulness.** A quick Google search will show that many CEOs of Fortune 500 companies regularly use mindfulness practices.
- **Short breaks.** Get some air – step outside for a few minutes and take a few deep breaths. Walk around the office, and talk to a few people. The key is leaving your computer for a few minutes and thinking about something other than your stressors.
- **Reward yourself.** Do something that you find rewarding (not work) that makes you forget about everything else for a few hours.
- **Exercise.** Even if you hate it while doing it, you will feel better physically and mentally and better able to manage stress.
- **Monitor your stress levels.** Create a spreadsheet of your stressors. Three times a day, give each stressor a one to ten score. Each morning, review your chart; where are you doing well or poorly, and why? Focus your energy on the highest stress factors.
- **Accept.** Recognize stressors that are not within your power to change. You are not superhuman. If you can't change a stressful situation or reduce its impact, accept it or delegate it to someone better placed to manage it.

You will never reduce stress to zero, and you don't want to; there is a value to being hyper-alert and ready to deal with the challenges life and business throw at you. However, you can turn the flame down and learn to manage stress, so it doesn't overwhelm you.



### **Give Recognition; It Makes Good Business Sense**

Whether you have one employee or many or have none but use sub-contractors, showing recognition for work well done can be highly advantageous. Even if you rely on no one to carry out work for you, recognition can still play a part in your success. Showing appreciation to customers, clients, or suppliers can lead to better, more loyal relationships.

Think for a minute. Do you show appreciation to those who work for you? Do you recognize good performance? A Gallup poll showed that over 60% of those surveyed had received zero recognition that year.

Another survey showed that over one-fifth of managers surprisingly said they didn't *want* to show recognition. What's with that? Although the survey didn't state a reason for this reluctance, many managers expect excellent work as the norm, so why make a deal out of it? Often, the more analytical the manager or leader is, the less likely they will show appreciation for expected performance. Unfortunately, this lack of awareness usually has a detrimental effect on morale and performance.

When you recognize someone's good work, you engage with them. How can this be bad? It is very easy to take people for granted. Heck, they're doing a good job; leave well enough alone. Managers are more likely to take good workers for granted; they keep their heads down, don't cause any ripples, and the temptation is not to spoil a good thing.

Unfortunately, all may look good on the surface, but underneath, the person feels underappreciated and is looking for another job or somewhere else to buy what they need.

When people feel appreciated, they are more likely to be loyal. They feel more invested in the company's success and are more likely to take initiative.

## How to Give Recognition

First, show appreciation quickly after noticing someone has done something above and beyond what was expected of them or done something exceedingly well. There should always be a cause-and-effect relationship.

Recognize actions and not just outcomes. Think about the runner who comes forth in the Olympic Games but who achieved their personal best time. Don't they also deserve recognition? And when they get it from their coach, it will spur them on to better times. In terms of your employees, outcomes are often outside of their purviews.

When recognizing someone, be specific and talk about the impact the person has made. Don't be generic and just say, "You are doing a great job; keep it up!"

When showing appreciation, make it a regular thing, not just a one-off. Take a few moments at the end of each week to review the work or actions of those around you, and consider who might be worthy of recognition. This is one habit that is good to adopt.

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Make showing appreciation and recognizing good work and specific achievements part of your management philosophy. You will experience greater productivity, a better quality of work, greater efficiency, people taking more initiative and pushing themselves further, and better employee retention. And, as a bonus, morale will increase in leaps and bounds.



### **Coach's Corner - Develop the Habit of Working ON Your Business**

As owners and leaders, we can often get sidetracked by seemingly urgent yet unimportant tasks in our businesses. We get hung up on the things that distract us from the critical task of working ON our business. Urgent is not always important. You need to focus on crucial questions, challenges, and issues and make them urgent if you are to achieve your business and career goals.

This becomes the lens through which you focus your actions and strategies. It provides the impetus to encourage you to spend time working ON your business or career, not just IN it.

1. Keep your important goal(s) prominently displayed for you to see every day. Whether that is a one-page business plan incorporating actions and strategies to accomplish your goal, or a vision statement, it is essential to keep them at the forefront of your mind in whatever way works best for you.
2. Make it a habit to write down your weekly intentions. What do you want to accomplish this week? How do those objectives fit into your grand scheme of things? How are they related to your goal? At the end of the week, reflect on them by asking what barriers prevented you from delivering on your intentions. Finally, how can you avoid those barriers the following week?
3. Double down on this by being intentional about everything you do in your day. When you are about to embark on a task — emails, phone calls, meetings, etc. — ask yourself how each contributes to your desired outcome. Does it need to be done? Can someone else do it? Are you the best person to do it? Think about how your actions will help you reach your strategic goal and help you make better decisions.
4. Stop micromanaging. Be clear on your expectations and ensure your employees or colleagues understand them. Have a check-in process in place but then let them do the work, take on the responsibility, and take ownership of their work. It comes down to having them work IN the business while you focus ON the business.

The important thing is to get into the routine of working ON your business regularly; daily or weekly is best. Set aside uninterrupted time and demonstrate to your colleagues and staff that this is your priority.

Paul Abra, Certified Executive Coach

# The Art of Gratitude

Expressing gratitude is an art, especially in the workplace. Too often, we prefer to recognize employees monetarily than with words. How can you make gratitude a part of the workplace?

## STEP 01

### Get rid the stigma

Being grateful is not weak and neither should it be seen that way. Real weakness lies in letting pride get in the way of expressing your thankfulness.



## STEP 02

### Gratitude begins with you

You being a senior executive or the CEO. Take time out of your day to thank people for doing their jobs and doing them well.



## STEP 03

### Everyone deserves gratitude

No employee is better or lesser than the other. From the janitor to the CEO, everyone plays a role in an organization's success and deserves gratitude.



## STEP 04

### It's not the size of the gesture that matters

But the sincerity of it does. A few grateful words, straight from the heart carry a lot more weight than a big, spectacle. Most people just want to be acknowledged.



*“Recognition is not a scarce resource.  
You can't use it up or run out of it.”*

- Susan M. Heathfield,  
About.com Human Resources Expert



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