

**Swartz Retorts**  
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**Email Subject Line: Managing Stress at Work.**

**workopolis.com Summary/Newsletter page**

**Headline: Take Care of Your Stress Before It Takes Care of You**

**Summary:** Feel like you're heading towards "burnout?" Maybe it's time to reassess your priorities and start dealing with your stressors. Here are some proven tips on dealing with workplace pressures.

**Landing Page copy**

### **Managing Stress at Work**

Your chest constricts just a wee little bit. Your pulse is starting to race. And you notice that you're breathing faster than usual. Are you running a marathon? Dealing with a life-and-death crisis? Or just reacting to another tough day at work?

If you're like most people, stress on the job takes a silent toll on your body and your mind. Our biology can't always keep pace with modern demands. Maybe it's month end, and the numbers *must* be submitted by today. Or you're overloaded with work because your colleague is 'ghosting' again (he's there physically but not producing his fair share).

Regardless of the source, the facts on workplace stress speak for themselves. Bill Wilkerson, the Canadian Co-Founder & CEO of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health, pulls no punches on the subject. Regarding pressure on the job, his team of experts concludes that:

1. Stress-related mental health problems are driving disability rates within the North American labour force. This represents a significant business cost and deterrent to productivity. "Burnout" is becoming an epidemic.
2. Depression is the leading source of disability in the world and, as a percentage of the burden of disease, it is growing faster in the global population than cardiovascular disorders; yet it remains grievously under-researched, detected, diagnosed or treated.

On a personal note, I've been living with Dysthymia, a low-level though chronic form of clinical depression, for more than 15 years. Fortunately in my case it's managed very well by medication. But it was hell trying to hide it from my bosses and co-workers back when I was in the corporate world. Maybe you've noticed some signs in yourself but aren't quite sure what's happening. Like unusual shortness of patience with those around you. Less pleasure with things you normally enjoy. A notable change in your sleep or appetite. Excessive back, shoulder or neck pain. Loss of energy and concentration?

It can happen to any of us, in spite of how strong or immune we think we are. The latest research suggests there's a genetic basis for depression, and that it may be triggered by extended stress or trauma. Hence it makes sense to reduce the pressure you're under at work, if possible. Here are some strategic ways to do so:

- *Define your personal vision of success.* Is it getting that corner office regardless of the trade-offs? Being Vice President before you hit your 40's? Or seeing your spouse, children and friends more, even if it means earning less? Work/life balance means something different to each individual.
- *Know what it takes to keep your job.* Mastering the basics and learning the political landscape are essential. So is understanding your boss's needs and striving to consistently satisfy them.
- *Pace yourself.* We each have our own innate speed at which we operate comfortably. Go too slow or too fast for drawn-out periods and you'll start to feel the effects.

The above suggestions are, of course, higher level decisions. They may take time and experimentation to arrive at. In the meantime, anyone can practice stress hygiene during their workday. Among the more popular techniques are...

- *Taking a quick time-out.* If your boss or colleagues are on your case, remove yourself for a while from the situation. Go out to grab a coffee (decaf, naturally). Or else retreat into your cubicle or office. When you re-engage, you'll likely be fresher.
- *Seeing things in a different perspective.* Do you frequently believe that you're right while everyone around you isn't? Or that your bosses seldom have a clue about their jobs yet they're promoted while you've plateaued? Could be it's time to examine things from their point of view. Maybe they're seeing something you're not.
- *Keeping fit and energized.* Working out, eating right, sleeping well...not the easiest things to do when challenged, but doing so keeps you at your best.
- *Looking at the big picture.* Day to day it's so easy to get caught in the details of making a living. Have you stepped back recently to think about what's really important in your life? Or to consider if the values you started out with are still the ones that drive you?

In the final analysis stress is truly a personal matter. Some people thrive on the constant tension of living to work. Others need a more even sense of balance between security and living on the edge. It all comes down to your core values, desired pace of life, long term goals, and ability to deal with pressure. Measured against the realities of being employed and earning a living. Only you can determine the combination that gives you the best of all these elements.

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