



Manager Under Stress

This Course is approved by the DBPR Council of Community
Association Managers, for 4 hours of continuing education credit
in the area of:
Human Resources

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Introduction

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of and the means to more effectively respond to many of the causes of job stress that community association manager's experience in the daily performance of their duties. Students will explore seven major causes of workplace stress by reviewing examples of each type and engaging in group discussion designed to develop effective strategies to successfully respond to each type of stressful experience. The instructor will discuss additional methods to achieve successful outcomes following each group discussion session.

This course is designed to meet the for hour human resources requirement for community association managers. However, it is also suitable for board members who wish to enhance their skills and knowledge.

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Introduction:

Modern life is full of deadlines, frustrations, demands and annoyances. For most people, stress is so routine that it has become a lifestyle. In small doses, stress can help one perform under pressure and motivate one to excel. However, when one is continually under stress, the mind and the body pay a substantial price.

The US National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOHS) defines workplace stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. The Gallup Poll Survey, "Attitudes in the American Workplace VI,"¹ reported that 35% of works state that their jobs are harming their physical or emotional health and 42% state that job pressures are interfering with their personal relationships. Fifty percent state that they have a more demanding workload than in past years. Forty-eight percent reported that they sometimes have too many unreasonable deadlines and/or too much work, and 42% state that the sometimes, rarely or never have adequate control or input over their work duties.

According to the American Institute of Stress (AIS), common causes of workplace stress include long working hours, feelings of being treated unfairly, insufficient acknowledgement or reward for a job well done, lack of job security, office politics, and most importantly, increased demands to accomplish assignments without sufficient authority and/or resources.

Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than are any other life stressor—more so than even financial problems or family problems. Many studies suggest that psychologically demanding jobs that allow employees little control over the work process increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. On the basis of research by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and many other organizations, it is widely believed that job stress increases the risk for development of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders. High levels of stress are associated with substantial increases in health service utilization. Workers who report experiencing stress at work also show excessive health care utilization. In a 1998 study of 46,000 workers, health care costs were nearly 50% greater for workers reporting high levels of stress in comparison to "low risk" workers. The increment rose to nearly 150%, an increase of more than \$1,700 per person annually, for workers reporting high levels of both stress and depression. Additionally, periods of disability due to job stress tend to be much longer than disability periods for other occupational injuries and illnesses..

Long term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, and result in anxiety and depression. Stress-related disorders encompass a broad array of conditions, including psychological disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder) and other types of emotional strain (e.g., dissatisfaction, fatigue, tension, etc.), maladaptive behaviors (e.g., aggression, substance abuse), and cognitive impairment (e.g., concentration and memory problems). In turn, these conditions may lead to poor work performance or even injury. Job stress is also associated with various biological reactions that may lead ultimately to compromised health, such as cardiovascular disease, or in extreme cases death.

Stress is a prevalent and costly problem in today's workplace. About one-third of workers report high levels of stress. One-quarter of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives. Three-quarters of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago. Evidence also suggests that stress is the major cause of turnover in

¹ Commissioned by The Marlin Company

organizations: In addition to the health effects on individuals, workplace stress results in decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, employee turnover, and medical and insurance costs resulting from workers compensation claims.

The objectives of this course are as follows:

1. Describe the major types of workplace stress affecting community association managers.
2. Identify the elements and causes of stress
3. Develop effective strategies for achieving successful outcomes for stressful experiences.
4. Identify home-based stress reducing strategies to enable the manager to recharge energy and morale.

Definition of Manager

Dictionary.com defines manager as:

–noun

1. a person who has control or direction of an institution, business, etc., or of a part, division, or phase of it.
2. a person who manages: the manager of our track team.
3. a person who controls and manipulates resources and expenditures, as of a household.
4. British (formerly) a theatrical producer.

Wikipedia defines community managers as a manager of a condominium or homeowners association (including single-family home subdivisions, townhouses, or mixed-use development). The position is frequently confused with a property manager, who deals with individual rental units or a group of rental units, like an apartment complex. The community manager deals with property owners and homeowners. It includes three types:

- On-site manager: This type of manager works in the community which he or she manages.
- Portfolio manager: This type of community manager oversees several communities and is often paid on a commission basis.
- Large-scale manager: Typically, large scale managers are also on-site managers. To be considered for a large scale manager, the candidate must already be a manager of a large-scale community of over 1200 units, 1,000 acres (4.0 km²) and a budget of at least \$1.5m.

What is Stress?

Stress is a normal physical response to events that threaten or upset one's balance in some manner. When the body senses a hazard or some sort of danger (real or imagined), the body's systems go into a rapid, automatic process (fight or flight). This stress response is the body's way of defending the individual. It helps one stay alert and focused. In an emergency, stress can save one's life – giving extra strength to defend oneself or others, giving better awareness of events around one. Stress also keeps one at peak when playing competitive games, or preparing for exams, or getting ready for a board meeting. However, beyond a certain point, stress begins to cause major damage to health, productivity, moods, relationships and quality of life.

Stress is a highly personalized phenomenon and can vary widely even in identical situations for different reasons. One survey showed that having to complete paper work was more stressful for many police officers than the dangers associated with pursuing criminals. The severity of job stress depends on the magnitude of the demands that are being made and the individual's sense of control or decision-making latitude he or she has in dealing with them. Scientific studies based on this model confirm that workers who perceive they are subjected to high demands but have little control are at increased risk for high stress.

What is Job Stress?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, states that job stress poses a threat to the health of workers and organizations. NIOSH defines job stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Stress also occurs when the situation has high demands and the worker has little or no control over it. Job stress can lead to poor health and injury.

Job stress is widely experienced, and so pervasive that it's been found to affect people from all industries, ranks and socio-economic status levels. In fact, job stress is something we all face as workers -- and we all handle it differently. Not all stress is bad. Learning how to deal with and manage stress is critical to job performance, job safety, and maintaining physical and mental health. Infrequent doses of job stress pose little threat and may be effective in increasing motivation and productivity. Too much -- and too prolonged -- job stress can lead to a decline -- both professionally and personally.

Because we spend so much of our lives at work, job stress can result in stress in other areas of life as well. For example, when people are stressed at work, they may have less energy when not at work, and let exercise go by the wayside; they may have less patience when not at work, and relationships may suffer; they may feel so much stress at work that they experience burnout or depression. Due to a close link between job stress and chronic stress, job stress can take a significant toll on overall health and wellness, too.

Job Stress and Chronic Stress

People experience and are affected by stress differently. Eustress, considered 'good stress,' helps people feeling energetic, positive, and enthusiastic about living. Acute stress often occurs suddenly and is of relatively short duration. Acute stress is not considered particularly damaging, unless it continues over a long period -- becoming chronic stress. Chronic stress comes from situations where our stress response is prompted again and again, so that our bodies have little time and significant difficulty coming back to their pre-stressed state. Chronic stress often comes from conflicted relationships, over-packed schedules, and stressful jobs.

Effects of Job Stress

The body cannot differentiate between physical and psychological threats. Stress from an argument with your boss has the same effect as facing a life or death situation. If one is under a lot of stress -- continual problems at work; a lot of personal debt; health problems of significant others, and so on, the stress response is often "stuck" in the on position. The more the body's stress system is activated, the easier it is to trip and harder it is to shut off. Long term exposure to stress can disrupt almost every system in the body -- raising blood pressure, suppressing the immune system, increasing risks of heart attack and stroke, contributing to infertility, speeding up the aging process, and even rewiring the brain so that one is more vulnerable to mental illness.

When job stress turns chronic, it can really threaten our physical and emotional health. Consider the following job stress findings:

- One study including over 11,000 people found that employees reporting high psychological and physical job demands and low job control had elevated risks of emotional exhaustion (burnout), psychosomatic and physical health complaints of all kinds, and job dissatisfaction.
- According to a study by the British Medical Journal, chronic stress has been linked to the development of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, as well as other conditions. The study found a link between chronic job stress and metabolic syndrome, which is a group of factors that, together, increase the risk of these diseases, including high blood pressure, insulin resistance, and central obesity.² It established that greater levels of job stress increased one's likelihood of developing metabolic syndrome: the higher the stress level, the greater the chance of developing metabolic syndrome.
- Workers who have higher levels of job stress experience a greater incidence of the common cold, and call in sick more often.
- There has also been a documented link between high job stress and lower levels of mental health.

Physiological reactions to stress can have consequences for health over time. Researchers linked stress to the cardiovascular system, hypertension and coronary artery disease. There are four main physiological reactions to stress:

- Blood is shunted to the brain and large muscle groups, and away from extremities, skin, and organs that are not currently serving the body.
- An area near the brain stem, known as the reticular activating system, goes to work, causing a state of keen alertness as well as sharpening of hearing and vision.
- Energy-providing compounds of glucose and fatty acids are released into the bloodstream.
- The immune and digestive systems are temporarily shut down.

Signs & Symptoms of Stress Overload

The most hazardous issue with stress is that it can sneak up on a person. Stress starts to feel normal, and one does not notice the toll it is taking – or the effect it is having. So, how does one recognize when stress levels are out of control? One description comes from psychologist Connie Lillas³ describes three common responses:

- Foot on the gas: Anger & agitation, where one is heated up, overly emotional & unable to sit still.
- Foot on the brake: withdrawal or depression; one shuts down, spaces out, and shows little energy or emotion.
- Foot on both: tension & frozen. One freezes under pressure and looks paralyzed, but is agitated under the surface.

² Excessive abdominal fat, which has been linked to increased cortisol in the bloodstream, as well as several other health problems

³ Understanding Stress, Helpguide.org

Stress Warning Signs & Symptoms⁴

Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory Problems • Inability to concentrate • Poor judgment • Seeing on the negative • Anxious or racing thoughts • Constant worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodiness • Irritability or short tempers • Agitation, inability to relax • Feeling overwhelmed • Sense of loneliness and isolation • Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aches or pains • Diarrhea or constipation • Nausea, dizziness • Chest pain, rapid heartbeat • Loss of sex drive • Frequent colds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating more or less • Sleeping too much or too little • Isolating oneself from others • Procrastination or neglecting responsibilities • Using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax • Nervous habits, such as nail biting or pacing

Causes of Workplace Stress

Job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress. The differing viewpoints suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. According to one school of thought, differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping skills are very important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress. In other words, what is stressful for one person may not be a problem for someone else. This viewpoint underlies prevention strategies that focus on workers and ways to help them cope with demanding job conditions.

Although the importance of individual differences cannot be ignored, scientific evidence suggests that certain working conditions are stressful to most people. Such evidence argues for a greater emphasis on working conditions as the key source of job stress, and for job redesign as a primary prevention strategy. Large surveys of working conditions, including conditions recognized as risk factors for job stress, were conducted in member states of the European Union in 1990, 1995, and 2000. Results showed a time trend suggesting an increase in work intensity. In 1990, the percentage of workers reporting that they worked at high speeds at least one-quarter of their working time was 48%, increasing to 54% in 1995 and to 56% in 2000. Similarly, 50% of workers reported they work against tight deadlines at least one-fourth of their working time in 1990, increasing to 56% in 1995 and 60% in 2000. However, no change was noted in the period 1995–2000 (data not collected in 1990) in the percentage of workers reporting sufficient time to complete tasks.

⁴ Understanding Stress; Helpguide.org

A substantial percentage of Americans work very long hours. By one estimate, more than 26% of men and more than 11% of women worked 50 hours per week or more in 2000. These figures represent a considerable increase over the previous three decades, especially for women. According to the Department of Labor, there has been an upward trend in hours worked among employed women, an increase in extended work weeks (>40 hours) by men, and a considerable increase in combined working hours among working couples, particularly couples with young children.

A person's status in the workplace can also affect levels of stress. While workplace stress has the potential to affect employees of all categories; those who have very little influence to those who make major decisions for the company. However, less powerful employees (that is, those who have less control over their jobs) are more likely to suffer stress than powerful workers. Managers as well as other kinds of workers are vulnerable to work overload (Primm, 2005).

Economic factors that employees are facing in the 21st century have been linked to increased stress levels. Researchers and social commentators have pointed out that the computer and communications revolutions have made companies more efficient and productive than ever before. This boon in productivity however, has caused higher expectations and greater competition, putting more stress on the employee (Primm, 2005).

The following factors may lead to workplace stress:

- Overwork: working late, taking work home, not taking vacation
- Impending layoffs
- Being in the wrong career
- Conflict with boss or co-workers
- Bullying in the workplace

One worker in five (19%) is aware of physical or verbal bullying in his workplace. Those reporting it described higher anger and stress levels, lower satisfaction levels and generally more negative views of the workplace than those who did not report bullying. The Gallup Poll Survey, "Attitudes in the American Workplace VI," questioned whether a coworker had angered a respondent to the point where he felt like striking the other person (but didn't), 15% said yes. Among those who reported bullying, 38% said yes, as opposed to 10% of those who did not report bullying. Bullying, according to Frank McKenna III, President of The Marlin Company, "poisons the well of the workplace." Where bullying exists, workers report higher stress levels, lower job satisfaction, and more negative managers.

The NIOSH report on the right is an excellent resource that cites the following: ⁵

- 40% of workers reported their job was very or extremely stressful
- 25% view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives
- 75% of employees believe that workers have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago
- 29% of workers felt quite a bit or extremely stressed at work

⁵ This information was obtained in the 1990's in large surveys by Northwestern National Life Insurance Co, Princeton Survey Research Associates, St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co., Yale University and The Families and Work Institute.

- 26 percent of workers said they were "often or very often burned out or stressed by their work"

Job stress is more strongly associated with health complaints than financial or family problems. More recently, the Gallup Poll survey⁶ found that:

- 80% of workers feel stress on the job, nearly half say they need help in learning how to manage stress and 42% say their coworkers need such help;
- 14% of respondents had felt like striking a coworker in the past year, but didn't;
- 25% have felt like screaming or shouting because of job stress, 10% are concerned about an individual at work they fear could become violent;
- 9% are aware of an assault or violent act in their workplace and 18% had experienced some sort of threat or verbal intimidation in the past year.

A subsequent 2000 Integra Survey similarly reported that:

- 65% of workers said that workplace stress had caused difficulties and more than 10 percent described these as having major effects;
- 10% said they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred because of job stress and in this group, 42% report that yelling and other verbal abuse is common;
- 29% had yelled at co-workers because of workplace stress, 14% said they work where machinery or equipment has been damaged because of workplace rage and 2% admitted that they had actually personally struck someone;
- 19% or almost one in five respondents had quit a previous position because of job stress and nearly one in four have been driven to tears because of workplace stress;
- 62% routinely find that they end the day with work-related neck pain, 44% reported stressed-out eyes, 38% complained of hurting hands and 34% reported difficulty in sleeping because they were too stressed-out;
- 12% had called in sick because of job stress;
- Over half said they often spend 12-hour days on work related duties and an equal number frequently skip lunch because of the stress of job demands.

According to two studies the United States has the highest violent crime rate of any industrialized nation. An average of 20 workers is murdered each year, making homicide the second highest cause of workplace deaths and the leading one for females. 18,000 non-fatal violent crimes such as sexual and other assaults also occur each week while the victim is working, or about a million a year. Postal workers who work in a safe environment have experienced so many fatalities due to job stress that "going postal" has crept into our language. "Desk rage" and "phone rage" have also become increasingly common terms.

A 1999 government report found that the number of hours worked increased 8% in one generation to an average 47 hours/week with 20% working 49 hours/week. U.S. workers put in more hours on the job than the labor force of any other industrial nation, where the trend has been just the opposite. According to an International Labor Organization study, Americans put in the equivalent of an extra 40-hour work week in 2000 compared to ten years previously. Japan

⁶ 2000 annual "Attitudes In The American Workplace VI" sponsored by the Marlin Company

had the record until around 1995 but Americans now work almost a month more than the Japanese and three months more than Germans. We are also working harder. In a 2001 survey, nearly 40% of workers described their office environment as "most like a real life survivor program."

According to a survey of 800,000 workers in over 300 companies, the number of employees calling in sick because of stress tripled from 1996 to 2000. An estimated 1 million workers are absent every day due to stress. Unanticipated absenteeism is estimated to cost American companies \$602.00/worker/year. A 1997 three year study conducted by one large corporation found that 60% of employee absences could be traced to psychological problems that were due to job stress.

A 1999 government study stated that more jobs had been lost in the previous year than any other year in the last half century, and that the number of workers fearful of losing their jobs had more than doubled over the past decade. The problem has worsened considerably in the last decade, and especially in the last 4 years.

Job Conditions That May Lead to Stress⁷

Design of Tasks. Heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long work hours and shiftwork; hectic and routine tasks that have little inherent meaning, do not utilize workers' skills, and provide little sense of control. *Example:* Manager brings in his lunch, but must consume it over several hours, due to interruptions from owners, vendors and directors.

Management Style. Lack of participation by workers in decision-making, poor communication in the organization, lack of family-friendly policies. *Example:* President makes decisions. When the manager provides a suggestion or input, the president states: "We've always done it this way and we are not changing."

Interpersonal Relationships. Poor social environment and lack of support or help from coworkers and supervisors. *Example:* A manager works in an office by himself. Directors rarely visit, and his only support is from his maintenance supervisor, who barely speaks English. The president is unavailable for consultation, and annoyed when the manager seeks input.

Work Roles. Conflicting or uncertain job expectations, too much responsibility, too many "hats to wear." *Example:* The manager is caught between satisfying the requirements of the association and those of the management company, which are substantially different.

Career Concerns. Job insecurity and lack of opportunity for growth, advancement, or promotion; rapid changes for which workers are unprepared. *Example:* The management company has to downsize, due to a loss of properties, and all managers are worried they will lose their positions to others with more seniority or political clout.

Environmental Conditions. Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems. *Example:* The manager is assigned to a new property. The president, who has been there 18 years, keeps everything, even though the management company has copies. When the manager suggests that some of the paperwork be stored elsewhere to create a workable office space, the president refuses. Furthermore, the computer is sitting on an old dining room table, instead of a computer table.

⁷ NIOSH Reports

Signs of Workplace Stress

Stress-related problems include mood disturbance, psychological distress, sleep disturbance, upset stomach, headache, and problems in relationships with family and friends. The effects of job stress on chronic diseases are more difficult to ascertain because chronic diseases develop over relatively long periods of time and are influenced by many factors other than stress. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that stress plays a role in the development of several types of chronic health problems--including cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders. Some job stress symptoms include:

- Apathy
- Low morale
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Alienation
- Diminished productivity
- Absenteeism
- Physical problems (headaches, stomach problems)
- Workers' compensation awards as well as tort and FELA judgments
- Negativism/cynicism
- Boredom
- Frustration
- Depression
- Anger/irritability
- Accidents
- Employee turnover
- Direct medical, legal, and insurance costs

Job statistics reveal:

- 40% of job turnover is due to stress.
- 60 to 80% of accidents on the job are stress related and some, like the Three Mile Island and Exxon Valdez disasters, can affect untold thousands many miles away.
- In California, the number of Workers' Compensation claims for mental stress increased by almost 700 percent over eight years and ninety percent were successful with an average award of \$15,000 compared to a national average of \$3,420.
- Repetitive musculoskeletal injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome have become the nation's leading workplace health cost and account for almost a third of all Workers' Compensation awards.

Self-Generated Stress

Sometimes stress is caused by internal factors:

- Perfectionism
- Negative self-talk
- Lack of assertiveness
- Pessimism
- Unrealistic expectations
- Inability to accept uncertainty

How to Change the Organization to Prevent Job Stress

A combination of organizational change and stress management is often the most useful approach for preventing stress at work.

- Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
- Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.

- Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities.
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
- Improve communications-reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.
- Establish work schedules that are compatible with demands and responsibilities outside the job.
- Combat workplace discrimination (based on race, gender, national origin, religion or language).
- Bring in an objective outsider such as a consultant to suggest a fresh approach to persistent problems.
- Introducing a participative leadership style to involve as many subordinates as possible to resolve stress-producing problems.

St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company conducted several studies on the effects of stress prevention programs in hospital settings. Program activities included (1) employee and management education on job stress, (2) changes in hospital policies and procedures to reduce organizational sources of stress, and (3) the establishment of employee assistance programs. In one study, the frequency of medication errors declined by 50% after prevention activities were implemented in a 700-bed hospital. In a second study, there was a 70% reduction in malpractice claims in 22 hospitals that implemented stress prevention activities. In contrast, there was no reduction in claims in a matched group of 22 hospitals that did not implement stress prevention activities.[16]

Telecommuting is another way organizations can help reduce stress for their workers. Employees defined telecommuting as "an alternative work arrangement in which employees perform tasks elsewhere that are normally done in a primary or central workplace, for at least some portion of their work schedule, using electronic media to interact with others inside and outside the organization." One reason that telecommuting gets such high marks is that it allows employees more control over how they do their work. Telecommuters reported more job satisfaction and less desire to find a new job. Employees that worked from home also had less stress, improved work/life balance and higher performance rating by their managers.[17]

The following is a description of seven fictional but possible scenarios that a community association manager may encounter at some point in his or her career. The student's task is to identify the causes of the manager's stress and to develop alternative strategies that the manager may employ to reduce the level of stress and regain control and productivity.

Management & Prevention of Stress

Managing stress is about taking responsibility. One needs to take charge of thoughts, emotions, schedule, environment, and the way in which one handles problems and issues that crop up.

A starting point is to identify stressors. The true stressors are not always obvious. For instance, perhaps one sees a key stressor has too much work, where the actual stressor in that he is spending too much time socializing with colleagues.

On the basis of experience and research, NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) favors the view that working conditions play a primary role in causing job stress. However, the role of individual factors is not ignored. According to the NIOSH view, exposure to stressful working conditions (called job stressors) can have a direct influence on worker safety and health. But as shown below, individual and other situational factors can intervene to strengthen or weaken this influence. Theresa's need to care for her ill mother is an increasingly common example of an individual or situational factor that may intensify the effects of stressful working conditions. Examples of individual and situational factors that can help to reduce the effects of stressful working conditions include the following:

- Balance between work and family or personal life
- A support network of friends and coworkers
- A relaxed and positive outlook

Some recommendations for managing stress:

- **Start Your Day Off Right:** Many people come into work already stressed, and therefore more reactive to stress at work. Start off the day with good nutrition, proper planning, and a positive attitude, and you may find the stress of the workplace rolling off your back more easily.
- **Put it in perspective.** Jobs are disposable. Your friends, families, and health are not. If your employer expects too much of you, and it's starting to take its toll on you, start looking for a new job/new employer.
- **Modify your job situation.** If you really like your employer, but the job has become too stressful (or too boring), ask about tailoring your job to your skills. And if you got promoted into a more stressful position that you just are not able to handle, ask about a lateral transfer -- or even a transfer back to your old job (if that's what you want).
- **Be clear on requirements:** If you don't know exactly what's expected of you, or if the requirements keep changing with little notice, or you never know if what you're doing is enough schedule a meeting with the president of the board (and your management company supervisor) talk with your supervisor and go over expectations, and strategies for meeting them. After the meeting, write up a list of agreed upon objectives and requirements, and share this with the president (and your management company supervisor). If you are in agreement, the job will go smoother.
- **Stay Away From Conflict:** Because interpersonal conflict takes a toll on your physical and emotional health, don't gossip, don't share too many of your personal opinions about religion and politics, and try to steer clear of colorful office humor. Try to avoid those people at work who don't work well with others. If you cannot avoid conflict, try to resolve it (see conflict resolution).
- **Get time away.** If you feel the stress building, take a break. Walk away from the situation, perhaps walking around the block, sitting on a park bench, taking in a little meditative time. Exercise does wonders for the psyche. But even just finding a quiet place and listening to your iPod can reduce stress.
- **Fight through the clutter.** Taking the time to organization your desk or workspace can help ease the sense of losing control that comes from too much clutter. Keeping a to-do list -- and then crossing things off it -- also helps.

- **Stay Organized:** Being organized with your time means less rushing in the morning to avoid being late and rushing to get out at the end of the day. Keeping yourself organized means avoiding the negative effects of clutter, and being more efficient with your work
- **Talk it out.** Sometimes the best stress-reducer is simply sharing your stress with someone close to you. The act of talking it out -- and getting support and empathy from someone else -- is often an excellent way of blowing off steam and reducing stress. Have a support system of trusted people.
- **Cultivate allies at work.** Just knowing you have one or more co-workers who are willing to assist you in times of stress will reduce your stress level. Just remember to reciprocate and help them when they are in need.
- **Find humor in the situation.** When you -- or the people around you -- start taking things too seriously, find a way to break through with laughter. Share a joke or funny story.
- **Be Comfortable:** Physical discomfort is often an underlying and unrecognized stressor -- such as an uncomfortable chair, or keyboard that is not at the correct typing distance. Small distractions, such as office noise, can cause low-grade frustration. Work to create a quiet, comfortable and soothing workspace.
- **Have realistic expectations.** While Americans are working longer hours, we can still only fit so much work into one day. Having unrealistic expectations for what you can accomplish sets you up for failure -- and increased stress.
- **Forget Multitasking:** Multitasking was once THE WAY to maximize one's time and get more done in a day. Unfortunately, when one is talking on the phone, and making calculations, and typing a letter, speed and accuracy suffered. Many people who multitask feel frazzled from splitting one's focus. Rather than multitasking, try chunking. Chunking is the concept of breaking up one's day into larger chunks instead of reacting to each "emergency". The more chunks of time one dedicates to particular tasks, the fewer start-up moments one will have. The less time in start-up, the more time to get more done. Also, focusing on a single task at hand means a better quality product.
- **Nobody is perfect.** If you are one of those types that obsess over every detail and micromanage to make sure "everything is perfect," you need to stop. Change your motto to performing your best, and leave perfection to the gods. There is also a difference between a high achiever and a perfectionist. Especially in busy, fast-paced jobs, one will not be able to do everything perfectly, and attempting to meet this goal will create stress for everyone. Strive to do one's best will cause better results (perfectionists tend to stress about little mistakes and sometimes drop the ball because they can't do things well enough).
- **Maintain a positive attitude (and avoid those without one).** Negativism sucks the energy and motivation out of any situation, so avoid it whenever possible. Instead, develop a positive attitude -- and learn to reward yourself for little accomplishments (even if no one else does).
- **Exercise:** A sedentary lifestyle can lead to more illness and less ability to manage stress. By getting exercise during one's lunch break one can reduce stress, improve one's mood, and develop better physical health. Aerobic exercise --perspiring --is an effective anti-anxiety treatment lifting mood, increasing energy, sharpening focus and relaxing mind and body. For maximum stress relief, try to get at least 30 minutes of heart pounding activity on most days but activity can be broken up into two or three short segments.

- **Eat right:** Eating small but frequent meals throughout the day maintains an even level of blood sugar in your body. Low blood sugar makes you feel anxious and irritable. On the other hand, eating too much can make you lethargic.
- **Drink alcohol in moderation and avoid nicotine:** Alcohol temporarily reduces anxiety and worry, but too much can cause anxiety as it wears off. Drinking to relieve job stress can also start you on a path to alcohol abuse and dependence. Similarly, smoking when you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed may seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant – leading to higher, not lower, levels of anxiety.
- **Get enough sleep:** Stress and worry can cause insomnia. But lack of sleep also leaves you vulnerable to stress. When you're sleep deprived, your ability to handle stress is compromised. When you're well-rested, it's much easier to keep your emotional balance, a key factor in coping with job and workplace stress.
- **Listen to Music on the Drive Home:** Listening to music brings many benefits, and can offer an effective way to relieve stress after work. Combating the stress of a long day at work with one's favorite music on the drive home can reduce one's stress on the way home, thus better preparing one to interact with family and friends at home.
- **Time management tips for reducing job stress:**
 - ♦ Create a balanced schedule. Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.
 - ♦ Don't over-commit yourself. Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the "shoulds" and the "musts." Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.
 - ♦ Try to leave earlier in the morning. Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing to your desk and having time to ease into your day. Don't add to your stress levels by running late.
 - ♦ Plan regular breaks. Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to sit back and clear your mind. Also try to get away from your desk for lunch. Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help you be more, not less, productive.
- **Task management tips for reducing job stress**
 - ♦ Prioritize tasks. Make a list of tasks you have to do, and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high-priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.
 - ♦ Break projects into small steps. If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.
 - ♦ Delegate responsibility. You don't have to do it all yourself, whether at home, school, or on the job. If other people can take care of the task, why not let them? Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step. You'll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.
- **Improve emotional intelligence:** Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by

understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways. It's about communicating with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings, and defuse tension and stress.

- ♦ Self-awareness – The ability to recognize your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.
- ♦ Self-management – The ability to control your emotions and behavior and adapt to changing circumstances.
- ♦ Social awareness – The ability to sense, understand, and react to other's emotions and feel comfortable socially.
- ♦ Relationship management – The ability to inspire, influence, and connect to others and manage conflict.

The skill set that enables you to acquire these capabilities can be learned but requires the development of emotional and nonverbal ways of communicating that include:

- ♦ Learn to recognize your particular stress response and become familiar with sensual cues that can rapidly calm and energize you. Stay connected to your internal emotional experience so you can appropriately manage your own emotions. Knowing what you are feeling will not only add to your self-confidence and improve your self-control but enhance your understanding of others and help you build more satisfying relationships.
- ♦ Learn to recognize and effectively use the nonverbal cues that make up 95-98% of your communication process including eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gesture and touch. It is not what you say but how you say it that impacts others –for better or worse.
- ♦ Develop the capacity to meet challenges with humor. There is no better stress buster than a hardy laugh and nothing reduces stress quicker in the workplace than mutually shared humor. Note: if the laugh is at someone else's expense, you may end up with more rather than less stress.
- ♦ Learn to navigate conflict by becoming a good listener and someone who can face conflict fearlessly with the expectation that differences resolved will strengthen the relationship.

Laughter & Humor as a Workplace Stress Reducer

Humor and laughter can be a good stress-reliever, reduce job stress, enhance morale, bring people closer, and perhaps even fight off burnout. Unfortunately, if used incorrectly, it can alienate people and result in a more hostile work environment, even sparking lawsuits. Around 70% of people polled reported that workplace jokes they had heard centered around making fun of co-workers based on factors like age, sexual orientation, weight, accents, personal hygiene, and work behaviors. While there is not a significant difference between what men and women find offensive in office humor, women are more likely to be offended at remarks targeting their physical characteristics, such as weight, scars or cleavage.

So what's behind this delicate balance of offensive vs. funny office humor, and how can workers enjoy the stress-relieving benefits of humor and laughter without the damaging effects of offensive jokes? It seems that it is the use of humor to convey messages that are in and of themselves offensive. Here are some guidelines to remember when you're telling jokes around the office:

- **Think of The Message:** Ask yourself what the point, or underlying message, of your joke is. Are you using humor to say something that you wouldn't say to someone without the joke attached?
- **Know Your Audience:** If you're teasing someone about a physical feature, a scar, for example, do you know him well enough to know if he is comfortable enough with that feature to be matter-of-fact about it, or would mention of it be hurtful?
- **Leave Serious Topics Alone:** Do **not** joke about topics that are controversial or painful to someone else, like death, physical disabilities, sexual harassment or racial inequalities (or race in general).
- **Be Careful of Politics:** While a surprising number of people make political jokes, it is very important to know your audience, and avoid making political jokes that would offend someone of a different ideology if he is part of the group. Something that sounds hilarious when Bill Maher says it might sound crass coming from someone else.
- **When In Doubt, Leave It Out:** If you are not sure how a joke will be received, do not to tell it. Nobody wants to be made the butt of jokes, and it's best to joke about a neutral topic.
- **Emulate Seinfeld, Not The Office:** Reruns of Seinfeld, or any of his stand-up routines, provide perfect examples of (mostly) inoffensive but hilarious comedy. Everyone can relate to these jokes because they generally target human nature, the quirks of society, and do not single out groups based on features like race, sex or other features. Seinfeld makes us laugh at ourselves, and not at the expense of others. Steve Carell's character on The Office, however, gives perfect examples of what not to do. From belittling people, to constantly adding sexual innuendo by saying, "That's what she said!" to singling out people based on weight, sex, race and other offensive features, "Michael" is hilarious because he constantly does exactly what you shouldn't do!

When dealing with people who use workplace humor offensively or aggressively, use assertive communication to stand up for yourself or others, or change the subject and joke about other (safer) topics.

Conflict Resolution

With most conflicts, it is important to find a resolution. While this seems obvious, many people suppress their anger or just 'go along to get along.' They think that, by addressing a conflict, they are creating one, and simply keep quiet when upset. Unfortunately, this isn't a healthy long-term strategy. Unresolved conflict can lead to resentment and additional unresolved conflict in the relationship. Even more important, ongoing conflict can actually have a negative impact on your health and longevity

Unfortunately, resolving conflict can be tricky as well. Handled improperly, attempts at conflict resolution can actually make the conflict worse. Here are some guidelines to make conflict resolution more simple and less stressful.

Get In Touch With Your Feelings

An important component of conflict resolution involves only you -- knowing how you feel and why you feel that way. Sometimes we feel angry or resentful, but don't know why. Other times, we feel that the other person isn't doing what they should, but we aren't aware of exactly what we want from them, or if it's even reasonable. Journaling can be an effective way to get in touch with our own feelings, thoughts and expectations so we are better able to communicate them to

the other person. Sometimes this process brings up some pretty heavy issues, and psychotherapy can be helpful.

Hone Your Listening Skills

How effectively we listen is at least as important as how effectively we express ourselves. It is vital to understand the other person's perspective, if we are to come to a resolution. Just helping the other person feel heard and understood can sometimes resolve the conflict. Good listening also helps for you to be able to understand where the disconnect lies. Unfortunately, active listening is a common skill. It is not unusual for people to think they're listening, while they are actually formulating their next response, thinking to themselves how wrong the other person is, or doing things *other than* trying to understand the other person's perspective. Often, we are so defensive and entrenched in our own perspective that we do not hear the other person's point of view.

Practice Assertive Communication

Communicating your feelings and needs clearly is an important aspect of conflict resolution. Saying the wrong thing makes a conflict worse. You need to say what is on your mind in a way that is clear and assertive, without being aggressive or putting the other person on the defensive. One effective conflict resolution strategy is to put things in terms of how you feel rather than what you think the other person is doing wrong, using 'I feel' statements.

Seek a Solution

Once you think you understand the other person's perspective, and you think they understand yours, try to find a solution with which you both can live. Sometimes a simple and obvious answer comes up once both parties understand the other person's perspective. In cases where the conflict was based on a misunderstanding or a lack of insight to the other's point of view, a simple apology can work wonders, and an open discussion can bring people closer together. Other times, there is a little more work required. In cases where there is a conflict about an issue and both people don't agree, you have a few options: Sometimes you can agree to disagree; other times you can find a compromise or middle ground, and in other cases the person who feels more strongly about an issue may get their way, with the understanding that they will concede the next time. The important thing is to come to a place of understanding, and try to work things out in a way that's respectful to all involved.

Know When It's Not Working

Sometimes it is advisable to put some distance in the relationship, or cut ties completely. In cases of abuse, for example, simple conflict resolution techniques can only take you so far, and personal safety needs to take priority. When dealing with difficult family members, directors, or employees, adding a few boundaries and accepting the other person's limitations can bring some peace. In friendships that are unsupportive or characterized by ongoing conflict, letting go may be a great source of stress relief. Only you can decide if a relationship can be improved, or should be let go.

Exercises

The following is a description of seven fictional but possible scenarios that a community association manager may encounter at some point in his or her career. The scenarios are all based upon real occurrences reported by managers.

Your task is to identify the causes of the manager's stress and to develop alternative strategies that the manager may employ to reduce the level of stress and regain control and productivity. Specifically, we ask that you answer the following questions for each scenario:

1. What are the stressors?
2. What is the result of the stress?
3. What could the manager have done differently to prevent or mitigate the stress?
4. What could the manager have done differently to avert the situation(s)?
5. What can the manager do now to mitigate the stress on the job?
6. What can the manager do to mitigate the stress off the job?
7. Did the manager handle the situation correctly?

Exercise 1: High Expectations, Low Resources - Performing Miracles

Community association manager Juan Delgado has recently been hired to manage a thirty-two year old, five hundred unit high-rise condominium association. For many years the building, designed by a famous architect, was considered a showcase, luxury condominium. However, the building was severely damaged in a hurricane five years ago and since then, has deteriorated to the point that local building officials are threatening it with condemnation. The association's financial condition is marginal at best, with approximately thirty-five percent of maintenance fees committed to repayment of loans.

The previous manager quit as a result of the work place stress he was experiencing. Juan, an experienced and skillful manager, was hired at a high salary, with a commitment from the board that they would solve the financial problems of the association. His contract provided him authority to hire and fire staff at his discretion, after consultation with the Board of Directors. The president of the association is an intelligent, capable person with a background as a management consultant. The board is composed of a mix of personalities and backgrounds. Some directors are committed to criticizing the president and her actions.

Since the hurricane, owners have lived in a high stress environment, with uncarpeted hallways, wires dangling from hallway ceilings, frequent plumbing leaks, and air conditioning, heating and elevator breakdowns. There are approximately a dozen major capital projects going on, which the board has determined to be management's priority. Juan meets frequently with engineers, contractors, and building inspectors as well as board members appointed to provide oversight and direction on specific projects.

The association is engaged in expensive litigation with the contractor who performed concrete restoration and other major renovations that have been determined to have been done improperly. That contractor had been fired and new companies hired to correct the deficiencies and complete the work. The contractor, in turn, has liened the association for non-payment and filed a lawsuit against the association and the former president of the board for defamation of character.

An unrelated problem is enforcement of rules and regulations. The current rules and regulations are unclear. The president selectively enforces them, seemingly based upon whim. Additionally, the president often calls Juan at home to discuss association rumors, her feelings about actions or comments of other directors, and other matters, often not directly related to the operation of the association. Juan has permitted these calls, thinking they will diminish as the president becomes more secure in her position.

In recognition of the high workload and need for improved staff, the board permitted Juan to hire an assistant manager and recruit a new, more experienced maintenance director. The

president does not like the administrative assistant, who has been employed by the association for the past fifteen years. She has insisted upon her replacement regardless of the impact on the association. Juan has resisted making this change because he believes that the loss of the assistant's knowledge and institutional memory would be detrimental to the operation of the management office - especially given the workload and projects.

During the first nine months of Juan's tenure, major progress has been made in facilitating the completion of the capital projects. However, the president believes that rule enforcement, and the implementation of new security policies, are as important as the completion of the projects and can be accomplished with the personnel resources that Juan has been given. Other board members have expressed their disagreement with the president and have urged the manager to continue his initial course of action. However, with the exception of two dissident members, the directors are unwilling to openly challenge the president because they are unwilling to increase their level of involvement and incur the additional stress that would result. They fear the president might resign, and no other responsible board member is willing to take on that responsibility.

Recently Juan increased his normally long workday and is now working over 50 hours per week including work performed on the weekends. The president of the association has been calling Juan even more frequently during his off-hours. She is expressing concern about rule breakers and the lack of progress on the new security system. Juan is now experiencing considerable fatigue, is committing errors that he normally would never make, and has begun to have doubts that he will be able to overcome the barriers that are preventing him from accomplishing the goals of the association. Juan is now a manager under stress.

Exercise 2: The Manager and the President - Who's Running the Show?

Julie Parker has been the manager of a 250 unit home owner's association for the past five years. She is well-liked by the owners and takes considerable pride in her ability to perform her job effectively. She is an independent spirit and appreciates that, until just recently, board members have permitted her to do her job with a minimum of interference. However, at the last board meeting, a new president, Sam Warshafsky, was elected. Sam is a man in his early sixties, recently retired from a self-owned scrap metal business up north that he created from scratch. He operated his business without much attention to governmental regulation, except to develop methods of evading it, and that made him a wealthy man. He believes his success in life is due to his lack of trust in anyone but himself and his personal involvement in every infinitesimal aspect of his business. Unfortunately, Sam has not adapted well to retirement and is seeking an outlet for his considerable energies.

The morning after his election, Sam shows up at Julie's office dressed in an expensive suit and tie, sits down in front of her desk, and informs her that he intends to be a hands-on president. Julie responds that she appreciates his willingness to become involved and offers to provide a full orientation and report on all current and important activities of her office. Sam thanks her and asks if she minded if he sat and just observed what goes on in the office. Although a little uncomfortable with his request – she has never had a president do this – Julie agrees and begins to perform her routine duties. To her surprise, Sam continues to sit quietly in front of her desk during the next four hours, carefully watching and listening to everything. Sam then invites her to lunch. She accepts and they spend her lunch break discussing special projects, cost savings strategies, and association politics. Although Julie offers to split the cost, Sam insists on paying the check. The next day at 9 A.M. sharp, Sam shows up at the office, assumes his seat in front of Julie's desk and remains there until noon, whereupon he asks Julie to join him at lunch, which she again accepts. Sam once again picks up the tab. And so a new routine is

established in the manager's workday. At the next board meeting, Sam reports that Julie and he are working well together.

At the beginning, this routine seems pleasant enough and does not appear to interfere with Julie's ability to manage the association. However, after a couple of weeks, Julie begins to notice that maintenance, housekeeping, and security staff has changed some well-established procedures. Upon inquiring of them, she learns that Sam has directed them to make some minor changes in their activities. She directs them to return to the procedures.

As Julie thinks over the past weeks, she realizes that Sam and she have disagreed rather vigorously, during their lunch discussions, over a number of policies that Julie had successfully implemented over the past few years. These, in fact, are the policies that Sam has directed staff to change, without consulting with Julie. Julie brings these issues to Sam's attention. He advises her that these are minor issues, and that it is his right to make changes to better operate the association. Julie is now upset. Policies and procedures that she had developed and recommended, had been approved by past boards, and placed in clearly written manuals used to train personnel to ensure uniform application now appeared to be in danger of being revised or discarded upon the sole discretionary authority of the president. Julie sees that her authority to direct staff is being undermined by the president's actions. Julie explains her concerns to Sam, who again shrugs them off. He suggests she is overreacting. After a heated discussion, Sam agrees to let Julie know when he wants a change made.

The next day, the maintenance director, Alvino, comes to her as she is leaving for the day. He informs her that Sam has directed him to discontinue inspecting vendor work, as "it takes too much time away from other things." Sam also asked Alvino to repair a toilet in his unit, so that he did not need to call a plumber. Lastly, Alvino overheard a conversation between Sam and the roofing contractor, in which Sam told the roofer not to pull a permit, as "government only f*s things up." At the end of the day, Julie goes home to her family, who depend upon her calm demeanor to deal with everyday problems, as well as her paycheck. Although she knows that managers do not cry, she goes into her room, closes the door and weeps. Julie is now a manager under stress.

Exercise 3: The Manager in the Middle - The Board at War/A House Divided

Rene La Croix has been the manager of a 200 unit condominium association for the past eleven months. He had been hired upon the recommendation of the president at the time, Luis Rodriguez, who is no longer president, but retains his position as a director.

Approximately three months after Rene became manager, he apparently offended Luis' wife Cecilia. He has been unsuccessful in discovering what, exactly he supposedly did. He knows that past managers have had problems with Cecilia, and that she was instrumental in the firing of Rene's predecessor. Cecilia continues to tell community members that Rene is a poor manager, without giving any specifics. She soon convinces her husband that Rene should be replaced. Luis thereupon wrote a letter to the four other board members stating that he had lost confidence in the manager and strongly recommended his removal. However, the other members, aware of Cecilia's influence in removing the previous manager and believing that Rene was doing a good job, rejected Luis' recommendation. Luis immediately resigned as president.

No other board member was willing to assume the presidency, and the board finally settled on eighty-five year old Joe Hirsch. Joe is a well-liked and highly respected person in the community, but he is in poor health due to a heart condition. Joe had a strong belief in his

ability to achieve harmony and results through reasoned discussion. Joe was a marketing executive, and has little experience or understanding of community association management. Rene and Joe soon developed an excellent working relationship. Joe became dependent on Rene's expertise and appreciated his willingness to keep him and the board informed of the status of the three major capital projects that the association had recently initiated.

However, Cecilia is not satisfied with the result, especially as her husband was "forced" to resign as president. She personally holds his against Rene, and initiates a campaign, both overt and covert, to undermine Joe and discredit Rene. Both she and Luis have many friends in the building and Cecilia had used her chairmanship of the book club to build a strong political base. Recognizing Joe's popularity with the residents, they determined that their actions would be most effective directed at the manager rather than the president. They understood that Joe would be ineffective without Rene to guide him. Cecilia also befriends the administrative assistant, Leila, who was hired by Rene's predecessor just before he was fired. She encourages Leila to report to her and Luis everything that occurs in the office, and makes suggestions on how Leila can help undermine Rene. Cecilia promises Leila that she will be promoted if Rene is fired.

Joe becomes even more impressed with Rene upon witnessing his preparation and response to three major hurricanes that struck the property during one four month period. He reports to the board the exceptional job Rene and his staff did. This does not suit Luis and Cecilia; rumors soon begin to circulate that Rene was ineffective in his efforts to quickly repair the storm damage and get the delayed capital projects back on track. Luis had convinced Rudy La Motta, another board member, that he would make an excellent successor to Joe Hirsch. Rudy's wife, Susan, is a close friend of Cecilia's. Rudy now joins Luis in his attacks on Rene. Luis and Rudy and their spouses begin to pressure the association's treasurer, Richard Franklin, as the swing vote. They understand that only three votes are required to remove Joe from his office, and replace the manager. The board is now divided and argues at every meeting.

During the next three months, owners and residents begin to take sides, as the criticisms of Rene increase. Despite the efforts of the dissident directors, many owners recognized Rene's dedication and abilities and defended him. At the same time, others are being persuaded by the criticisms and rumors that had been spread by the unloyal opposition. Tremendous pressure is being brought on the wavering Richard Franklin to support one side or the other. And Joe Hirsch is now having occasional heart palpitations. Like the board, the house was now divided.

Rene is spending a considerable amount of time responding to rumors and false allegations. He is coming to the office every Saturday to perform routine duties that he is no longer able to accomplish during his normal workweek. He finds he cannot rely upon Leila for assistance, as she often advises him work was accomplished but was not. When he asks her to return calls, she advises him that she has, but, in reality, throws the messages away. Rene is getting criticism from owners for failing to return calls. He is becoming fatigued and short-tempered. He is concerned about whether he will keep his job. Rene is now a manager under stress.

Exercise 4: Doing the Right Thing - The Cost of Scruples

Dudley Wright has been the manager of a 150 unit homeowners association for two months. Prior to accepting the position, Dudley made extensive inquiries regarding the association and its board of directors. He learned that there had been rumors that previous boards had accepted kickbacks from contractors and that money had mysteriously disappeared from association accounts. When interviewing for the job with the newly elected board, Dudley stressed that he would not do anything he considered illegal, unethical, that violated the

association's documents or the professional standards that govern licensed community association managers. The board members informed him that they had been elected by the membership based upon their collective pledge to conduct themselves honestly and legally.

Happily, the board had been good as their word and Dudley had not been asked to do anything nor had he witnessed anything that could be construed as the least bit improper. Or had he?

As Dudley reflected on his first few months, he remembered that last week the Jane Barker, the secretary of the association, came into the office with an armful of sheet music. Association policy was that copies would be made for owners and residents at the cost of twenty-five cents a page. The board had a sign prominently displayed sign stating the policy. Nonetheless, Jane proceeded to copy her sheet music to the tune of approximately one half ream of paper or two hundred-fifty pages. Dudley was extremely busy at the time, and had not focused on Jane's action. He now realized that something improper had occurred.

Dudley remembered another incident in which the president of the board, Vernon Dillinger, informed him that he had scheduled a furniture delivery for a Saturday afternoon. Association policy restricted deliveries to weekdays from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and Saturday morning between 9 and noon. Exceptions could be granted only upon an emergency, or with the consent of the board. Vernon had explained that he needed a waiver on the rule because he was leaving on vacation and Saturday afternoon was the only time he could be present to accept the delivery. Dudley realized that he had not said anything to Vernon about the need to uniformly enforce the rules without preference to any owner, regardless of his position. Nor had he communicated with the secretary about her improper use of the association's copier.

Dudley's thoughts now shifted to another incident that came to mind in which treasurer, Tom Enron, after reviewing the bids for the planned pool resurfacing project, had contacted one of the bidders and requested a new, lower cost proposal. Dudley now realized that perhaps he was not employed by a totally honest and upright board and that his intention of working for an association that would uphold his high ethical standards was not being realized.

Dudley decided that he needed to seek guidance from his wife, Claudia, and his minister, Pastor John Armstrong, before taking any action. That evening, just as he was arrived at his door, Claudia greeted him with a big hug and smile. Dudley, she gushed, guess what, we are going to have a new addition to our family. Dudley joyfully expressed his happiness with the blessed event – his first child – and quickly decided to defer a discussion of workplace problems to a more appropriate time.

He did, however, call Pastor Armstrong and set up a counseling appointment. After listening attentively to Dudley, Pastor Armstrong advised that the occurrences Dudley described were unscrupulous behavior on the part of the board members. He further suggested that Dudley himself had acted unscrupulously in his passive response. Pastor Armstrong strongly advised Dudley to denounce such conduct on the part of his board members whenever it occurred.

Dudley left the counseling session upset and somewhat confused. Pastor Armstrong had used the words scruples and unscrupulous a number of times during the session but they were not terms with which Dudley was familiar. Somewhat later he remembered an old movie he had seen in which the young daughter of a con man was castigating her father about his behavior. When her father protested that he had scruples, she responded that she did not know what scruples were but if he had them he had stolen them from someone else. Dudley now understood that his pastor had placed a great moral burden on his shoulders and he was

determined to no longer passively accept the reoccurrence of unscrupulous behavior by board members or anyone else in the association.

That night he told Claudia of his discussion with Pastor Armstrong and of his decision on how he would respond to future incidents. Claudia quietly informed Dudley that the world they lived in was corrupt, that no one had appointed him to be Mother Theresa's successor, and that, with a new baby on the way and unpaid bills piling up, there was no way that she would tolerate him putting his job at risk.

The next day at work, President Dillinger came to the office and directed Dudley to issue a check to him for \$250 for expenses that he had occurred in the performance of his duties as president. Dudley asked the president for copies of the receipts. He replied that he had lost them and not to be concerned because Treasurer Tom Enron had already agreed to counter sign the checks. Dudley Wright was now a manager under stress.

Exercise 5: Dissidents with Money and Time - Litigating with Fat Cats

Luther Van Broek manages a 250 unit condominium. The owners of the association have split into warring camps. One group supports the current board; a second opposes it; a third group consisting of a past president and his wife, Lester and Lesley Dunlop, hates both groups and is determined to do everything in their power to obstruct the current board and any successive board from accomplishing anything. Luther understands the reason for their bitterness is that Lester has been widely accused of mishandling millions of dollars in capital project funding and, in the most recent election, he received the second fewest votes of nine candidates. His wife Lesley received the fewest. Luther has created problems for the board and Luther in a number of different ways. Although he is wealthy beyond most people's imagination, he has stopped paying his maintenance assessment to protest what he claims is management's refusal to repair the damaged sliding glass doors in his unit. He is also suing the board and the past president for defamation of character and for failure to provide him with an accurate certificate of assessment. Additionally, he continuously makes written demands for information that would, if complied with, severely impair Luther's capacity to perform the routine operations of his office, not to mention the many capital projects he is managing. Although Luther is well aware of Lester's statutory right to the information he has requested, he finds it impossible to set aside time to do the necessary research to obtain the documents and meet the board's demands to make progress on the capital projects, some of which have been undertaken in response to Fire and Building Department citations. Luther has requested assistance from the board to handle this problem, but the board has been unable to reach a decision. Luther listed projects that were falling behind in each manager's report. The board's suggestion was that he take work home, so he could catch up, that he was a salaried employee and had to work whatever hours were necessary to get the job done. Luther spent the weekend in the office, attempting to research and catch up.

On Monday morning, Luther arrived at his office an hour early, determined to make substantial progress on the job projects that had been delayed because of the time he had expended on Lester's law suits. About 9:15, he received a telephone call from the association's attorney, Angelo Punt, reminding him that he was scheduled to be at a mediation session with Lester's attorney at 2:00 P.M. that afternoon. Lester checked his calendar and realized that he had incorrectly scheduled the mediation for next Monday afternoon. He began to realize that he had been making a lot of mistakes recently because he was continually rushing from one unfinished activity to another. Lester immediately began to gather the documents he needed for the mediation session. By working through lunch, he managed to gather the required documents and then drove through heavy traffic to arrive at the mediation at 2:20 P.M. Impatiently awaiting

him were two angry attorneys, Johnny Demon representing the plaintiff, Lester Dunlop, and Angelo Punt. Two hours into the deposition Luther was asked to produce a specific document that was crucial to resolving the dispute. To his horror, he realized that he had taken it home to review approximately a week ago, had not returned it to the office, and that no one was home to forward it to him. Luther informed the attorneys that he did not have the document. Johnny Demon thereupon arose, declared the mediation over, and stormed out of the room screaming that he would see them either in court or in hell. Luther returned to his office to find the association president, Lavinia Hare, staring coldly at him and appearing to be hopping mad. He quickly surmised that she was not there to compliment him on a job well done. Luther was now a manager under stress.

Exercise 6: Capital Projects - Snafus, Cost Overruns, Rescheduling

Lupe Goldberg is a community association manager with extensive experience in working with engineers, contractors, and building inspectors on large and complex capital projects. She is currently managing a 400 unit twenty story high rise condominium. The association's board of directors recently contracted with Thrifty Construction Company to restore its corroded balconies and parking garage.

During an inspection of the garage with Joe Valoppio, the professional engineer hired as project manager, Lupe requested that Joe evaluate the pool equipment room because she had noticed that portions of the pool's concrete underside were flaking and soft to the touch. Joe determined that, in addition to the balconies and parking garage, the pool would also require concrete restoration and resurfacing. These projects were not funded in the original special assessment. Further, their cost could not be accurately estimated until the full extent of the damage was determined.

Lupe informed the board president, Larry Chu, that, at her initiative, the engineer had inspected the pool shell in the garage and had determined that additional work was required. Although Larry was aware that, a number of years ago, the pool of a neighboring condominium built by the same developer around the same time, had fallen into its garage, destroying vehicles and narrowly missed injuring or killing some residents, he expressed anger at Lupe for bringing the problem to Joe's attention. Larry informed Lupe that he and the board had been severely criticized for the cost of the current special assessment, that they had not budgeted funding for contingencies, and that now the board would be faced with voting for another special assessment or borrowing money to fund the shortfall. He admonished Lupe for exceeding her authority and warned her not to let it happen again.

A few days later Joe advised Lupe that work performed on a number of balconies was substandard and had to be redone. Lupe discussed Joe's findings with Juan Del Tardio of Thrifty Construction. Juan responded that he was aware of the problem and that it was the fault of his subcontractor, Vanity Ready-Mix Limited. He added that Vanity had been having cash flow problems recently and had just laid off a number of employees. Juan promised that Vanity would re-do the work properly but there would be a delay of a week or so.

Lupe immediately informed President Chu of the new situation. Unexpectedly, Larry flew into a rage and accused Lupe of creating problems instead of solving them. Lupe reminded Harry that she had recommended another higher cost but better qualified contractor, that the budget include funds for unexpected expenses, and that a performance bond be included in the contract. Larry informed her that it was not her job to criticize the president or the board and that it was her responsibility to get the project done properly and within budget.

The next morning Lupe woke up with a throbbing migraine headache. She called Larry Chu and told him she was ill and would not be to work that day. President Chu asked her if her problems were female in nature because if they were it was not legitimate to take time off. Lupe hung up on him. She was now a manager under stress.

Exercise 7: Emergencies and Disasters - Fix it Now, Fix it Cheap

Community Association Manager Phil Lubartowski was hired by the board of Epoxy Condominium Association to replace its retiring manager, Juan-Pepe Garcia, on August 1st. Juan-Pepe has been the manager for 20 years, and, as he told Phil: "This building ain't got no problems." Phil and Juan-Pepe walked the grounds, with Juan-Pepe describing facilities, equipment, and introducing Phil to staff. When they arrived at the new, above-ground storage tank, Juan-Pepe boasted that he has saved the association \$4,000, by having staff connect the tank to the generator. Phil asked if he generator has been tested, and Juan-Pepe assured him it was in working order. Phil noticed some problems as he walked with Juan-Pepe, and made a mental note to test all systems.

However, Phil was only on the job a week, when Hurricane Lolita swept through the area. He has little time to prepare the building, and, he worked with his maintenance supervisor, Ramon, to put up the shutters, take down signs and otherwise get the property ready. Although the county ordered the building evacuated, many residents – elderly with no place to go – refused to leave. Board president, Lonnie Le Mange, advised Phil to let them stay – although he had made other arrangements at a hotel.

Hurricane Lolita severely damaged Epoxy – trees were down, signs were damaged, shutters were bent. Phil had hardly any sleep in the days after Hurricane Lolita had rampaged through. When Phil turned on the emergency generator, he found that the storage tank was empty. Phil had, after many fruitless attempts, finally located a diesel fuel company with the capacity to refill the building's tank. Finally, at 6:30 PM, he and Jorge watched the tanker fill the storage tank, and Jorge turned on the generator. After checking to be sure the elevator and lights worked, an exhausted Phil left for home.

At midnight, Phil received a telephone call from security, informing him that a gasoline odor was pervading the building and that the emergency generator was no longer working. He immediately called 911, got into his car and raced over to the building, skillfully avoiding downed power lines and debris filled streets as he drove.

Upon arrival, he consulted with Fire Department officials on the scene, who informed him that the elevator pit was filled with diesel fuel. Six hours after the storage tank had been filled it was again empty. Phil, suffering from fatigue, went to his office, turned on a flashlight and began dialing. Within two hours, a vehicle arrived and siphoned the diesel fuel from the elevator pit and miraculously, a technician from the generator company who was available on emergency standby had repaired the generator. The technician informed Phil that a generator malfunction had resulted in fuel flowing onto the floor and due to a design flaw in the connections between the storage tank and generator, down a drainpipe that emptied into the elevator pit. Ramon and the technician corrected the problem, and Phil once again located the diesel fuel supplier who dispatched a truck to refill the tank. Unfortunately, when Ramon, the maintenance director, attempted to restart the generator nothing happened. The generator finally came back to life after Phil called the generator technician who talked Ramon through the restart process. Phil finally got home and to bed at 4:00 A.M.

The next day, Phil arrived at work at noon. President Lonnie Le Mange greeted him, having left the posh hotel at which he was staying “until the crisis is over.” Lonnie asked for an update. Phil summarized the actions he had taken to prepare the building and residents for the storm, and those actions subsequent to the hurricane, including notifying the insurance company and documenting the damage. He informed President Le Mange that he had taken advantage of the services of the construction company which was installing a new expansion joint on the property, and had negotiated a flat fee of \$6,000 for removal of the extensive debris that was blocking access to interior roadways and the building itself. He also informed him of the generator failure that had occurred the previous day and the likelihood that the EPA would conduct an investigation.

Lonnie exploded, claiming that Phil had no authority to arrange payment for the debris removal, or to agree to drainage and replace to the fuel line. In fact, he suggested, had Phil done his job, he would have known the tank was improperly connected to the generator. Phil responded that he had been checking systems since his employment, but had relied upon Juan-Pepe’s statement that the generator system was functional. He also noted that he had tried unsuccessfully to reach Lonnie but disruptions to both cable and land line telephone service made it impossible. He reminded the president that many residents who were unable to evacuate the building had run out of both food and water and that some elderly residents were out of medication. Lonnie responded that he considered the price of debris removal that Phil had negotiated exorbitant, and that if Phil would have enforced the evacuation order, the additional fuel cost and ridiculously high debris removal expense could have been avoided. Phil, astonished at the president’s lack of appreciation for his efforts and insensitivity to the needs of the residents, informed the president that he found the criticisms unreasonable. In light of these criticisms, Phil asked Lonnie for guidance on what should be handled and how, and expressed his anger at Lonnie’s remarks. Lonnie abruptly stated that the board would discuss the proper recourse for Phil’s actions, and left the property to return to his hotel.

The next day Phil met with contractors to inspect the extensive interior damage to hallway walls and apartment units. After the inspection, he called Lonnie, apologized for his undiplomatic remarks of the previous day and recommended that an engineer be hired to draw up restoration plans and bid specifications. Lonnie informed Phil that residents wanted to return to their apartments and that he knew a contractor who was cheap and could begin work within the next few days. He directed Phil to immediately draw up a contract for his signature and not to bother to notify the board since this was an emergency situation. Phil advised Lonnie that the immediate crisis was over and that an emergency situation no longer existed. He suggested that no work should begin until the insurance adjustor had assessed the damage. He reminded Lonnie that it was essential to obtain permits to perform the necessary repairs. Lonnie responded that he found Phil uncooperative and stupid, and told him the board would hold a meeting forthwith to determine what contractor to use. He suggested that Phil was unqualified for his positions, but stated: “I supposed we are stuck with you, given the current crisis. You better watch your step.” Phil was now a manager under stress.

Conclusion

As we stated at the beginning, modern life is full of deadlines, frustrations, demands and annoyances. For most people, stress is so routine that it has become a lifestyle. In small doses, stress can help one perform under pressure and motivate one to excel. However, when one is continually under stress, the mind and the body pay a substantially price.

Being a community association manager is often a stressful position, just by its nature. While the manager usually reports through the president to a board, he must keep the board satisfied to keep his position. Differing personalities can affect one's effectiveness. A manager who works through a management company for an association has an additional boss to please – and the requirements of the management company may not be consistent with what the board wants. While the president is the chief operating officer, other board members make demands upon the manager, and expect him to comply, regardless of the association objectives. Certain owners often have differing agendas from the board, and look to subvert the manager to damage to board.

There is no perfect job. Everyone has pressures and stress. Every individual handles situations differently. While a dictatorial president may result in an unworkable situation from one person, another may find he can adjust to the demands. Unfortunately, in the current job market, managers do not necessarily have the flexibility of selecting their positions, but may need to take what is available – and adjust.

We have reviewed various stressors and have suggested certain strategies to reduce stress. We have provided you with seven situations which occurred in community associations, and asked that you evaluate the stressors and develop strategies for resolving the stress. We hope that these will be helpful to you as you move forward with your management career.

Questions

1. NIOHS stands for:
 - a) National Institute of Occupations & Home Security
 - b) National Institute of Occupational Health & Safety
 - c) National Institution of Occupational Health & Safety
 - d) Natural Issues on Occupations, Health & Safety
2. According to the American Institute of Stress, common causes of workplace stress include:
 - a) Shortened working days due to the economy
 - b) Feelings of being treated fairly
 - c) Office politics
 - d) Decreased workloads
3. In a 1998 study, health care costs were nearly ____ greater for works reporting high levels of stress in comparison to “low risk” works.
 - a) 50%
 - b) 75%
 - c) 25%
 - d) 35%
4. Long term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems, such as:
 - a) Lowered blood pressure
 - b) Increased risk of renal disease
 - c) Increased risk of cancer
 - d) Increased risk of anxiety and depression
5. A manager is defined as all of the following except:
 - a) A farmer
 - b) A person who controls and manipulates resources and expenditures
 - c) A person who manages
 - d) A theatrical producer
6. Stress:
 - a) Never varies between individuals
 - b) Is important to keep one at peak in the workplace
 - c) Is a normal physical response to events that threaten or upset one’s balance in some manner
 - d) Takes away stress to defend oneself and others
7. Eustress is:
 - a) Stress experienced in a crisis
 - b) Chronic stress
 - c) Stress from conflicted relationships
 - d) A stress that helps people feel energetic, positive and enthusiastic
8. Which of the following is true:
 - a) Stress from an argument has the same effect as facing a life or death situation
 - b) If one is under a lot of stress, the stress response fades into an off position
 - c) The more the body’s stress system is activated, the easier it is to deal with stress
 - d) Long term stress increases risk of heart attack only

9. According to the British Medical Journal:
- a) Chronic stress is linked to the development of heart disease and renal failure
 - b) Greater levels of stress decrease one's likelihood of developing metabolic syndrome
 - c) Chronic stress increase the risk of central obesity
 - d) Stress is necessary for successful job performance
10. Foot on the gas can be described as:
- a) One is frozen under pressure and cannot act
 - b) One is withdrawn or depressed and therefore continues to speed ahead
 - c) One is heated up, overly emotional and unable to sit still
 - d) One is agitated under the surface but looks and functions normally
11. Stress warning signs and symbols include:
- a) Memory problems, nausea, and ability to relax
 - b) Worrying, overwhelming happiness, and nail biting
 - c) Aches or pains, euphoria, and moodiness
 - d) Frequent colds, pacing, poor judgment
12. Which of the following statements is true?
- a) What is stressful for one person will be stressful for all people
 - b) Differences in personality and coping skills are important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress
 - c) Stress never results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work
 - d) All psychologists agree that on the importance of worker characteristics vs. working conditions are the primary cause of job stress
13. A Gallup Poll Survey found that:
- a) 50% of workers had felt like striking a coworker in the last year, but did not
 - b) 35% of workers have felt like screaming or shouting due to job stress
 - c) 50% of workers are fearful that another worker on the job may become violent
 - d) 42% of workers believe that coworkers need help in learning to manage stress
14. According to two studies, the United States:
- a) Has coined terms such as "going postal," desk rage," and "phone rage."
 - b) Has homicide as a leading cause of workplace deaths for men
 - c) Has the lowest violent crime rate of any industrialized nation
 - d) Has less than 10,000 non-fatal violent crimes each year while the victim is working
15. Job conditions that may lead to stress including all of the following but:
- a) Design of tasks
 - b) Work roles
 - c) Career concerns
 - d) Breaks and working hours
16. Job statistics reveal:
- a) 60% of job turnover is due to stress
 - b) 90% of accidents on the job are stress related
 - c) Repetitive musculoskeletal injuries account for almost a third of workers' compensation claims
 - d) In California, Workers' Comp claims for mental stress increased almost 1000% over five years

17. Some ways to change the organization to prevent job stress include all but the following:
- a) Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers
 - b) Establish work schedules that the same for all employees
 - c) Bring in an objective outsider to suggest new approaches to persistent problems
 - d) Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources
18. Recommendations for managing stress include all but the following:
- a) Play music at work
 - b) Be clear of requirements
 - c) Stay away from conflict when possible
 - d) Drink alcohol in moderation
19. Improving emotional intelligence excludes:
- a) The ability to discount other's emotional responses
 - b) Learning to recognize your particular stress responses
 - c) The ability to accept input from others without feeling guilty
 - d) Becoming a good listener
20. Humor and laughter:
- a) Are inappropriate in the workplace
 - b) Can be a good stress reliever and enhance morale if used correctly
 - c) Can reduce stress when playing off of a coworker's physical deficits
 - d) Should include politics and religion

References

Some of the references used in preparing this course include:

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