**7 Ways to Be a Stress-Free Workaholic**

Saying it's a crazy, complex world out there is putting it mildly. The rate of technological change is staggering. The constant bombardment of information and communication has us all on overload. And we're constantly slugging it out in a brutally competitive global market.

If it seems as if you're locked in a downward spiral of trying to do more with less, it isn't you. It's for real. That surprising array of macro factors creates stress on all of our businesses and on all of us. We try to manage it as best we can, but at some point, things break. Systems break. People break. That's the nature of stress.

If you're an entrepreneur, you're well aware of the constant pressure to keep your burn rate down and stretch capital investments as far as they'll go. And should the stars align and you gain customer traction, then you've got the not-insignificant challenges of high growth and scalability to deal with.

Either way, there are times when you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders. And that means stress, big time. Having lived through several high-growth companies, a few successful and failed start-ups, and 20 years of executive management, I have plenty of great strategies for managing stress.

**Work your tail off when you have to, not when you don't.** Business happens in spurts. Always. Whether you're developing a product or growing a business, those long hours don't go on forever. It's OK to kill yourself for a few weeks or months, as long as you chill out for a while when it's over. If you do it constantly, you're asking for trouble.

**Learn to give up--sort of.** When you're overstressed, overworked, and the ideas just won't come, try giving up. Seriously, just call it quits, go home, go for a run, whatever. Once you relax, that's when inspiration flows--usually when you're lying in bed half asleep or in the shower.

**Strategize and plan.** Here's a method for managing stress you're not likely to see anywhere else. When things seem overwhelming, they're often the result of day-to-day inertia. To thwart the evils of the status quo, take a step back and gain some perspective. Get some time away from distractions--just you or with your team--and brainstorm, strategize, and plan. Have a nice dinner out. You'll be amazed at the results.

**Mix business with pleasure.**Whenever you're going through high-stress times, take your team out for dinner. Have a few drinks. Take breaks and goof around. Yes, it probably takes longer to get things done that way, but I would argue that higher morale increases effectiveness.

**Don't leave things for the last minute.** Yes, I know you can't always control this, but if you can--and you can more often than you think--give yourself a buffer. You'd be amazed how much more relaxed you'll be if you plan to finish your pitch a day early or get to the airport a couple of hours before the flight.

**Don't take it out on others.** Leaders and managers, listen up. Maybe you can function at a high level, but if you're simultaneously demotivating your team, then what's the point? And if you take it out on family and friends, you're just going to end up lonely and depressed. If you can't handle the stress, find an outlet that doesn't include taking it out on other living things.

**Lots of outlets work--pick one or two.** Caffeine can boost your mood and performance during the day. Wine can bring you down and help you sleep at night. But you can't keep that sort of cycle up for too long. Learn to exercise, meditate, get outdoors, build things, play Scrabble, talk to someone--whatever works, do it.

Look, if you want to be a workaholic, that's fine, be my guest. But at least learn how to be a high-functioning one, meaning don't just run yourself and your team into the ground. If you're practical, you'll be effective.

Above all, learn to recognize the signs of burnout in yourself and your people. Downward spirals are hard to break out of. And, if you're a leader, you'll take everyone, and maybe the entire company, down with you.