

From HealthNewsDigest.com

Guest Columnist

Tips on Managing Work and Life During a Crisis

By

Oct 14, 2008 - 12:55:17 PM



(HealthNewsDigest.com) - The uncertainty and drama surrounding today's financial market crisis has created increased pressure on all of us. Some worry whether or not they will continue to have a job while others deal with the challenges of laying people off, many of whom may have been colleagues and friends.

Stress is reaching epidemic numbers. The most recent American Psychological Association survey found that in September, eight out of 10 Americans cited money (81 percent) and the economy (80 percent) as their top sources of stress, compared with 75 percent and 66 percent respectively in April. More than half of Americans reported greater stress last month over work (67 percent), providing for their families (64 percent), housing costs (62 percent) and job stability (56 percent) than they did in April.*

How do we continue conducting business as usual while dealing with a crisis? Being prepared in anticipation of a crisis is key to our business survival and success. While unexpected events may be catastrophic in nature, it is the emotional intensity what may overwhelm our senses (and good judgment) during those challenging times.

As difficult as it seems, it is essential that we stay healthy during rough times. Stress affects the most vulnerable systems: some people will experience frequent migraine headaches, whereas others will develop gastrointestinal problems, and others will have high blood pressure. Stress may trigger panic attacks in some people and will affect others with clinical depression.

The following are general strategies I have found effective in my work as a crisis management consultant, as a physician, as well as in my own experience as a business owner.

Strategy #1: Assess the situation. If you are facing an unexpected event, whether it is a catastrophic-like event, the loss of your job, the loss of a significant family member or friend, ensure your own safety, your family's safety and the safety of those who work with you. There can be no blink in choosing people first. If you are in charge of managing others, people will always remember if you cared for them during stressful times.

Strategy #2: Concentrate on your "here and now." Ground yourself. Look at the immediate things you can do to control your situation. Focus on prioritizing your activities and avoid wasting time and effort. Help others around you concentrate on their immediate needs. Look for ways in which you can work together and help each other.

Strategy #3: Go back to your schedule or plan as soon as possible. Start with the simplest routine; make sure your pillars of physical health are in place (nutrition, sleep, exercise, and relaxation). Break it down to small steps if needed. Go back to your business plan. This plan should be easily available as during times of crisis or personal loss, or both, it may be very difficult to "remember" exactly what the next step was.

Strategy #4: Avoid making big changes during times of crisis. If you need to make some changes, make

sure you go through the critical thinking process, such as looking at pros and cons or conducting a thorough SWOT analysis. This is not the time to gamble all your assets in an “all or nothing” approach. Be conservative and take risks in creating opportunities that you have previously analyzed and evaluated prior to taking action.

Strategy #5: Approach your trusted circle of friends. Many have shared with me they were not at their best intellectual ability during times of tremendous stress, and believe they made poor decisions they later regretted. Avoid being around people who are talking about the world coming to an end. It is very easy to fall into the spinning of negative thinking. Learn exactly what each of your friends can offer in a positive way. While some may offer their emotional support or be good listeners, others may offer their advice and help you make the decisions. Avoid isolating yourself and allow yourself to collaborate with others who may also be going through a hard time as well. You’d be surprised how many people around you may be willing to help you if you only asked.

Strategy #6: Establish significant relationships beyond your comfort group. During these stressful times, some people are finding their “comfort network” is gone, as they may have lost their job and close colleagues may have been laid off too. Having an extended networking group will assist you in your swift recovery, as you will continue to be in touch with others who may share common goals, as well as collaborate with others who may need your products or services.

Strategy #7: Assess your intervention. Evaluate what worked and what didn’t work for you. Improve your overall plan and plan ahead. Invite your family members to help you during this stressful time. Consider this an opportunity to leave behind what was not working in your business and continue to improve your business and to simplify as much of the process as possible. While many expect a magic solution to resolve a time of crisis, the most effective strategies still consist of being consistently ready and organized on a regular basis.

*The 2008 survey data was collected by Harris Interactive for the American Psychological Association during the periods of April 7-15 among 2,529 U.S. residents 18 or older; June 23-Aug. 13 (1,791 adults); and Sept. 19-23 (2,507 adults).

About Gabriela Cora, MD, MBA

Dr. Gaby Cora is an executive wellness coach, author, and keynote speaker in addition to practicing as a medical doctor. Her expertise in crisis leadership inspired her to design a powerful program assisting executives in Leading under Pressure®: Maximize Your Health While Building Your Wealth. She’s a key collaborator of Fortune 500 corporations and international organizations including the Coca-Cola Company, New York Life, the Pharmaceutical Industry, and the University of Miami. She has given presentations across the United States and internationally. Prior to launching the Executive Health & Institute, she was director, medical research specialist for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Lieutenant Commander for the US Public Health Service, and a clinical researcher at the prestigious National Institutes of Health.

For more information, visit www.ExecutiveHealthWealth.com.

www.HealthNewsDigest.com

© Copyright by [HealthNewsDigest.com](http://www.HealthNewsDigest.com)