

Practice Safe Stress: Building Stress Resilience through Human Connection and Humor

In a 24/7 always-on world, filled with change and uncertainty, to build personal-professional resilience and vital personal-professional relationships, we need a daily dose of "L & L" as much as periodic "R & R." Let go and knowingly laugh at life's "slings and arrows" as well as our own absurdities. Let the Stress doc help you quickly recognize the stages of burnout and discover prevention and rejuvenation strategies. Roar as you playfully grasp communication blocks and also disarm power struggles. Use playful and powerful story sharing to identify common struggles, break down status barriers, and generate camaraderie. Create a more equal "helmets off" and "we're all in this together" atmosphere and culture.

By the end of this "Get FIT" -- FUN-Interactive-Thought-provoking -- Workshop, participants will:

1. Rapidly recognize stress smoke signals and the Four Stages of Burnout
2. Discover the Four "R"s of burnout prevention, Six "R"s of burnout recovery & rejuvenation, along with the heart and art of "letting go"
3. Identify key "Listening & Hearing, Letting Go and Learning" barriers in work with clients
4. Disarm self-defeating power struggles through courageous and trust-building good questions
5. Engage in Feeling Underutilized Exercise
6. Creatively confront the Intimate FOE: in a fun small group exercise, transform the "Fear of Exposure" into the "Fun of Embarrassment"
7. Take home the Stress Doc's "Top Ten" Tips for Surviving Trauma, Transition & Everyday Stress

Seek the higher power of Stress Doc humor: *May the Farce Be with You!*

Don't miss your appointment with the Stress Doc!

Mark Gorkin, MSW, LICSW, "The Stress Doc"™, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, is a national keynote speaker and "Motivational Humorist" known for interactive, inspiring, and FUN programs for government agencies & major corporations. The Doc is a training and Stress Resilience Consultant for several national consulting firms. He has also led "Resilience, Team Building and Humor" programs for various branches of the Armed Services. A former Stress and Violence Prevention Consultant for the US Postal Service, Mark is the author of *Practice Safe Stress*, *The Four Faces of Anger*, and *Resiliency Rap*. **For more info on the Doc's "Practice Safe Stress" programs or to receive his free e-newsletter, email stressdoc@aol.com or call 301-875-2567.**

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### Stress Test

Rate yourself on how you typically react in each of the situations listed below. There are no right or wrong answers.

4 – Almost Always                      3 – Frequently                      2 – Sometimes                      1 – Never

\_\_\_ I do as much as I can in the least amount of time.

- \_\_\_ I get impatient with delays or interruptions.
- \_\_\_ I have to win at games to feel satisfied or to enjoy myself.
- \_\_\_ I accelerate my car through amber lights.
- \_\_\_ I am reluctant to admit I need help or to ask for help.
- \_\_\_ I am too critical of others' work.
- \_\_\_ I feel driven to achieve or acquire more and more.
- \_\_\_ I need and seek other people's recognition and admiration.
- \_\_\_ I feel compelled to check my phone, watch or clock.
- \_\_\_ I overschedule more than I can do realistically.
- \_\_\_ I do several things at one time.
- \_\_\_ I carry around a lot of irritation or anger.
- \_\_\_ I don't have time for hobbies or time for myself.
- \_\_\_ I basically lack a support system of close family and/or friends.
- \_\_\_ My mother would not be happy about my eating regimen or habits.
- \_\_\_ I do not take time out for planned exercise, meditation, or yoga.
- \_\_\_ I get involved or caught up in multiple projects.
- \_\_\_ Deadlines are a constant part of my work.
- \_\_\_ I get somewhat anxious or guilty when relaxing or doing nothing.
- \_\_\_ I accept or take on too many responsibilities.

20 – 30 Perhaps life is boring, or you feel non-productive, or your job lacks stimulation.

30 – 50 You have a good balance between stress, balance, and controlling stress.

50 – 60 You are borderline tense; perhaps you aren't handling stress well.

60 – 80 Are you a candidate for burnout or heart disease?

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## **Combat Strategies at the Burnout Battlefield**

**Today's world is 24/7, wired and always on and often cycling between upgrading and reorganizing--if not outsourcing and downsizing. And as company mantras become "do more with less," it's no surprise that more and more people are struggling with job stress and burnout.**

*By Mark Gorkin, LICSW*

### **The Erosive Spiral**

The classic set-up for burnout is a professional or personal situation that places high ongoing demands and responsibilities upon you while restricting your sense of control, autonomy and/or authority. Inflexibly high

expectations and elusive goals only add fuel to the fire. Consider this: If, no matter what you do or how hard you try, results, rewards, recognition and relief are not forthcoming and you can't say and mean "no" or won't let go, trouble awaits. The groundwork is laid for apathy, callousness and despair.

Burnout is a gradual process by which a person detaches from work and other significant roles and relationships in response to excessive and prolonged stress and mental, physical and emotional strain. The result is lowered productivity, cynicism and confusion--a feeling of being drained and having nothing more to give.

### **The Four Stages of Burnout**

**Physical, mental and emotional exhaustion** is the first stage of burnout. Do you recognize this sequence? Maybe you are still holding it together at work, but as soon as you get home you go right for the fridge, turn on the TV, hit the sofa and are comatose for the rest of the evening. Normally you pride yourself on doing a thorough job. But budget cuts have you looking for shortcuts, if not cutting corners, and this gnaws at your self-esteem. A case of the "brain strain" is developing, accompanied by an energy shortage and feelings of exhaustion.

**Shame and doubt** manifest themselves in the second stage of burnout. For example, if your supervisor asks you to take on a new assignment your first reaction is to be helpful, but suddenly a voice inside screams, "Are you kidding?" You're feeling shaky in the present and losing confidence about managing the future--you can even start discounting past accomplishments. Remember, this is not a logical process but a psychological one.

**Cynicism and callousness** are how people often respond to feeling vulnerable. They put their guard up and look out for No. 1. In the short run this strategy may work, but over time this hard exterior can become a heavy burden. Remember, burnout is less a sign of failure and more a sign that you gave yourself away. Not surprisingly, you can become resentful and feel that people are taking advantage of you. Sensitive individuals begin developing calloused skin for self-protection.

This stage of burnout doesn't just facilitate a hardening of the psyche. When your stress starts to smolder and turns to frustration and anger it can lead to a hardening of the arteries. High blood pressure, hypertension, cardiovascular complications, even heart attacks and strokes are potential health risks.

**Failure, helplessness and crisis** are symptoms of the fourth stage of burnout. And while it sounds terrible, consider this: hitting bottom means there's no more downward spiral. And if you can reach out, there's nowhere to go but up. Being caught in a career catch-22 often signals the final stage. Burnout is like trying to run a marathon at full speed. Without pacing, the body parts wear out, and the mental apparatus breaks down. In fact, one reason the fourth stage is so disorienting psychologically is that there are cracks in your defensive armor.

Fourth-stage burnout is the crisis point. Are you ready to reach out for the help and resources you need? A person recovers and expands his or her strengths and possibilities by:

- Getting proper support from a professional trained in crisis intervention and loss;
- Confronting denial, false hopes, cynicism and helplessness;
- Grieving past and present losses, while turning guilt, anxiety and aggression into focused energy; and
- Acquiring skills and technology for transforming new awareness and motivation.

### **Rehabilitation and Rejuvenation**

While the erosive spiral of burnout is dangerous, it also provides opportunity for growth. I know from personal experience.

Back in the 1980s, I was an unrealistic doctoral student. Low self-esteem and determination to silence critics and doubters had me trying to turn a mystical-like experience in psychoanalysis into a doctoral dissertation. For the sake of brevity, let's just say I was definitely off the ivy-covered wall. And for several months, I was sidelined by

exhaustion, existential emptiness and frightening, stress-induced dizzy spells. Fortunately, a silver lining emerged from the academic ashes. I became an expert on stress and burnout eventually evolving a self-care, recovery and prevention process.

It took several months of grieving and tending to mind-body wounds to recover. I needed to know that significant others still loved and respected me despite my feelings of academic failure. You may need a mentor or a counselor to reconfirm your pre-crisis identity; to help you see strengths when you are fixated on your weaknesses. And the earlier one can begin grieving and “letting go,” the easier for emotional catharsis to become a tool for rebuilding healthy purpose and passion.

### **Four Rs of Burnout Recovery**

**Running** – Get moving with 30-40 minutes of exercise, such as jogging, brisk walking, cycling or swimming, which will get those disposition-enhancing endorphins pumping. The chemical influx helps slow a racing mind and helps lift a sluggish mood. There’s a beginning and end point for a tangible sense of control and accomplishment. Your routine becomes a success ritual fueling burnout recovery.

**Reading** – Turn to humorous novels or cartoon books to add some absurdity, if not levity, to your perspective. Hearty laughter also releases endorphins, giving vital organs a brief but vigorous internal massage.

**Retreating** – Take time to reflect on this ego- and identity-shattering experience and answer some of the big, existential questions: What are my skills, gifts and talents? What are my emotional, knowledge and learning gaps? The blank canvas is scary--but also exciting. To paraphrase poet Walt Whitman: Follow the open road and discover or recover your soul.

**Writing** - Research indicates that taking the time to express and analyze your emotions through writing provides a stress-relieving anchor in a stormy, troubled sea. Reflective writing can also be a source of self-discovery--a tool for your healing, understanding and action.

### **Shake Things Up**

Rebuilding may involve shaking up the personal-professional puzzle, exploring anew or even returning to one’s passionate roots. This might include job or career path changes.

- Restructure current roles and responsibilities; work in another department or division.
- Take a sabbatical or travel.
- Consult independently or work for a foundation, an association or an institute.
- Go back to school to pursue a heartfelt interest, or even return to the classroom as an educator.
- Go into business for yourself or, if you’re self-employed and running on empty, join a company.
- Recover a previous creative pursuit and turn it into a career path or, perhaps, balance a job with a passionate hobby.
- Pursue a different professional setting or field or a new geographical location.

### **Burnout Prevention Strategies**

Burnout evokes an experience of loss--from loss of control or abandoning a cherished goal to a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. However, wrestling with loss often yields renewed energy and transitional possibilities.

To reduce chronic stress and prevent burnout, the Stress Doc prescribes natural SPEED.

**Sleep** – While recent research questions the health benefits of excessive sleep (more than eight hours) a pattern of less than six hours for most people yields a loss of mental sharpness. Also, sleep research supports brief napping (10 to 40 minutes) during the day for mind-body rejuvenation.

**Priorities** – Focus on the essentials when trying to be productive. To meet expectations and to achieve goals, it's often vital to establish limits and set boundaries. Learn to say no and to negotiate. Tactfully yet assertively discuss what's urgent versus what's important.

**Empathy** – Listening to or supporting others can be stress relieving, just make sure the shoulder lending is not a one-way transaction. At work and/or in your home life, have at least one stress buddy with whom you can let your hair down.

**Exercise** – The benefit of regular exercise is both physical and psychological. Thirty minutes of vigorous activity releases endorphins--natural mood enhancers and pain relievers in the brain.

**Diet** – A diet high in saturated fats (red meat, high-fat dairy) and simple sugars (sodas, cookies and excessive chocolate) induces drowsiness and mental torpor, not to mention clogged arteries. And too much alcohol and caffeine is a roller coaster headache--moodiness or depression often follows aggression and agitation. Balancing protein, fruits and vegetables, complex carbs, grains, nuts and plenty of water is vital for optimal energy and alertness along with cardiovascular health.

## **Psychological Hardiness**

Psychological hardiness is a concept developed by Dr. Suzanne Kobasa and her research team while studying the health of AT&T executives during the stressful breakup of "Ma Bell." Some execs were having a hard time physically and emotionally, while others were coping effectively with the transitional storm. The hardest executives demonstrated what I call the four C's of psychological hardiness.

**Commitment** – While not happy about the major restructuring and resulting turbulence, the hardest executives did not give up; they were determined to do quality work. They also had a life outside the office and received support from family, friends, colleagues and spiritual activities, as well as from hobbies. Hobbies allow you to take time out and to stimulate and nurture yourself.

**Control** – The hardy execs also had a realistic sense of control and less rigid need to wield it. They understood the necessity of giving up some turf positions and status posturing. Letting go of your cherished territory often provides a new vantage point for strategically surveying the emergent big picture.

**Change** – The hardy individuals had a realistic attitude toward change. For them, change was a natural part of life, not something to be resisted. Even when facing unpleasant or unhappy changes, they quickly grappled with their emotions. They grieved the loss of their familiar world, and then prepared themselves for the new or unknown. With this enlightened perspective, change was more a stepping-stone than a stumbling block.

**Conditioning** – Finally, the most hardy of the execs engaged in regular aerobic exercise or physical conditioning. Why is it so critical? As we've seen, not only does exercise help you stay fit, manage your weight and improve your cardiovascular health, but it also releases mood-lifting endorphins, a good antidote to mild feelings of agitation and/or depression. Also, when everything's up in the air--you can't seem to close any projects or sales or meet elusive deadlines--structured exercise provides a self-defined beginning and endpoint.

When you add natural SPEED to your routine and emulate the hardest executives, you will have established a work world and a lifestyle that is balanced, has boundaries and also is bursting with energy. You have an awareness and action plan that prevents stress smoke signals from smoldering and erupting into that burnout fire. You will have truly learned how to practice safe stress!

**MARK GORKIN, LICSW, MCSHRM member**, is a keynote speaker and "Motivational Humorist" as well as a trainer and syndicated writer specializing in stress, team building, anger management and working with difficult people. The Stress Doc is the author of *Practice Safe Stress: Healing and Laughing in the Face of Stress, Burnout & Depression* and *The Four Faces of Anger: Transforming Anger, Rage and Conflict into Behavior and Attitude that Inspire*. As America Online's psycho-humorist, Gorkin runs the weekly Shrink Rap and Group Chat. Contact him at [stressdoc@aol.com](mailto:stressdoc@aol.com) or subscribe to his free, award-winning monthly newsletter online at

## The Stress Doc's Formula for Developing Natural SPEED: Short Version

In today's 24/7 "do more with less" and "lean and *MEAN*" world, often cycling between downsizing and constant upgrading, who doesn't at times grapple with a case of brain strain, frustration or a depressed mood? Under these demanding and daunting conditions, how do you: a) find control amid the chaos, b) better manage time, c) rejuvenate mind-body energy and d) sustain passion and purpose? Why with the Stress Doc's guidelines for reducing chronic stress and for preventing burnout, of course. Here's my formula for "Developing 'Natural *SPEED*'":

**S = Sleep.** Don't be cheap with your need for sleep. It's nature's way to ebb and flow and help you grow. While recent research questions the health benefits of excessive sleep (over eight hours) a pattern of less than six hours for most people yields cognitive impairment, that is, a loss of mental sharpness. Lack of sleep, not just all work, makes Jack and Jill dull. Also, sleep research supports brief napping (10-40 minutes) during the day for mind-body rejuvenation.

**P = Priorities.** In a "do more with less" world, it's imperative to grasp two organizational and interpersonal maxims:

a. Pareto Principle. (named for an Italian sociologist). 80% of your results are produced by 20% of your activities. So focus on the essentials when trying to be productive. The principle also means you can drop 4/5 of what you are doing without feeling guilty. ;-)

b. N & N. To meet expectations and to achieve quantity and quality goals, it's often vital to establish limits and set boundaries when facing extreme demands. Learn to say "No" and to "Negotiate." Don't "Just do it." Tactfully yet assertively discuss what's "urgent" (must get done now) versus what's "important" (which gets prioritized) as well as develop manageable timelines. There really can be life after deadlines! So remember, "A firm 'No' a day keeps the ulcers away...and the hostilities, too!"

With these two priority principles in your operational tool kit not only will you better manage your time and choices, but you well on your way to achieving "Emancipation Procrastination."

**E = Empathy.** Listening to or supporting others can be stress-relieving. Just make sure the shoulder lending is not a one-way transaction. If you are always the pillar, those who lean on you may not be quick to see when you're feeling shaky. Remember, "E" is for the "Empathy" found in a caring shoulder, but all give without take is a big mistake for now you shoulder a boulder! Beware playing the heroic, self-denying superman or superwoman role. At work and/or in your home life, have at least one stress buddy with whom you can let your hair down (especially on a "bad hair day." As a t-shirt purchased for an ex-girlfriend proclaimed: "How can I control my life when I can't control my hair!")

**E = Exercise.** The benefit of regular exercise is both physical and psychological. Thirty minutes of vigorous, non-stop, large muscle movement activity – brisk walking, swimming, bike riding, dancing, etc. – releases brain chemicals called endorphins which are the mind-body's natural mood enhancers and pain relievers. It's less a runner's high and more that we can step back and see things with a calmer disposition and fresher perspective.

When stressed, everything feel's up in the air. The answer: to feel grounded. There is nothing like a brisk walk for thirty minutes for creating a beginning and end point for a tangible sense of accomplishment and control. Actually, you're developing a "success ritual." And while I don't always love to exercise, after my forty-five minute routine of stretching, treadmill walking and weights...well, I do like feeling virtuous.

**D = Diet.** A diet high in saturated fats (red meat, whole milk products, fried oyster po-boys; having lived in New Orleans, I'm convinced the restaurants are owned by the cardiologists) and simple sugars (sodas, cookies and excessive chocolate; sorry folks) induces drowsiness and mental torpor, not to mention clogged arteries. And too much alcohol and caffeine is a roller coaster headache -- moodiness or depression often follows aggression and agitation. Balancing protein, fruits and vegetables, complex carbs, grains, nuts and sufficient water is vital for optimal energy and alertness along with cardiovascular health. Remember, a mind is a terrible thing to waist!

## The Stress Doc's "Eight Strategic 'F's for Mastering Loss and Change"

In today's uncertain work, career and home life climate, the ability to grapple effectively with unemployment, a downsized budget or family lifestyle, the challenge of managing finances, personal health or being a caregiver for others are stressor many individuals and families know all too well. When you add the uncertainty of company reorganization or a prolonged job search, or being transferred to a new department, flexibility and adaptability become primary survival skills. Clearly, positively engaging with loss and change requires more than just "sucking it up." Try mastering the Stress Doc's Eight "F's of Loss and Change; turn potential danger into personal and professional opportunity:

- 1) Familiar. Grappling with anxiety, rage, hopelessness or sadness in letting go of the familiar role or predictable past, leads to a big question: Who am I? This role or relationship has been such a big part of my identity. Remember, sometimes your former niche of success now has you mostly stuck in the ditch of excess. There's a critical crossroad ahead,
- 2) Future. Clearly the horizon appears cloudy and threatening, lacking direction and clarity. What will be expected of me? Who will I now have to report to or work with? Just because your past or traditional roles and responsibilities may be receding doesn't mean you can't transfer your experience and skills into new challenging arenas,
- 3) Face. Some loss of self-esteem and self-worth is all too common, especially when our life puzzle has been broken up other than by one's own hand. Would this scenario be unsettling: Two months ago your department received a great performance review? Now top management is engaged in major budget cutting, and no one knows if layoffs are on the way. Do you think this feels like a punch in the gut on a very personal level? Shame and guilt, rage and diminished confidence are frequent early traveling partners on an uncertain and profound transitional journey,
- 4) Rebuild Fire Now begin to let the angst and anger to smolder: What a source of injustice, insult, injury? And too, how did you feed into the adverse situation? Were there any self-defeating behaviors you engaged in? Old voices that controlled you? So let frustration with other and frustration with self begin to fire "constructive discontent" to gradually heighten energy and awaken purpose
- 5) Reassert Focus. Major change can be scary. Underlying feelings may include rage, helplessness, hopelessness and humiliation. Sometimes we need a little rage to break through chains of mind-body-behavior paralysis. Of course, rage needs to be tempered. Remember, more people shoot themselves in the foot than go postal! (And, let me say, as a former Stress and Violence Prevention Consultant with the US Postal Service, I know "Going Postal.") The challenge is to grapple with this array of powerful emotions, if need be, with personal or professional support. You can't just willpower your way through this psychological quicksand or burnout spiral.

Remember,

*For the Phoenix to rise from the ashes  
One must know the pain  
To transform the fire to burning desire!*

If you can honestly grapple and grieve the first three "F"s, then you are engaged in a productive brooding and refocusing aggression process. Maybe I am ready to knock on if not knock down doors again. At minimum, you will affirm, "I may not like the cards that have been dealt, but how do I make the best of my reality right now." And you'll likely start hatching a new perspective with, if not crystal clear targets, then an intuitive, crystal ball-like enlightenment. Suddenly this Stress Doc mantra starts resonating: "I don't know where I'm going...I just think I know how to get there!"

6) Seek Feedback. Throughout this process, but especially now, getting solid feedback is crucial. It's not easy getting clear, clean, and honest feedback: many don't really have a clue how to give it. Or people are fearful you won't know how to handle it. You have to work hard to find someone who will give you the Stress Doc's version of TLC: "Tender Loving Criticism" and "Tough Loving Care." You need a "stress buddy" to help sort out the wheat from the chaff. Before you blow up in a supervisor's office check in with your buddy and ask, "Am I seeing this situation objectively or not? What's my part in this

problem?" In times of rapid or daunting change, trustworthy feedback helps us remember who we are; that our basic, core self remains intact despite being shaken by unsettling forces.

7) Have Faith. Having the courage to grapple with these "F"s now yields a strength to understand what I n your present life rests in your control and what lies beyond. Of course, there's always an unpredictable element or moment in major transition. Life is not a straight line progression. However, by oing your "head work, heart work and homework," you are in a much stronger personal and professional position. You are building cognitive and emotional muscles; you can have faith in a growing ability to handle whatever will be thrown at you. Going through this process means you are evolving the psychological capacity for dealing with ambiguous and unpredictable twists and turns on life's journey. As I once penned: *Whether the loss is a key person, a desired position or a powerful illusion, each deserves the respect of a mourning. The pit in the stomach, the clenched fists and quivering jaw, the anguished sobs prove catalytic in time. In mystical fashion like spring upon winter, the seeds of dissolution bear fruitful renewal.*

*And how do we transform the mystical maturation into everyday evolution? Consider the prescient words of the great scientific/polio pioneer, Dr. Jonas Salk: Evolution is about getting one more time than you fall down; being courageous one more time than you are fearful; and trusting just one more time than you are anxious.*

8) And even FUN! As psychiatrist and student of humor, Dr. Ernst Kris noted: *What was once feared and is now mastered is laughed at.* We may look back and lightly note our past vulnerability with greater compassion. And we also may develop a refreshingly feisty attitude. And as I inverted: *What was once feared and is now laughed at is no longer a master! Definitely slogans for...Practicing Safe Stress!*

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## **The Science and Art of Active Listening:**

### ***The Stress Doc's CPRS Method***

There are several ways to enhance listening effectiveness, especially when engaged in a complex or emotional exchange. A fundamental technique is "Active Listening." Here's an acronym to help transform less than attentive or self-centered listening into clear, concise and compassionate communication. Are you ready to revive a give and take relationship; are you ready to be an assertive and empathic communicator; are you ready to practice CPR and S?

### **Key CPRS Components of "Active Listening":**

#### **C. Clarification and (Be) Concise**

a. Clarification. Clarification involves asking the other party to provide more information, to elaborate upon a statement or answer specific questions. A clarification attempt is not an inquisitorial, "WHY did you do that?" It's more a recognition that something is not clear; perhaps the listener has some confusion and desires more information, again, for better understanding. And clarification should not be the springboard to a harsh or



blaming "You"-message and/or a dismissive judgment, e.g., "You're wrong" or "You don't really believe that, do you!" A much better response is, "I disagree," "I see it differently" or "My data says otherwise."

Asking questions that gives the other party a chance to speak his or her mind (and if desired, to also speak from the heart) defines another "c"-word – *concern*. Yet showing empathy doesn't mean there isn't room for difference. As I like to say, "Acknowledgement does not necessarily mean Agreement." That is, a communicator can both listen attentively and respectfully and after taking in the message share his or her differing and even "troubled-with-what-I'm-hearing" perspective.

b. (Be) Concise. I believe over-talking or rambling on, especially when the communicator is basically conveying the same message over and over, is a dis-ease of epidemic proportions. Perhaps I'm hypersensitive: as a professional speaker I know the importance of keeping messages clear, brief and to the point. Occasionally, I repeat a phrase purposefully for emphasis. I immediately see two parts to this communicational excess: 1) the egotist who believes he is enlightening the world with his never-ending pearls and 2) an insecure communicator faced with the absence of immediate acknowledgement from his or her audience keeps trying to get the original message across (and likely audience approval), sometimes through repetition, sometimes through telling another story. My suggestion: in the latter scenario, stop trying so hard; better to find the pass in the *impasse* by asking, "Am I being clear?" And don't put the burden on the other with, "Do you understand?" (Of course, a mature message receiver knows to provide some kind of responsive – verbal or nonverbal – feedback.) Remember the Stress Doc's new KISS: *Keep It Short & Smart!*

## **P. Paraphrase and Pause**

a. Paraphrase. Paraphrasing involves repeating the other's message in the person's words or in your own distillation, to affirm, "Message sent is message received." Sometimes, especially if a sender has conveyed a significant amount of information or complex instructions, it's wise to say, "I know I just said a lot. Would you paraphrase back what you heard?" Again, the motive is not to catch the other but to have both parties on the same page.

b. Pause. In a "T n T" (Time- and Task-driven) world, communicators often feel they have to cram in the info as time is limited. Providing people with a lengthy, seemingly endless laundry list almost assures that key issues and ideas will be lost in the verbiage. Learning to pause, to segment or chunk your message helps the receiver catch the gist without fumbling the ideas, intentions or implications. (The communicational analogy might be writing concisely, using short and to the point paragraphs.) Momentary breaks from the back and forth also allow the parties to ponder and posit new possibilities. Now active listening may morph into creative listening.

## **R. Reaction vs. Response and Reflect/Reveal Feelings**

a. Reaction vs. Response. Reactive listening usually occurs when you feel threatened or angry and then immediately engage in a counterargument (covert or verbalized). Unbiased or flexible listening has ended. Upon sensing an opening, for example, perceived inconsistency or irrationality in the message, you reject or talk over the message and basically dismiss the messenger. Or, some end a contentious listening process with a quick and reactive retreat: "You've hurt me" or "You made me upset" and the receiver vacates the communicational field and avoids an honest exchange. (Clearly, if one party is being abusive, and it does not feel safe to voice your position, then retreating is a wise strategy.) In contrast, a response often blends both head and heart and involves the use of an "I" message: "I'm concerned about what I'm hearing" or "I sense there's a problem. Is my assessment on target?" An "I"-message response is the opposite of a wildly emotional or knee-"jerk" reaction; it takes personal responsibility for both receiving and giving feedback. Shifting from blaming "You" messages to assertive and empathic "I"s transforms a defensive reaction into a reasoned response. So "count to ten and check within."

b. Reflect Feelings (Tentatively)/Reveal Feelings (Appropriately). To reflect someone's feelings means to lightly or kindly ask about or to acknowledge overt or underlying feelings that are attached to the other party's communication. A tentative or tactful approach is often best: "I know you are on board, still it sounds like you may have some frustration with the decision. Care to discuss it?" Sometimes you may not know what the other is feeling. Instead of trying to guess or saying, "Gee you must be angry," if you want to comment, better to say, "When I've been in a similar situation, I found myself becoming..." (Be careful; don't suddenly shift the focus and make yourself the center of the conversation.) And then pause; give the other person time to respond or not. Also, especially regarding the emotional component of messages, both listening and looking for verbal and nonverbal cues – voice tone and volume, facial and other bodily gestures, for example, lowered head and eyes or arms crossed over the chest – will facilitate more accurate reflection or discretion.

## S. Strategize and Summarize

a. Strategize. Strategic listening takes active listening to a next level. The goal is more than awareness and empathy. Now you want to invite the other to engage in a mutual, problem-solving dance. Common and disparate, structured and spontaneous ideas and emotions as well as goals and objectives are freely shared, akin to a brainstorming. Though in this strategic interplay give and take questioning for understanding and for triggering imaginative possibilities is encouraged. The purpose of such strategic back and forth is "synergy" – a sharing-listening-sharing dialogic loop yielding an expanded understanding: *the consciousness whole is greater than the sum of the communicational parts*.

b. Summarize. Finally, you are ready to review and pull together such problem-solving elements as mutual agreements, outstanding differences -- factual as well as emotional -- broad strategies and action plans to be executed (including the parties responsible for implementation), time frames, ongoing monitoring or interim report back and follow-up procedures. And depending on the communicational context, a written summary is often advisable.

In the spirit of walking the talk, here's a succinct summary of the "**Keys to Active or CPRS Listening**":

**Clarification** – clear up confusion and foster greater understanding without passing premature judgment  
**(Be) Concise** – keep messages clear, the new KISSt; beware egotistical or insecure rambling

**Paraphrase** – two-way repeating or distilling of the message so that "message sent is message received"  
**Pause** – take time to chunk your message, allowing the other to get the gist and ponder possibilities

**Reaction vs. Response** – "count to ten, check within" to respond with assertive "I"s not blaming "You"s  
**Reflect/Reveal Feelings** – tactful questioning or sharing acknowledges self/other and invites exchange

**Strategize** – generate mutual listening-sharing loop for both idea generation and insightful imagination  
**Summarize** – review and record agreements, unresolved differences and future problem-solving steps.

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"You Can't Make Me" Exercise

B. Power Struggle Exercise. Now for the second exercise. Imagine you are caught in a power struggle with a problematic individual or, at least, someone who can be a "pain in the butt." This individual can inhabit either your professional or personal life. For this mind game, the specific issue is not critical. Let's say the general content involves issues of control, status, or who has (or doesn't have) the right or power to make a decision. For simplicity sake, let's say Person A is an employee or a junior family member and Person B is a supervisor or a more senior family member, e.g., an older sibling. In this exercise, the battle begins with the Person A/employee declaring, "You can't make!" and the Person B/supervisor countering, "Oh yes I can!" My workshop instructions specifically caution antagonists about getting out of their chairs. But the players can be as

aggressive or as whiny as they wish. After a couple of verbal volleys, the participants are encouraged to say what they would really like to say to their antagonist.

Not surprisingly, at some point during this exchange, for many folks there is an eruption of laughter. (Actually, at another military spouse program, the outpouring was so loud and animated, that the soldiers in a room across the hall were so startled and concerned, they were about to storm into our meeting.) Perhaps it's the somewhat artificial and absurd nature of the interaction. Also, some people cover up intense emotions, such as raw aggression, through nervous laughter. And for a group of folks that have been holding in a lot of emotion for a good while, e.g., the military spouses, the exercise allows them to break out of character and/or role, to engage in a good "primal scream," as it were. Still, for me, the number of people who get hooked by the battle, who "want to win," seems significant. Why are so many so quick to get caught up in power struggles? I've come up with **"The Six 'C's' of Power Struggles:**

- 1. Control.** Who will be in control? I believe this is connected to authority issues and, ultimately, the parent-child dynamic. That is, a person still fighting overt or covert emotional battles with family members or other significant adults, under enough work or home-life stress will invariably bring and project such issues in the workspace.
- 2. Competition.** This also has family roots – sibling rivalry issues. Who is better? Who is the favorite? Certainly, cliques and "in-groups" stalk many office halls and work floors.
- 3. Change.** During periods of transition, there's much uncertainty. Who is in charge? Do the rules and operational procedure still apply? Some people will try to fill the void, appropriately or inappropriately. Change often stirs uncertainty and anxiety and that may push some to become overly rigid, manipulating or controlling.
- 4. Cultural Diversity.** Surely the variety of socio-cultural and demographic dynamics shape how we give meaning to experience, including meaning to the motivations, beliefs, and behaviors of self and of others. Personal maturity is often required if difference and disagreement are not reflexively equated with disapproval and disloyalty.
- 5. Communication Skills.** Exercising the skills for effectively negotiating the aforementioned "C's" – Control, Competition, Change, and Cultural diversity – especially in the context of an actual or potential emotionally charged power struggle requires a communicator who can be both assertive and empathic; a communicator who can both affirm limits and respect boundaries. With communicational dexterity, this individual is often able to "find the pass in the impasse."
- 6. Courage.** And finally, you have the courage, you are willing to risk doing some self-assessment regarding these forces or "hot buttons" that propel you into disruptive power struggles. And, you open to critical and constructive feedback from others. You have the integrity and fortitude to engage others in genuine and productive conflict resolution.

Key Communication Principles

Now let me provide four communication tips and tools for preventing a conflict or misunderstanding from turning into a full-fledged struggle or an ongoing battle:

- 1. Drop the Rope.** How do you not take the bait when someone is provocatively fishing for an argument or power struggle? The challenge becomes not instinctively pulling back when someone offers you a rope and then "yanks your chain." You don't have to prove you can give (or be) as big a jerk. In fact, you can just "drop the rope." This is not a sign of weakness. Your message is, "I don't want to play this self-defeating or dysfunctional game. Can we come up with a more productive way to address the grievance or solve the problem?"
- 2. Use the "Four 'P' Process of Empathic Engagement."** One or both parties in a power struggle are usually angry or anxious about something. Your antagonist may be upset about your actions (as a supervisor) or about a common problematic situation. For example, in an employee's mind, are you playing favorites in the department? In order to quickly connect to a belligerent or injured party (after setting limits on any harassing behavior, of course) attempt to engage the other person around his "Pain" and "Passion" or her "Purpose" and sense of "Power" (or feelings of powerlessness or helplessness). These "P's" are definitely a pathway to

empathy and possibly more peaceful and productive coexistence.

3. Reduce the Status or Power Differential. As a manager (or parent of a teenager) unless absolutely necessary, don't lead with your authority trump card. In fact, try to level the playing field; strive for adult-to-adult communication. I believe there is a disarmingly simple yet effective and efficient method of reducing status differences: "Ask a Good Question." In an interpersonal context, especially one fused with tension or conflict, there are "**Four Pillars of a Good Question**":

a) Humble Pillar: The questioner lets down a "know-it-all" or "overly sure of his data and its implications" mask; assumptions and inferences are held in abeyance pending some genuine communicational back and forth. And sometimes, being humble infuses the moment when you can say, "I don't fully get where you are coming from, but I want to listen and learn."

Finally, with an assist from social psychology research, humility helps counter a common perceptual bias. "Attribution Theory" examines how someone perceives another person's motives and behaviors. It's especially interested in perceptual error based on an observer attributing a person's motives or actions (especially in a "negative context") to personality factors instead of situational forces. Here's an illustration. Let's say a relatively new colleague at work (whom you don't know well) has come in late two times in the past week. It wouldn't be surprising if you (and others) began to start wondering about his or her motives and competencies, e.g., is the person lazy, disorganized, disenchanted with work, or just plain old passive-aggressive? However, if you were to come in late a couple of times, or were asked to speculate about reasons for your hypothetical lateness, research indicates you would likely quickly note, for example, the traffic conditions, needing to get a child to daycare, illness in the family, etc.

Can you see the bias? When explaining our own problematic behavior we first focus on situational or outside conditions affecting intentions and actions, thus providing a rationale or protective cover for any outcomes or consequences. In contrast, while observing others our initial predilection is to judge based on inner personality or motivational traits, not on environmental constraints. An assessment focused on the individual alone, not seen in context, is more judgmental, making it harder to be empathic or forgiving, or even just truly curious. (For example, "I wonder why she behaves that way?" said with obvious tone, is often more a disguised judgment than a question of genuine concern.) And this tendency to broadly, quickly, or indiscriminately place personal evaluation over situation is called "Attribution Error." *Humility asks more questions and makes fewer assumptions.*

b) Openness Pillar: The questioner's humility facilitates a posture of receptivity to the other's position or perspective; one may learn something new or valuable or have a supposition modified. Take time for "R & R and R & R": *Receive and Reflect ... and then Respond and Reevaluate*, based on "give-and-take" dialog. Of course, two Stress Doc mantras underlie this mutual engagement:

- Difference and Disagreement \neq Disapproval and Disloyalty
- Acknowledgement Does Not Mean Agreement; (remember, most people don't expect immediate agreement; what they do expect is to be genuinely listened to and the other party makes a genuine effort to grapple with if not grasp their perspective)

c) Understanding Pillar: Broadening a "head and heart" outlook not only encourages greater awareness of and tolerance for the other, but it enhances the imagination, inspiration, and innovation potential of multifaceted and multicultural teams and organizations. When *Conflict and Challenge* spark *Consciousness and Creativity* these elements combine and crystallize as Four "C"-ing soul mates. The process of give-and-take listening and questioning helps each person tackle the question, "What can I do to respond more effectively, compassionately, and unexpectedly to the other's needs and desires." It also challenges the questioner to gain insight regarding his or her own biases, habitual patterns, and prejudices.

d) Respectful Pillar: Being respectful is less about putting someone up on a pedestal and more about paying careful attention to (showing curiosity and a desire to understand, that is, asking good and open-ended questions about) their *lived experience, emotional framework, and world view*.

Clearly, if consistently applied, these foundational pillars provide a safer and more secure interpersonal context; they tend to elicit more forthright communication. And if you are fortunate, your antagonist will even provide

critical feedback. Why do I say fortunate? In the long run, I believe nothing builds trust more than when a person expresses clean and clear disagreement, frustration, or anger, perhaps challenges the other's expertise or authority, yet discovers that the recipient doesn't fall apart, run away, or analytically cut them off at the knees before establishing real understanding; the receiver-target doesn't abandon them, and/or doesn't blast back or seek revenge. You may not agree with the other person's argument, but as we've outlined, you have demonstrated humility, openness, acknowledgement, and respect.

Finally, I'm convinced, five-ten minutes of careful and compassionate listening, that is, "asking good questions" – being humble, open, understanding, and respectful – pays interpersonal dividends: you will reap an "HOUR of Power."

4. Avoid Black or White Thinking. An argument that must result in one person being 'right' the other party "wrong" clearly tightens the tension in the tug or words if not war. Dividing antagonists into "winners" and "losers" doesn't foster lasting conciliation and working partners. Oftentimes, a sign of real strength is the capacity for some comfort with uncertainty or even being tentative in the heat of battle: "I'm not sure about that" or "Right now, I don't agree. Still, you make a good point. Let me think more about this." In fact, taking a time out, while also establishing a concrete reengagement time, often allows you to retreat and reflect and return with more resolve and reason.

Again, allowing for uncertainty or delayed decision-making (instead of rushing to judgment) creates subjective space for opinions and strategic options. You are inviting the other to be a genuine problem-solving participant. Setting aside "all or none" "victor or victim" thinking encourages power sharing over power struggle. Both parties can generate an array of leading edge and colorful ideas.

Disarming Words of Wisdom

With the "Six 'C's" (of power struggles) and the above communication "principles" and "pillars" in mind, as a manager or message receiver and sender what might you say to a provocative employee/individual who declares (or in so many words avers), "You can't make me"? Consider this response:

1) "I don't know if I can make you or I can't make you. That's not where I'm coming from." [Resisting the provocative bait. You're not quickly playing the authority trump card, more momentarily placing your status or power on the shelf; you are vital and vulnerable without giving up your power potential.]

2) "If there is a problem – if I'm bugging you or our situation is problematic – I'd like to hear about it." [Inviting criticism takes courage; it often elicits real feedback and can help build trust. Of course, when someone's feedback turns into flame throwing, protective action is vital. Remember, there's a difference between someone displaying some "attitude" in the heat of a disagreement and being "abusive." The former is *smoke*, the latter *fire*. Try to tolerate the smoke, quickly put out the flames or move away from any rapid fire attack.]

3) "I need your contribution to meet our goals. I believe I'm in a position to support you. For us to succeed we have to be pulling together not pulling apart." [Acknowledging the other and also recognizing self. Affirming the process – from dropping the rope to forging a power and performance partnership.]

Closing Summary

The disarming power struggle exercise noted the "Six 'C's" that spur on self-defeating or ego-driven battles – Control, Competition, Change, Cultural diversity, Communication skills, and Courage.

Then came the "*Four Pillars of Asking Good Questions*" or "Your HOUR of Power": being *Humble, Open, Understanding, and Respectful*.

Next, four communicational tips and tools for disarming dysfunctional power games were detailed:

- 1) "drop the rope"
- 2) use the "Four 'P's" for engagement
- 3) reduce the status or power differential
- 4) avoid 'black or white' thinking.

And finally, a power sharing to power struggle response in the face of individual or employee provocation is provided. Surely these are all concepts and tools to disarm aggressors and power struggles, to forge more productive working relationships, and to help us all...*Practice Safe Stress!*

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“Top Ten” Stress Resilience Tools & Techniques for Surviving Trauma, Transition, and Everyday Stress

This past year we have witnessed how imbalances and stressors in nature may suddenly erupt with devastating consequences. While not as cataclysmic, work-family-life imbalances and pressures may manifest in confusing, overwhelming and destructive, even life-threatening, emotions and behaviors. As one Nepali community leader articulated: “We too will erupt if our life gets out of balance, if we deplete ourselves, run ourselves to the ground, stretch ourselves thin, and live for all the wrong reasons. We will either collapse into ourselves or explode onto others.

We need a powerful stress tool kit to manage such stressors as; a) being emotionally connected to two homelands, b) separated from significant others as well as from geographical and cultural markers, c) everyday pressures pursuing the American, including adapting to new cultural values, d) the challenges of finding meaningful employment, and especially, e) being an individual new to the US, feeling like “a stranger in a strange land.”

Perhaps most critical, as a community we need to affirm that reaching out for mental and emotional health services (the mind-heart) is as natural and normal as seeking help for physical illness (the body). *We must help our under-served community come out of the shadows of shame, stigma, and silence and discover a new horizon of hope!*

Here is Be Well Initiative and the Stress Doc’s™ “Top Ten” Stress Resilience Tools and Techniques for Surviving Crises and Everyday Stress:

- 1. Find a “Stress Buddy.”** Find a friend or community leader whom you trust and can open up to, that is, to talk openly and honestly about your emotions
- 2. Speak to a Professional.** If you are feeling intense levels of stress, anger, and/or depression, with disrupted patterns of eating and sleeping, misusing alcohol and drugs or simply wanting to withdraw from life, it is time to speak with a person trained in providing mental health counseling. There are Crisis Hot Lines for you to call. If you are not sure where to go, contact one of the counseling/clinical members of the Be Well Initiative Team:

Bharati Devkota, Nepali Speaking, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) – telephone # 443-742-2575

Anshu Basnyat, Nepali Speaking, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) – telephone # 443-574-3430; call for an appointment

Mark Gorkin, the Stress Doc, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) – telephone # 301-875-2567

3. Join a Support Group. Consider starting a Nepali/community support group. BWI will be glad to assist. There are also church groups, 12-Step groups (and you don't have to have a drinking or drug problem) throughout the Greater DC-VA-MD area where you can share with others experiencing similar stressors and pressures,

4. Understand Change, Loss, and the Need to Grieve. Dealing with loss and change stirs many emotions – shock, sadness, anger, fear, confusion, apathy, etc. There is not one way to grieve; each person has his or her own grief rhythm and time frame. However, if after 2-4 weeks you are still having difficulty getting back into your routine, consider talking to a professional counselor.

5. Make Sleeping/Rejuvenating and Healthy Eating a Top Priority. For most individuals, getting at least 6, even better 7-8, hours a night of sleep is vital for overall mind-body health. Develop a sleep routine, turn off the electronic gadgets, read or listen to soothing music or sounds of nature.

As for food and fuel intake, beware of picking up some of the sloppy eating habits of too many Americans. Reduce your intake of salts, sugars, and saturated fats – those cans of soda and bags of chips. Eat more fruits, especially the berries, and green and leafy vegetables; whole grains, beans and legumes and, if not going vegan, Omega-3 fish – salmon and sardines, are heart-healthy choices. *Listen to your grandmother!*

6. Get Regular Exercise. Thirty minutes (or even two fifteen minute segments) of vigorous, non-stop, large muscle movement activity – brisk walking, swimming, bike riding, dancing, etc. – releases brain chemicals such as endorphins and dopamine which are the mind-body's natural mood enhancers and pain relievers. Find a walking buddy three days/week.

7. Learn to Say “No” and Set Limits. During my workshops, more people have said to me, “Mark until I learned how to say ‘No’...I was living on the edge of stress!” Saying no doesn't make you a bad person. Ultimately, if you are to truly help others you must be in good health yourself. Take an assertiveness training class or call one of the BWI staff for guidance.

8. Identify and Defuse Stress Triggers. To improve your capacity for emotional self-regulation, before reacting: a) take some deep breaths, b) pay attention to those “3 B” – *Brain-Body-Behavior* – stress smoke signals, c) learn to use assertive “I” messages instead of blaming “You” messages, for example, “I don't agree” as opposed to “You're wrong!”

Actually, three of my favorite stress defusers also help set limits:

A firm “no” a day keeps the ulcers away and the hostilities, too.

Do know your limits and don't limit your “No”s.

Count to ten...and check within; when in doubt...check without!

9. Get Organized. Chronic clutter in a room or office (or even a car) creates a messy mind. Recognize that anger, fear, boredom, or depression often contributes to ongoing procrastination. Develop a system for reading, filing or tossing. Again, if your organizational system is not working, reach out for help with a concerned friend or a counselor.

10. Discover a Hobby or Engage in an Art Project...Or Just Laugh. A life that completely revolves around responsibilities to family and work, with no time for mind-body-spirit nourishment and rejuvenation is a life at-risk. Remember, *burnout is less a sign of failure and more that we gave ourselves away!* Hobbies, vigorous activities like bike riding and dancing, or art projects, even reading or watching videos for laughs enable us to step back, shift gears, have fun, and rediscover the sublime in nature and our true essence.

In closing, if you begin to apply these “Top Ten” tips and techniques you will become commander of your own stress ship, being able to navigate stormy seas and eventually reach your own island or homeland of mind-body-spirit resiliency and serenity. Just remember...*Practice Safe Stress!*

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Nepali Diaspora Behavioral Health & Wellness Initiative. A former Stress and Violence Prevention Consultant for the US Postal Service, he has led numerous Pre-Deployment Stress Resilience-Humor-Team Building Retreats for the US Army. The Doc is the author of *Practice Safe Stress*, *The Four Faces of Anger*, and *Preserving Human Touch in a High Tech World*. Mark's award-winning, *USA Today Online "HotSite"* – www.stressdoc.com – was called a "workplace resource" by National Public Radio (NPR). For more info, email: stressdoc@aol.com.

Here's a reworked "Stress Resiliency Shrink Rap™" that has some powerful new verse and images, especially around the intersection of sleeping and eating issues. The Natural SPEED formula goes beyond *Survival Strategies*; it also speaks to mind-body resiliency, brain agility, and emotional integrity. Live audiences love the SPEED concept. Enjoy!

Natural SPEED: *Stress Resiliency Shrink Rap™* – *Safe Stress Survival Strategies*

Are you the "poster child" for stress and duress?
Should you try Prozac? Is it time to confess
To Ebay shopping – which may be a warning
When you're clicking madly at three in the morning?

But relax, have no fear...
The Stress Doc is here. So lay worries to rest...
Now listen and learn to *Practice Safe Stress!*™

As you sprint to the wire with blood pressure higher
Timeless mind-body tips to heed
For slowing down, getting feet on the ground
And building Natural SPEED – *Sleep-Priority-Passion-Empathy-Exercise-Diet*.

Now don't be cheap with your need for "Sleep."
Maximum learning must be REM deep
To be a beauty with mental acuity
Not that snooze-button bashing *BLEEP!*

For when it comes to daily slumber
All night gaming is dumb and dumber.
You may call me a grouchy old toad:
"Pull the d__n plug on 'just one more' download."

Chorus: *Ready to confess – join the flock
Who you gonna get – the Stress Doc!*

"P" stands for "Priority"
You can't do it all every day.
Urgent means now but important can wait.
Do you know how to "N & N"? –
Just say "No and Negotiate!"

Now I hope you'll pardon my asking:
"Must you always be multi-tasking?"
Oh, it's just me, honey, your Energizer Bunny.
Running from quiet, your life is a riot.
Hmm...what is that "ADD" masking?

Chorus: *Is your life a mess? – you need a rock
Who you gonna get – the Stress Doc!*

Another “P”-word is “Passion”
And we’re not talking sex, shoes, or fashion.
Don’t try to impress, better...
Learn to play chess
Or dig, dream, and dance in your garden.

“E” is for the “Empathy”
Found in a caring shoulder.
But all give without take is a big mistake
For now you shoulder a boulder.

Find a stress buddy who knows TLC
Someone honest and self-aware –
One who gives “Tender Loving Criticism”
Yet also takes “Tough Loving Care!”

Chorus: *Doing more with less – better take stock
Who you gonna get – the Stress Doc!*

The second “E” is for “Exercise”
Start pumping iron or those thighs.
You may not need SSRIs.
Try thirty minutes of non-stop spin
For your mood uplifting endorphin.

Being fit physically
Goes beyond stress resiliency.
Try this new math for a more vital path:
Pumped up brain agility
Times emotive tranquility
Now equals mind-body integrity!

And, finally, “D” is for a healthy “Diet”
Alas, many would rather die than try it.
To manage foods so often craved
Grieve, “let go,” and then be brave
Sending diet fads to an early grave.

So eat those fruits and veggies
Try omega fish and bean protein.
Too much fats, salt, and sugar
Overdosing alcohol and caffeine
Is a rollercoaster formula
For a brain-fogged and artery-clogged machine.

Chorus: *When it comes to stress – you’re on the clock
Who you gonna get – the Stress Doc!*

It's time to end this Shrink Rap
With final tips for you –
"A firm 'No' a day keeps the ulcers away, and the hostilities too."
So to lessen daily woes, "Do know your limits; don't limit your 'No's!"

Ponder this Stress Doc wit and wisdom
Try to live it day after day:
Burnout is not a sign of failure
You simply gave yourself away.

Remember, sometimes less is more
And more is really less.
Balance work and play, faith and love
And, of course...*Practice Safe Stress!*

Chorus: *When it comes to stress – it's a lock
Who you gonna get – the Stress Doc!
When it comes to stress – it's a lock
Who you gonna get – the Stress Doc!*

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Shrink Rap™ Productions

Mark Gorkin, MSW, LICSW, "The Stress Doc"™, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, is an acclaimed keynote and kickoff speaker and "Motivational Humorist" known for his interactive, inspiring and *FUN* speaking and workshop programs. In addition, the "Doc" is a team building and organizational development consultant, and is America Online's "Online Psychohumorist"™. Speaking clients include Cleveland Clinic, MITRE Corporation, Sonoma County, CA, Govt. Managers Conference, and the Montana Public Health Service. Currently he is leading "Stress, Team Building and Humor" programs for the 1st Cavalry and 4th Infantry Divisions, Ft. Hood, Texas. The Stress Doc is the author of *Practice Safe Stress* and of *The Four Faces of Anger*. See his award-winning, *USA Today Online* "HotSite" -- www.stressdoc.com -- called a "workplace resource" by National Public Radio (NPR). For more info on the Doc's "Practice Safe Stress" programs or to receive his free e-newsletter, email stressdoc@aol.com or call **301-875-2567**.