

activities, (4) difficulty concentrating or making decisions, (5) tendency to anger quickly, and (6) lack of energy. There are ways to deal with excessive stress. It is best if the organization is attuned to the problem and monitors their PMs and employees for work overload. In addition, as we discussed earlier in the context of EQ, the PM should be self-aware and spot the danger signals early. Kent suggests several ways to control stress:

1. Keep a journal, taking time to reflect on the events of the day.
2. Prioritize all tasks facing you, eliminating tasks that do not really need to be done, transferring or delegating what you can, delaying low priority items, and minimizing the scope of any subtask that is not crucial to your overall task (the online Appendix to this chapter provides a primer on effective time management).
3. Give yourself time to unwind from high-stress meetings, perhaps by taking a short walk or doing 15 minutes of exercise or meditation. Avoid meditating on the high-stress meeting.
4. Engage in after-work physical activities that take your mind off the tasks.
5. Improve your physical surroundings so they are pleasant, enjoyable, and comfortable, helping you to relax.
6. Become aware of the control you do or do not have over events. One of the great laws of living is "Do not develop anxiety about things over which you have no control!"

One way PMs try to handle excess work is by "multitasking." But as Hunsberger (2008) points out, this does not work. In fact, multitasking is a misnomer. What you are doing is switching back and forth between tasks. You lose time whenever you do this. Her advice is to divide your tasks into small steps, prioritize them on a to-do list, be proactive by tackling and completing tasks as soon as possible, and then cross them off the list (see the online Appendix for additional ideas on effective time management). If you can't finish in one sitting, leave notes that trigger your memory about where you were when you were interrupted. We will have more to say about the pitfalls of multitasking when we discuss the concept of the Critical Chain in Chapter 9.

There are numerous factors in life that cause stress, and PMs are as subject to them as other humans. There do, however, appear to be four major causes of stress often associated with the management of projects. First, some PMs never develop a reasonably consistent set of procedures and techniques with which to manage their work. Second, many simply have "too much on their plates." Third, some have a high need to achieve that is consistently frustrated. Fourth, the parent organization is in the throes of major change.

This book is primarily devoted to helping the PM deal with the first cause of stress. As for the second cause, we would remind the PM to include himself/herself as a "resource" when planning a project. Almost all project management software packages will signal the planner when a project plan calls for a resource to be used beyond its capacity (see Chapters 9 and 10). Such signals, at least, provide PMs with some evidence with which to discuss the work load with the appropriate senior manager.

Concerning the third cause of stress, Slevin (1989) points out that stress results when the demands made on an individual are greater than the person's ability to cope with them, particularly when the person has a high need for achievement. It is axiomatic that senior managers give the toughest projects to their best PMs. It is the toughest projects that are most apt to be beset with unsolvable problems. The cure for such stress is obvious, except to the senior managers who continue the practice.

Finally, in this era of restructuring and downsizing, stress from worry about one's future is a common condition in modern organizations. Dealing with and reducing these stresses as well as the stress resulting from everyday life is beyond the scope of this book as well as the expertise of its authors. Fortunately, any bookstore will have entire sections devoted to the subject of stress and its relief.

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