



SURVIVING & THRIVING

AMID THE WAVES OF LIFE



Dr Pete, PhD

on Wellbeing, Work/Life,
Recovery, Families &
Relationships

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*Dr Pete on Wellbeing, Work/Life,
Recovery, Families & Relationships*

Dr Pete, PhD
The Stress Surfer

A book by The Stress Surfer

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To all the mid-life freedom fighters:
Escape the ordinary and make a difference!

ABOUT DR PETE



DR PETE, PHD, IS A LEADING psychologist, life coach and facilitator with a personal and professional journey full of both achievements and challenges.

The professional side: a Masters in Clinical Psychology, PhD thesis in chronic stress and CBT, and subsequent work in mental health hospitals, welfare services and corporate and clinical private practice. Dr Pete has extensive experience in the treatment of many psychological problems.

The personal side: Dr Pete is a recovering “people pleaser”. Combined with the challenge of raising kids in a separated family and running a growing business, this has given him some deep bruises and scars. He’s had many opportunities to practice what he preaches. He knows the difference between textbook advice and practical wisdom.

Dr Pete is a wannabe soul surfer who is passionate about life and living. He spends as much time as possible surfing with his daughters and spending time with family and friends in the outdoors.

Dr Pete doesn’t have the luxury of spending all his time searching for the ultimate wave. However, he has learned to use surfing not only as a stress relieving activity but also as a powerful metaphor for riding the Waves of Life and managing Wipeouts.

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INTRODUCTION

AFTER WRITING *THE STRESS SURFER: RIDING the Waves of Life Without the Stress*, I began working on my next book: *The Endless Summer Life Strategy* to help people set the direction of their lives towards living their dreams and leaving a positive legacy.

Meanwhile, I continued writing blogs and articles and running seminars and workshops about The Stress Surfer philosophy – in particular the topics of The Waves of Life and Wipeouts, and The 4 Elements of Inner Wellbeing.

During seminars and interactive discussions with members of The Stress Surfer community online, people appeared to quickly be able to understand and apply The Stress Surfer philosophy to some areas of their lives, but would struggle to comprehend how to apply these same simple skills and strategies in other areas. For example some people were able to quickly make changes to overcome challenging Waves in their personal lives but then unable to resolve similar challenging waves in their workplaces (and vice versa).

In other instances people would seek further clarification about specific issues such as conflict, grief and loss, and forgiveness. They raised specific concerns about certain types of challenging Waves of Life such as relationship strain, family and parenting challenges, stress from financial and legal problems and life stage issues such as retirement. Another series of questions came from counselors and therapists who wanted more specific information about The Stress Surfer philosophy in recovering from clinical disorders such as depression and anxiety.

The more I spoke with people around me in the workshops and seminars and in the online communities, the more apparent the need became for a companion guide to *Riding the Waves of Life*—expanding on a number of key Wellbeing Strategies, exploring a range of specific

Work/Life and Relationship issues and addressing key recovery topics such as overcoming anger, anxiety and depression.

May this follow up guide shine greater light on the myriad challenges we face in successfully Riding the Waves of Life!

Dr Pete, The Stress Surfer

ONE

**WELLBEING
STRATEGIES**

YOUR WAVES OF LIFE: MOUNTAINS VS. MOLEHILLS



WHEN I WAS A YOUNG CHILD and getting upset about things, I remember my parents saying to me, “Pete, don’t make mountains out of molehills.” More recently I have heard a similar saying made famous by author, Dr Richard Carlson: “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”

However when I look back on things, I must confess, what my parents thought were molehills, were through my eyes as a child indeed big mountains.

So how do we better understand the objective size of the challenging Waves of Life we face so we can get a better perspective of what really does warrant our attention versus what we need to minimize our focus on?

There are two ways to answer this question:

1. Personal Relativity
2. Stressful Life Event Scales.

1. PERSONAL RELATIVITY

The first answer is about relativity – that is, comparing what you are currently upset about with your previous worst challenges in life and using this as a reference point for sizing up just how big the current wave is.

For people who have had, as the saying goes: “the bad luck of good luck” in their lives, often very small challenges can seem overwhelming due to their previous good fortune.

Alternatively people who have “the good luck of bad luck” are able to cope with much more difficult challenges because of their past experiences with adversity.

2. STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS SCALES

The second answer is about objective research, which measures stressful life events based on what many other people over the years have found to be the most and least challenging Waves of Life to manage.

In 1967, psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe developed a scale of 43 life events to assess the link between stressful life events and illness. Their stressful life events scale continues to be one of the best measures to assess risks of stress related illness—even after 45 years (confirmed by research in 2010).

Based on the pioneering work of Holmes and Rahe, The Stress Surfer divides the events that stress people out into three categories:

1. **Regular Waves** of everyday hassles
2. **Big Waves** of major change
3. **Tsunamis (Tidal Waves)** of life-changing events.

TSUNAMIS AND TIDAL WAVES

Tsunamis or Tidal Waves are Waves of Life that create acute crises, tragedies or dramatic changes to our lives and place us at risk of extreme dysfunction and stress-related illness.

Tidal Waves and Tsunamis include a range of stressful life events such as:

- » Death of spouse
- » Divorce
- » Marital separation

- » Jail term
- » Death of close family member
- » Personal injury or illness
- » Marriage
- » Fired at work
- » Marital reconciliation
- » Retirement
- » Change in health of family member
- » Pregnancy.

BIG WAVES

Big Waves are Waves of Life that create significant challenges and changes to our lives but do not necessarily create the risks of extreme dysfunction and illness that Tsunamis do.

Big Waves of Life include a range of stressful life events including:

- » Gaining new family member
- » Change in financial state
- » Death of close friend
- » Change to a different line of work
- » Foreclosure of mortgage or loan
- » Change in responsibilities at work
- » Son or daughter leaving home
- » Trouble with in-laws
- » Outstanding personal achievement
- » Begin or end school/college
- » Change in residence
- » Change in school/college.

REGULAR WAVES & DAILY HASSLES

The majority of causes of stress that we face on a day-to-day basis are not as extreme as these life events. Regular Waves of Life include:

- » Change in recreation

- » Change in church activities
- » Change in social activities
- » A moderate loan or mortgage
- » Change in sleeping habits
- » Change in number of family get-togethers
- » Change in eating habits
- » Vacation, Christmas
- » Minor violations of the law.

These everyday causes of stress are also known as “daily hassles”, those minor irritations such as misplacing our car keys, traffic jams, minor arguments with family/colleagues, and so on.

HEALTHY RESPONSES TO DIFFERENT SIZED WAVES OF LIFE

By properly assessing the size of the waves of life you are facing you can respond in the healthiest way and avoid the problems of under- or over-reacting.

“Under-reactions” are where we live in an unhealthy sense of denial and do not prepare for the inevitable change and in turn are overwhelmed when it comes. If you are experiencing a genuine Big Wave or Tsunami then create space to allow yourself to cope and recover.

On the other hand “over-reactions” are when we blow out of proportion our response to what is really a small wave or daily hassle. They can lead to unnecessary health problems and damaged relationships.

So next time you find yourself confronted by some challenging Waves of Life remember to firstly assess the size of the waves so you can respond with the right approach and avoid the dangers of under- or over-reacting.

Ride the Waves of Life!

THE 4 ELEMENTS: LIVING IN BALANCE



TO PREVENT A WIPEOUT WHEN FACED with a challenging Wave of Life (or to recover much faster if you do Wipeout), you need to balance the 4 Elements of Inner Wellbeing.

Just as in Nature there is Wind, Water, Earth and Fire so for Stress Surfers there are Mindsets, Emotions, Lifestyle and Purpose. To ride the Waves of Life successfully we need to understand and live in balance with the 4 Elements of Inner Wellbeing.

THE 4 ELEMENTS OF YOUR INNER WELLBEING

Ancient cultures recognized four elements in nature: Wind, Water, Earth & Fire. They searched for these elements in their inner worlds.

ELEMENT 1 – MINDSETS

MINDSETS and thoughts were likened to the free moving and unseen WIND. The way we think about what happens to us, and our beliefs and perceptions about events, circumstances and life pressures are important in managing our stress. We can sometimes see circumstances as being either all bad or all good. This “black or white” or “all or nothing” view of a situation may cause unnecessary distress. It can limit our ability to look at things accurately and solve problems. The Stress Surfer can learn to think about the waves of life in ways that

turn negative pressures into positive pressures and promote personal growth and success.

ELEMENT 2 – EMOTIONS

EMOTIONS and feelings were the cause of tears, which flow like WATER. This is about what we actually do every day in response to life stressors, which influences our ability to ride the waves of life. The Stress Surfer learns to manage their emotions through problem solving, coping strategies and relaxation. We learn to reduce any unnecessary tension and stress, and increase levels of physical calmness and mind relaxation. We become aware of the “here and now”, neither dwelling on the past nor worrying about the future. We develop the ability to draw on positive and relaxing images and memories, which in turn enables us not only to accurately assess and solve problems we experience, but also to stay mentally calm and relaxed.

ELEMENT 3 – LIFESTYLE

LIFESTYLE and the daily needs of the body were likened to the stability of the EARTH. Sometimes we can allow stress to affect our sleeping patterns, eating habits and diet. The elements of our lifestyle related to social activities and hobbies and interests can suffer. We forget to stay physically fit and active. The Stress Surfer learns to maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle across the areas of sleep, diet, exercise and social habits and interests, even as the waves of life continue rolling in.

ELEMENT 4 – PURPOSE

PURPOSE and passion were the courage of convictions that burns within us, and were likened to FIRE. Having a clear sense of purpose or mission in life and developing meaningful life goals are the key ingredients of a successful life. The Stress Surfer learns to live according to their values, and pay attention to the legacy they are leaving behind them.

Are you living in Balance with the 4 Elements of your Inner Well-being? Which of the Elements do you tend to focus on and which do you neglect when facing the challenging Waves of Life? Take some time out today to review and re-balance the 4 Elements of your Inner Wellbeing!

Ride the Waves of Life!

MINDSETS: YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS LIFE



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY SOME people get frustrated and upset about the Waves of Life, while others take it all in their stride and appear calm and successful even in a stormy sea? How successfully we surf the Waves of Life doesn't depend so much on the waves themselves, but on how we think about them, in particular our attitudes and Mindsets.

Mindsets are the first of the 4 Elements of Inner Wellbeing. Like the element of Wind in nature is unseen but powerful – so are our thoughts and Mindsets towards life. The successful Stress Surfer learns to adopt a healthy Mindset towards the Waves of Life.

“People do not get upset by things, but rather, by the way they view them.” So said the ancient Greek Philosopher, Epictetus, in the 1st Century AD. In the 1950s, psychologist Dr Albert Ellis and psychiatrist Dr Aaron Beck, working separately, used this ancient idea and their own observations about how people cope, to formulate techniques for reducing emotional distress by helping people change their attitudes and Mindsets towards life.

WHAT IS A MINDSET?

Mindsets are the attitudes we take toward stressful situations based on information processing and our belief systems. Mindsets sit in the “subconscious” area of our minds and with practice can be easily ac-

cessed, challenged and changed from stressful to successful perspectives. If we allow our unhealthy belief systems to cloud our judgment about the Waves of Life we are facing, we can adopt a Mindset which is unhealthy and can cause us considerable distress.

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY MINDSETS

I spent many years looking at the research on mindsets. I asked the question (as have many before me): Are there an infinite type and number of mindsets, or are there only a few? I arrived at the conclusion that underlying our thinking there are three common Unhealthy Mindsets (Demanding, Worry & Blame), and three corresponding Healthy Mindsets (Encouraging, Acceptance & Responsibility).

MINDSETS – WHAT’S YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS LIFE?

1. FROM DEMANDING TO ENCOURAGING

There is much freedom from Anger and Depression when you change your Mindset from one of demand and hostility towards others, where you insist that they “should” do what you want them to do and you try to control their actions. Example thought patterns that relate to a Demanding Mindset include:

- » “They should do what I want them to do or else...”
- » “I must achieve what I set out to do, with no flexibility.”
- » “I do not accept failures or excuses and people must do what they commit to, regardless.”

The opposite mindset, Encouraging, respects people’s right to make their own choices and encourages and influences them where possible. Example thought patterns that relate to an Encouraging Mindset include:

- » “How can I shape and influence them to do what I need them to do?”
- » “I hope they will do what I want but I need to have a back-up plan.”

- » “How can I encourage them and show them the benefits of what I want them to do?”

2. FROM WORRY TO ACCEPTANCE

The mindset of Worry involves fearing the future and change, over-controlling relationships, and blocking growth and development for self and others. Example thought patterns that relate to Worry include:

- » “They might be hurt or unsafe but I do not know because I am not there.”
- » “What if this or that bad thing happens soon?”
- » “I can’t let them take that risk as I do not want them to get hurt.”

You move from Worry to a state of Acceptance, where you are able to Accept that you cannot predict the future. You make the most of each day and each relationship in the “here and now”. Example thought patterns related to an Acceptance Mindset include:

- » “That has not happened yet. I need to make the most of today.”
- » “One day at a time – I will not worry about the future.”
- » “I hope they are safe but there’s no point worrying about what I can’t control.”

3. FROM BLAME TO RESPONSIBILITY

Blame is where you rigidly Blame other people and/or events for your own reactions, outbursts and negative moods. Examples of thought patterns related to a Blame Mindset include:

- » “How dare they talk to me like that!”
- » “It’s all their fault my life is ruined.”
- » “If they didn’t treat me like that then I would have been able to succeed.”

When you make the journey to a Responsible mindset, you take responsibility for our own reactions, outbursts and moods. You have an

awareness of your own body and mind and decide your own actions, letting go of harmful emotions. Example thought patterns related to a Responsibility Mindset include:

- » “I will not waste my energy or time on them any longer.”
- » “I will make the most of what I have.”
- » “My anger is my problem and the sooner I move on from this the better.”

What is your Mindset towards life RIGHT NOW? Where can you move to a healthier Mindset towards the challenging Waves of Life you are facing? Take some time out today to stop, reflect and tune up your attitude towards life!

Ride the Waves of Life!

YOUR EMOTIONS: DRIVERS OR PASSENGERS?



LIKE WATER THAT FLOWS SO ARE the tears of our Emotions. In order to ride the Waves of Life successfully we need to be aware of the power of Emotions but not let them overpower the other Elements of Inner Wellbeing. Emotions are important passengers, but not the driver. We need to express Emotions in healthy ways to avoid accumulating baggage in our lives.

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

An emotion is what psychologists call an “affective state” – a mood or feeling. It is not a thought or Mindset. There are only four basic core emotions:

1. **Joy:** The peak positive emotional state with a continuum of positive emotional experiences. You might hear it described as Happiness, Satisfaction, Fulfillment, Contentment and Peace.
2. **Anger:** Also described as Frustration, Dissatisfaction, Disappointment, Hatred and Rage.
3. **Fear:** Also described as Terror, Panic and Anxiousness.
4. **Sadness:** Also described as Shame, Hurt and Guilt.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EMOTIONS

PRIMARY EMOTIONS (IT'S ALL GOOD)

Primary emotions are in-the-moment emotional responses to a pleasant or unpleasant stimulus. They happen as a direct result of an external cue that affects us emotionally. That is, they occur in close proximity to the event that brought them on. Primary emotions are important because they provide us with information about our current situation and get us ready or motivated to act in some way.

SECONDARY EMOTIONS (IT'S ALL BAD!)

Secondary emotions are very familiar. We might mistake them for primary emotions if we're not self-aware. For example, anxiety is often due to fear. We may not be aware that we're afraid, or even what we are fearing (it could be many things), so it becomes expressed as general anxiety. The thing that helps you identify a secondary emotion is if you can't alleviate it without digging deeper.

A secondary emotion is what occurs when we don't recognize, value, listen to, or respond to our primary emotions. If we do not express the primary emotion it doesn't go away. Secondary emotions stick around for a long time and prevent us from interacting and growing in healthy ways. Examples of unhealthy outcomes from Secondary Emotions include: Worry, Anxiety, Low Self Esteem, Depression, Jealousy, Hatred, Hostility and Paranoia.

BE SELF-AWARE OF YOUR EMOTIONS

What different types of Emotions have you experienced recently? Have they become the drivers in your life or are they the passengers?

How did you express these Primary Emotions in healthy ways to prevent unhealthy Secondary Emotions and baggage accumulating in your inner world? What can you do to move to a higher level of Emotional Awareness when facing the challenging Waves of Life? Take some time out this week to stop and reflect on how you can increase your Emotional Awareness.

Ride the Waves of Life!

LIFE STRATEGY: ARE YOU “LIVING THE DREAM”?



HAVE YOU EVER FELT FRUSTRATED WITH life? Do you struggle with understanding the direction and purpose of your life at times? Do you feel unclear about the next big goal to focus on and get excited about?

Being truly happy and satisfied with your life is an objective well worth pursuing! Living a life with clear direction and purpose as well as exciting dreams and goals is achievable for anyone willing to put in the time and effort to develop a Life Strategy.

Life Strategy is about living our lives “on purpose” – being clear on what really matters in the end.

Life Strategy is also about living “in balance” across the four quadrants of our lives:

- » **Work** – the activities we do to earn income and contribute to a better world
- » **Play** – the activities we do to unwind and relax and/or to stay fit and healthy
- » **Relationship** – the energy and effort we put into our primary relationship and ensuring a loving and sustainable relationship is maintained
- » **Family & Friends** – the time and focus we give to our family responsibilities and growing our friendship networks.

Developing a Life Strategy is therefore the process of (1) understanding our preferred legacy, then mapping out our (2) dreams and (3) goals in life, then (4) action planning and (5) building support networks to achieve these goals and “Live the Dream” across the four life quadrants of Work, Play, Relationships and Family & Friends.

THE ENDLESS SUMMER LIFE STRATEGY

When I think about my ideal life strategy I am drawn to the idea of Living an Endless Summer. *The Endless Summer* is a famous 1966 surf movie. Two surfers follow the summer season around the world, in search of great waves and new experiences and cultures. Its title comes from the idea that if you had enough time and money it would be possible to follow the summer around the world, making it endless.

The Endless Summer is the ultimate dream for many surfers. For non-surfers the Endless Summer reflects the idea of being able to live your life to pursue your dreams and goals without being overcome by barriers and limitations.

Let’s take a look at the Life Strategy of the Endless Summer Surfer who follows the waves around the world:

1. YOUR LEGACY IN LIFE – A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR PURPOSE & MISSION IN LIFE

For the Endless Summer Surfer this may be about nature, travel, and sharing new experiences with friends and family. The life quadrant of Play may be about a life spent in the surf and ocean. Work may be more about being financially responsible than a particular career ambition, or about a career linked to the ocean and environment. Relationship may be about spending life with a partner who shares similar goals in travel and nature. Family & Friends may be about a life spent both travelling with friends and family wherever possible as well as being available and supportive even when away travelling for extended lengths of time.

What is your mission in life? What Legacy do you want to leave behind you in the areas of Work, Play, Relationship and Family & Friends?

2. LIFE DREAMS – HAVE A VISION FOR YOUR IDEAL LIFE

For the Endless Summer Surfer, dreams may be the perfect waves in the perfect locations with the perfect group of family or friends. Play may be focused on fantastic surfing experiences. Work may be focused on flexible hours and a role that keeps them connected to the ocean. Relationship may be about sharing a love of surfing with their partner. Family & Friends may be about spending lots of time enjoying the ocean with like-minded family and friends.

What are your dreams in life across the areas of Work, Play, Relationships and Family & Friends?

3. GOALS & BUCKET LISTS – GOALS ARE THE CONCRETE AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES THAT FORM PART OF OUR DREAMS

For the Endless Summer Surfer goals may be to visit specific countries and surf at specific beaches. In the area of Play there will be a list of specific locations and surfing beaches to experience with specific Family & Friends. There will also likely be specific income goals and flexible hours needed for Work and specific characteristics and attributes needed in a partner for the Relationship to work effectively.

What goals have you set for yourself to be able to live your dreams?
What are the specific goals you need to identify in each of the areas of Work, Play, Relationships and Family & Friends?

4. ACTION PLANS – THE IMPORTANT DETAILED STEPS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

For the Endless Summer Surfer there are a number of detailed steps in “Living the Dream”. These include: raising money and organising flexible arrangements in their Work; learning new languages, orga-

nizing complex travel plans and health checks and physical fitness to enable them to follow the summer season for Play; having phones or internet to stay in touch with loved ones for Family & Friends, and communicating clear expectations and designing travel plans to be supportive of their key Relationship.

What detailed action steps do you need to plan to achieve your life goals? What specific action plans are needed across the 4 Life Quadrants of Work, Play, Relationships and Family & Friends?

5. SUPPORT NETWORKS & SETBACKS – DEVELOP YOUR SUPPORT NETWORKS AND PREPARE FOR SETBACKS

Support Networks for the Endless Summer Surfer could include: Mentors to help stay focused on goals; Friends who can help with specific issues be that surfing skills or native customs, and Professionals who can help to manage finances, travel plans and health. Setbacks for the Endless Summer Surfer might include delays and cancellations in travel plans, poor weather and waves, ill-health, running out of money, or other unforeseen circumstances.

What support do you need to have in place to live your dreams and what setbacks do you need to plan for? What backup plans do you have in place and who are the key mentors who can support you across the different areas of Work, Play, Relationships and Family & Friends?

LIFE STRATEGY: TAKE YOUR NEXT STEPS

The Endless Summer Life Strategy is available to us all! What is the next step you need to take? Do you need to stop and reconnect with your Legacy in life? Are your Dreams and Goals clear? Is it time to roll up your sleeves and examine the effort and detail needed to action plan and achieve your goals? Do you need to overcome some setbacks and build a more effective network of support?

Also consider how well-balanced your Life Strategy is across the 4 Life Quadrants of Work, Play, Relationships and Family & Friends.

Are you only focused on Work at the expense of the other areas? Are you making sure your Relationship is a priority? Are your Family & Friends neglected because of other life pressures? Are you a workaholic and missing out on Play?

A friend of mine recently reminded me that any goal worth achieving in life usually requires tremendous effort, focus, self-discipline and perseverance. Don't give up on your Life Strategy and stay focused on "Living the Dream"!

Ride the Waves of Life!

CONFLICT: OVERCOME THE 3 UNHEALTHY APPROACHES



AS A RECOVERING “PEOPLE PLEASER” I have made more than my share of mistakes when it comes to managing conflict.

Firstly, there have been times when I have tried to appease and “rescue” people when, in hindsight, I shouldn’t have.

Secondly, there have been times when I have been the “victim”, coerced into agreeing with things I later regretted.

Thirdly, times when I, despite being a people pleaser, have become argumentative and a “persecutor” rather than see the other person’s perspective.

Stephen Karpman’s theory of the 3 dysfunctional roles in conflict referred to above helped me see how dysfunctional, yet normal, my unhealthy approaches to conflict were. Karpman discovered that during an argument or conflict situation there are 3 different types of unhealthy approaches people may take in order to meet their needs for safety and control ahead of actually resolving the issues at hand: Persecutor, Victim & Rescuer.

In these situations the Victim may not really be as helpless as they feel, the Rescuer may not really be helping, and the Persecutor may not really have a justified complaint. Let’s take a look at how to better understand and manage these 3 Unhealthy Approaches and how to ride the wave of conflict better.

THE RESCUER

Inadvertently becoming a Rescuer when you get into a conflict is best characterized by the following motivation: “I get to feel safe and in control by helping others.”

While you may feel good about helping others, falling into the unhealthy Rescuer trap in conflict can lead to a range of problems. There is the benign mistake of over-involvement in other people’s lives to the more severe problem of sabotaging or over emphasizing the scale of problems so as to amplify your importance in rescuing people from their problems.

HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A RESCUER

If you find yourself falling into the trap of being a Rescuer there is a wise old saying to consider: “You are only responsible for others when they are either infants or when they are very old – the rest of the time they are responsible for themselves.” That being the case, turn off the unhealthy Rescuer approach and instead empower people to take responsibility for their actions and solutions.

HOW TO COPE WITH A RESCUER

Being on the opposing side of a Rescuer during conflict can be really frustrating. Rescuers aim to solve problems on behalf of others and can block the accurate assessment of issues and appropriate apportionment of responsibility and consequences. If you have to negotiate through conflict with a Rescuer, try to thank them for their good intentions but ask them to refrain from assisting with solutions until agreement is first reached on the underlying problems, causes and responsibility of the parties involved.

THE PERSECUTOR

Persecutors are the domineering or aggressive people in the conflict. Their motivation in the conflict is best described as “I get to feel safe by hurting others and putting them down.” While there may be

some short-term satisfaction for Persecutors in attacking others, they are damaging other people's wellbeing. If allowed to persist, they may begin down the long road toward bullying and increased potential for physical violence.

The Persecutor's need to dominate others over-stretches the size and scale of the problems they may face. It interferes with their ability to listen and work towards resolutions. When confronted by their own behavior Persecutors go one of two ways:

1. Either escalate into further aggression OR
2. Invert into a passive/victim state (known as the passive-aggressive cycle).

HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A PERSECUTOR

If you find yourself falling into the trap of becoming too aggressive too quickly and Persecuting' others rather than resolving issues try to implement some basic anger management and listening techniques. Firstly, calm yourself down by using slow deep breathing and relaxing any tense muscles. Secondly, improve your listening by repeating back any questions to ensure you have them right before answering. Also, use "I" statements to own your own feelings rather than "You" statements to blame others.

HOW TO COPE WITH A PERSECUTOR

Being on the opposing side and the receiver of the outburst and tirades of a Persecutor can be a distressing and terrifying experience. When dealing with a Persecutor, avoid interrupting and wait for them to run out of steam. Do not react in an upset manner and **never** take it personally or show negative emotion.

Overtly aggressive people are experienced at making the receiver feel that they are personally to blame for the situation. Don't argue with them and only respond to the facts of the situation rather than the emotional argument. If the aggressor constantly uses swear words or personal attacks, ignore these at first because it can be a tactic to

get you to bite. If repeatedly threatened or you assess the first threat as more than “hot air”, stay calm and terminate the discussion as quickly as possible, and report to the relevant authorities.

THE VICTIM

Taking a Victim approach to conflict is to adopt a passive and helpless stance towards your situation and fail to take responsibility for your own needs and actions in working towards resolution. The unhealthy Victim role in conflict is best characterized by the statement “I get to feel safe by being submissive and giving in to the demands of others.”

While lessening the short-term impact of conflict by being submissive, people who take the Victim role only encourage further abuse from Persecutors. They accidentally reinforce their aggressive behavior by “giving in” to them. Additionally, people in the Victim role may fail to exert any control or responsibility over their own circumstances, which leads towards a state of “learned helplessness.”

HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM

If you find yourself falling into the unhealthy role of Victim during conflict you need to remind yourself that unless you take responsibility to assert your needs and concerns it is unlikely anything positive will be achieved. Also, remember that while you may not get exactly what you want as an outcome, by asserting your needs and preferences you are more likely to get a better result. Remember that simply giving up and becoming submissive can lead to further bad behavior from others. Calmly asserting your needs and setting limits and boundaries, while difficult in the short-term, will be much better in the long-term.

HOW TO COPE WITH A VICTIM

If you find yourself having to manage someone who is adopting the Victim role, don’t allow yourself to be sidetracked or persuaded by emotional argument. Importantly, do not respond unnecessarily or overcompensate for signs of distress. Remain objective, empathic and

supportive but also calm and steady. Do not be dismissive nor take on their emotional distress. Use repetition to anchor the person on the realistic positives and negatives, and most importantly the necessary actions needed to resolve conflict.

THE SOLUTION: AN “ISSUES” FOCUS & REALISTIC SOLUTIONS

In order to prevent yourself from falling into the traps of Victim, Persecutor or Rescuer, make sure you take an “issues” focus. Talk about issues and don’t stray into personal criticisms. When emotions do rise, restating the issues is a great way of de-escalating.

It is also important to be realistic about solutions. Get resolutions that will be practical and achievable, rather than promises that may never be followed through.

Adopting an “issues” focus and holding to the issues—not straying into personal criticism—combined with a realistic expectation about resolutions and solutions will enable you to avoid the 3 Unhealthy Approaches and be more successful when riding the waves of conflict!

Ride the Waves of Life!

FORGIVENESS: WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND



LIFE IS AT TIMES HARD AND people can be cruel to one another. Careless harsh words spoken in only a few seconds can open profound wounds which can take many years to heal. That's one of my favorite lines from the popular poem "The Interview With God" (author unknown).

We each have our own stress responses when confronting challenging Waves of Life and our unhealthy reactions can place a lot of pressure on our family, friends and colleagues. Many of us know what it is to become overwhelmed, lose control and lash out at others in anger. Others know the fear and terror of being on the receiving end of such outbursts.

For those who lash out at others in anger, all three unhealthy Mindsets are at work: Blame, Worry and Demand. For those on the receiving end—the victims of the same outbursts—the same three Mindsets of Blame, Worry and Demand can lead to entrenched bitterness and helplessness.

THE SOLUTION: FORGIVENESS

But what is Forgiveness really?

The concept of Forgiveness has its roots in ancient religious texts. In Ancient Greek scrolls, that would later lead to the modern Christian Bible, the word for forgiveness was *aphiemi*.

When translated directly into modern English *aphiemi* means “to leave behind and move forwards.” This means that forgiveness, as described by notable Christian religious figures such as Jesus Christ, means to simply leave behind past hurts and bitterness and move forwards with life—a bit of a different definition than current dictionaries and some contemporary religious perspectives suggest.

According to some dictionary definitions forgiveness also means “to grant pardon for an offense or absolve them from the consequences.” According to some modern religious teachings forgiveness also includes the idea of pardoning or “turning the other cheek.” This suggests not only that we should let go of past hurts and move forwards BUT ALSO we should restore a previous difficult relationship and give the person another chance...

But it just ain’t necessarily so.

The core of forgiveness IS ABOUT leaving behind past hurts and moving forwards with your life. It is NOT NECESSARILY about re-engaging with people who may have previously hurt you. While it is a beautiful thing to pardon and restore damaged relationships to a brighter future—and should be considered where possible—it is equally a pitfall and trap to allow ourselves to be hurt again and further damage our lives.

Growing up, I was taught that forgiveness was to “pardon” or “excuse” people’s bad behavior and give them another chance. I applied this in the schoolyard and didn’t speak up when bullied, only to have the same people treat me badly again a few weeks later. Clearly I needed to leave behind my distress about what they did to me and move forwards with my life—but also find a way to do this that didn’t expose me to more bad behavior in the future.

PUTTING FORGIVENESS INTO PRACTISE: CHANGING YOUR MINDSETS

Forgiveness is an important concept to understand when it comes to having Healthy Mindsets.

As we have discussed, Forgiveness when translated from the ancient Greek word *aphiemi* means “to let go and move forwards” and is about letting go of past hurts and moving forwards without bitterness. Contrary to popular belief (and some dictionary definitions), it does not necessarily mean pardoning people and/or restoring a relationship, nor reframing a previous bad situation in a more positive light.

As we have seen, the Mindsets that can lead a person to become “stuck” and unable to move forwards from an experience of bad behavior are:

- » Worry (fear that it will happen again and fear I will not be able to recover fully)
- » Blame (wanting vengeance and punishment beyond merely setting limits for safety)
- » Demand (insisting that bad things should never happen to me and requiring certainty in an uncertain world).

From a Mindset perspective, Forgiveness is best reflected in the Healthy Mindsets of Acceptance, Responsibility and Encouragement:

- » Acceptance of what has happened and any injustices that have occurred
- » Responsibility to make the most of your current and future life and let go of past hurts and injustices
- » And finally Encouragement—to stay positive and allow yourself the space and time to recover from past hurts and move forwards in life!

Ride the Waves of Life!

DAILY HASSLES: STRAWS THAT BREAK THE CAMEL'S BACK



HAVE YOU EVER HAD ONE OF “those” days—days where nothing seems to go right? I have had more than my fair share. Several of them have the same pattern.

It starts with sleeping through the alarm and running late for school drop offs and then late to work, followed by appointments running behind schedule all day, sending emails with typos and errors to very important people, then being caught in traffic while trying to get to school pick-up early, then ongoing work phone calls in between restless kids, traffic jams, and ballet and sports drop offs, and finally it ends with dinner being over cooked and children keeping me awake all night!!

Sometimes all these Regular Waves of Life are like the proverbial “straws that break the camel’s back.” They can lead me to a Wipeout of stress where I lose concentration, forget things, become short-tempered, get muscle pain in my back and neck and get a headache.

The Regular Waves of Life are the everyday causes of stress known as “daily hassles”, those minor irritations such as misplacing our car keys, traffic jams, minor arguments with family, friends or co-workers, and so on. Researchers (Lazarus and Folkman) reported that it was the daily hassles rather than the major life events that affect us the most.

Major Waves of Life do not occur every day, but daily hassles do. It's the pressure and frustration of these constant daily hassles that causes us the most stress. Because they occur so regularly, they can cause chronic health problems if we do not effectively manage the 4 Elements of Wellbeing.

DO YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE DAILY HASSLES?

- » Misplacing keys
- » Arguments
- » Traffic jams
- » Time pressures
- » Lack of sleep
- » Bureaucracy
- » Waiting in queues
- » Gossip
- » Inconsiderate people
- » Meal preparation
- » Office politics
- » Problems with family and children

4 QUICK TIPS FOR MANAGING THE STRESS OF DAILY HASSLES

1. Daily Hassles may be Regular Waves of Life but too many daily hassles in the same day will create some serious negative emotions. Express emotions in a healthy and safe way in the moment. That way you can avoid any excess baggage building up throughout the day and stay focused and be able to problem solve the way ahead.
2. Mindsets of Blame and Demanding might say that hassles "shouldn't" happen to you and that life should treat you differently. This only makes things worse, particularly when managing a range of daily hassles that build up during

the course of the day. Be Accepting of both yourself and what is happening around you. Be “in the moment” so you move forwards from hassles as soon as they have passed. Be Responsible to “own” your own reactions in how you adapt, survive and thrive.

3. Lifestyle—When you have too many daily hassles in a given day, look after your sleep, diet and exercise and plan ahead to spend time with positive friends and family and hobbies. Avoid excess caffeine, alcohol, late nights and long angry conversations with similarly upset people.
4. Reconnect with your Purpose in life. If the daily hassles you are facing destabilize your sense of purpose then re-invest and redirect this energy to other areas of your life such as family, friends, hobbies, your health and fitness. Don't become stuck in a moment. In the words of the famous U2 song, “It's just a moment whose time will pass”!

Ride the Waves of Life!

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: AGGRESSION, MANIPULATION & EMOTION



HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO HAVE a “Difficult Conversation” with someone? Have you ever had to say no, set limits, or provide feedback about bad behavior to someone at work, at home or in the community? The other day I had to provide some feedback to someone as part of conflict resolution in their workplace. They got really upset and started shouting and then subsequently complained about why their manager and peers had not given them feedback sooner...

Let’s face it, for most of us, difficult conversations are hard to have at the best of times. I personally find it really difficult to give feedback or say no to someone. I would much rather avoid the entire situation or simply give in to their demands. But, as the old saying goes: “give them an inch and they take a mile”. Sometimes the long-term pain created by avoidance is far more damaging and destructive than the short-term pain of actually having the difficult conversation.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: 3 DYSFUNCTIONAL PERSONALITY TYPES

When it comes to having difficult conversations there are three dysfunctional personality types that can be especially hard to deal with. They are (1) the Aggressive and Domineering types, (2) the Manipulative and Deceptive types, and (3) the Highly Emotional and Over Sensitive types. In each case your role in having the difficult conversation is to get your constructive message across whilst lowering any conflict, and only continuing dialogue whilst you feel safe.

When I first started working as a psychologist many years ago I was given some great advice about how to best manage these three styles. These are the specific tips I have used throughout my career to successfully manage each of these.

1. AGGRESSIVE AND DOMINEERING PEOPLE

- » When they are speaking, avoid interrupting and wait for them to run out of steam. Do not react in an upset manner. NEVER take it personally or show negative emotion. Aggressive people are experienced at making the receiver feel that they are personally to blame.
- » Don't argue with them or use confronting phrases such as, "You're being ridiculous." Instead, use words like, "I'm interested in hearing what you think." Only respond to the facts of the situation rather than to emotional argument. Stay calm using healthy and rational self-talk.
- » Use a relaxed, positive, calm and firm tone. Do not match their voice quality. Watch your non-verbal behavior to ensure that it matches self-confidence. Use reflective listening skills. Reframe what they say, focusing only on the rational component and repeating this back to the Aggressor.
- » Use the Aggressor's name at the beginning of the conversation. This will help to equalize the power. If the Aggressor

keeps on interrupting you, subtly let them know that you are aware what they are doing by calmly saying, “What I was about to say before was...”

- » Do not block complaints. If the Aggressor feels that they have a valid complaint, then give them the details of someone they can take their complaint to, or refer them to someone better able to assist. Don't wear too much of the abuse before referring them on.
- » If Aggressors constantly use swear words or personal attacks ignore it at first because it can be a tactic to get you to bite. However, if it continues then stop and calmly but firmly tell the Aggressor that you really would like to continue, but to do so you will need them to refrain from personal attacks. If you are repeatedly threatened, stay calm and terminate the discussion as quickly as possible, and report matters to the relevant authorities.

2. MANIPULATIVE AND DECEPTIVE PEOPLE

Firstly, it is important to note that many of the tips listed under “Aggressive” styles can be used with this character style. In addition, remember the following points:

- » Stay calm and focused by using slow abdominal breathing and rational self-talk.
- » If you have listened carefully to the reasons given by this person and you have decided to continue your course of action, then continually, in your responses, stick to the facts and therefore the necessary consequences (broken record).
- » Complete your course of action and remove yourself as quickly and calmly as you can from the situation.
- » Don't allow yourself to be sidetracked or persuaded by emotional argument.

3. “OVER SENSITIVE” AND HIGHLY EMOTIONAL PEOPLE

- » Do not respond unnecessarily or overcompensate to distress. Remain objective, empathic and supportive but also calm and steady.
- » Stay calm. Do not be dismissive nor take on their emotional distress (sympathy vs empathy).
- » Use reflective listening skills to demonstrate empathy but continually bring the person back to the facts and consequences.
- » Encourage the person to focus on more positive aspects of the situation.
- » Use repetition to anchor the person in the realistic positives and negatives and limit Catastrophising, Over-Generalising and Personalising.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF – DEBRIEFING & SUPPORT

When a difficult conversation finally concludes it is not uncommon for many of us to feel exhausted and upset ourselves – especially if we have had to endure personal criticism or sit with people who display high levels of emotional distress. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** to make sure you get debriefing and support yourself after such encounters.

Make sure you have supportive and objective mentors/colleagues you can confidentially talk with about (1) the outcomes of the difficult conversation (2) your own communication – things that went well and things you could improve (3) your own emotional reactions and your current state in terms of calming down and getting on with the next tasks you need to do without carrying any baggage forwards.

A debrief of this style can be a quick informal chat lasting only a couple of minutes or a more lengthy meeting, depending on your needs. In any case make sure you debrief after difficult conversations. I

have seen many people burnout and suffer emotional breakdowns after facing too many difficult conversations without debriefing support.

Remember, difficult conversations are necessary at times. The short-term pain is necessary if we are to avoid the long term pain of people continuing to behave in unacceptable ways towards us. Take some time out today to refresh your skills in having Difficult Conversations, and identify who your mentors are who can debrief and support you when needed!

Ride the Waves of Life

TWO

WORK/LIFE ISSUES

HORRIBLE BOSSES: WORKPLACE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES



HAVE YOU SEEN THE MOVIE *HORRIBLE Bosses*? It is a story of three bosses, each with their own extremely dysfunctional management styles (AKA The “Psychopath”, “Man-eater” and “Tool”). They show us the worst in controlling, manipulative, avoidant and bullying behaviors towards their respective staff, who in turn, go on a hapless adventure to seek revenge.

It would have to be one of the funniest and most extreme examples of dysfunctional managers I have ever seen—clearly taking things well beyond absurd but nonetheless making some important points about good and bad leadership behaviors.

Given we spend so much of our lives at work, having to deal with a horrible boss can turn into a very big Wave of Life unless we can find ways to develop effective workplace survival skills. But it’s not a “one size fits all” approach as there are different profiles of dysfunctional leaders evident in the workplace.

FOUR DYSFUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLES: WORKPLACE SURVIVAL SKILLS

When we look at research examining the types of dysfunctional leadership styles and their adverse impact on staff morale, wellbeing

and productivity, four types of dysfunctional leadership styles are evident. They are labeled Laissez-Faire, Popular, Command & Control and Follow the Rules.

Let's take a look at:

1. The key characteristics of each type of dysfunctional leader
2. The impact and consequences on staff
3. Workplace survival skills we can use to maintain our motivation and engagement.

1. THE LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADER

Laissez-Faire is a French term which translated means: “let it be” or “let them do as they will”. With this definition in mind you can easily imagine the dysfunctional leadership characteristics of the Laissez-Faire leader. Their preference is to avoid responsibility and not interfere with anything either above or below them in the organizational structure. In management meetings they avoid sharing their opinions and go with the status quo. When interacting with their staff they do not provide feedback, do not follow-up on requests for help, do not communicate their views about important issues and remain vague and elusive.

The impact of this style of leadership on staff is quite destructive. It leads to increased withdrawal behaviors among staff who show low discretionary effort and poor performance, eventually leading to complete disengagement and team dysfunction.

WORKING FOR A LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADER

So what do you do if you have a boss who is a Laissez-Faire leader? What specific workplace survival skills do you need?

The first thing you need to do is fill in the “information gaps” with updates and company information from other sources so you can stay informed and up-to-date. Next, you need to develop a culture of peer support and accountability within the team to stay focused and moti-

vated. Developing a mentor network can also assist in staying engaged and developing professionally.

2. THE POPULAR LEADER

The Popular leader may not initially seem like a dysfunctional leadership style. Popular leaders are, by definition, focused on being “liked” by their staff. As such, their leadership style has some upsides—high support and a very strong focus on positive interpersonal relationships.

However the downsides of a popular leader are low focus on core business, neglect of performance management, avoidance of tough conversations, and a team vs corporate or “us and them” mentality. The impact on staff working with a popular leader is initially positive with high discretionary effort among staff to follow directions. However, the over focus on relationships and the lack of focus on core business invariably leads to poor team performance. Instead of addressing the issues, the popular leader engages in upwards bullying by blaming other teams and more senior leaders for issues rather than taking responsibility and accountability. Inevitably a range of entrenched negative behaviors occur and other teams in the organization become openly cynical and hostile towards this leader’s team, spreading dysfunction across the wider organization.

WORKING FOR A POPULAR LEADER

Workplace survival skills needed when working for a Popular leader are similar to the Laissez-Faire leader in that you need to rely on additional sources of information beyond your leader to understand the broader operations and needs of the organization. You also need to remember to accommodate high expectations of socialization among team members and managers, and adjust your own attitude and work routine accordingly. Finally, when broader politics and blame of other teams and managers occurs, keep a low profile and quietly stay focused on your own work performance so you don’t become a victim of subsequent reviews and crackdowns by more senior managers.

3. THE COMMAND & CONTROL LEADER

Command & Control leaders, as the name suggests, take the necessary management responsibility of organizing and directing teams to unhealthy and extreme levels. The one redeeming characteristic of a Command & Control leader—high clarity—is completely overwhelmed by the negative characteristics of low perceived support, low engagement, poor communication, neglect of developmental feedback, and an over-emphasis on corrective feedback.

The impacts of this dysfunctional leadership style on the team are vast and includes a stigma about reporting personal problems, low discretionary effort, low innovation, increased withdrawal behaviors, fear, intimidation and conflict.

WORKING FOR A COMMAND & CONTROL LEADER

Workplace survival skills when working under a Command & Control leader primarily relate to having a positive and resilient attitude in the face of unhelpful criticism, and a strong support network to offset the unsupportive behaviors of the Command & Control leader. Peer mentors and networking across the wider organization can provide development opportunities that may not arise when working under this type of leader.

4. THE FOLLOW THE RULES LEADER

What's wrong with a leader following the rules I hear you say? Nothing at all—unless of course it is taken to extremes and becomes the only focus of leadership activity at the neglect of everything else. The Follow the Rules leader is characterized by a strong focus on rules and procedures, low perceived support, a reactive people focus, high clarity, everything is black or white, low engagement, and when under pressure, they tighten adherence to the rule.

The impact of this dysfunctional leadership style on staff includes a reluctance to report problems, low discretionary effort, low innovation, increased withdrawal behaviors, harassment and conflict.

WORKING FOR A FOLLOW THE RULES LEADER

Workplace survival skills for working with a Follow the Rules leader include increasing your attention to detail and compliance with what may appear to be trivial rules and expectations, lowering your expectations of team engagement and socialization and finding other ways to fulfill these needs, developing peer support strategies to engage with problem solving or workplace support, and engaging mentors from other areas in the organization to help you with your professional development needs.

YOUR BOSS: BE GRATEFUL FOR THE STRENGTHS BUT PROACTIVE ON THE WEAKNESSES

Now that we have taken an in-depth look at dysfunctional leadership styles, take some time to reflect on both the strengths and weaknesses of your leaders. What are their strengths? How can you make the most of these positives and leverage your development and career accordingly? What about their weaknesses? What do you need to do differently so as not to get upset and frustrated by their limitations?

If you are a boss yourself, take a good hard look at your own strengths and weaknesses. Be honest—none of us are perfect. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses is a powerful step towards becoming a more effective leader.

By having a greater awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four dysfunctional leadership styles and honing your workplace survival skills, you will be able to effectively manage any horrible bosses you encounter and experience greater job satisfaction and happiness at work as a result!

Ride the Waves of Life!

CHAMPION BOSSES: 6 HEALTHY HABITS



DID YOU KNOW THAT WE SPEND 34% of our lives (approximately 228,708 hours!) trying to successfully ride the Wave of Life that is our work? Given how much time we invest in our work it is important to be in a job we are happy with, and even more important to have a Champion Boss (or be a Champion Boss if you are a Manager yourself).

We all know what it is like to have a Horrible Boss—either through firsthand experience or through friends and colleagues. However many of us have also had a Champion Boss but in all the mayhem and confusion of work and life may not have realized it at the time.

A Champion Boss isn't necessarily a boss who gives you everything you want but rather a boss who can bring out the best in you at work. They make the workplace both engaging and profitable for the whole team. Champion Bosses are able to both:

1. Drive team performance
2. Effectively support staff by engaging in 6 Healthy Habits.

6 HEALTHY HABITS FOR CHAMPION BOSSES

DRIVING TEAM PERFORMANCE

Healthy Habit No 1. Communicating Vision & Strategy

Champion Bosses have a great ability to regularly and clearly communicate to team members the short- and long-term vision and strategy of the organization at both a global and team-specific level.

Healthy Habit No 2. Showing Credibility & Getting Results

Champion Bosses are able to effectively demonstrate their own competence and to perform their role and get the team to deliver credible results at both the team and organizational level.

Healthy Habit No 3. Providing Feedback & Development Opportunities

Champion Bosses are always on the lookout for opportunities to give and receive both positive and constructive feedback. They provide developmental opportunities to team members in a way that is fair and equitable to all.

EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTING STAFF

Healthy Habit No 4. Being Trustworthy

Champion Bosses are able to create an environment of honesty and trust by being an effective listener and never sharing in any negative gossiping. By being trustworthy, Champion Bosses help team members openly share their needs and concerns.

Healthy Habit No 5. Providing Motivation & Encouragement

Champion Bosses have a great ability to motivate and encourage team members based on their individual needs and preferences. They are great at knowing what makes each individual “tick” and can use friendly nicknames, jokes, small talk, and have goal driven conversations to make people feel encouraged and motivated at work.

Healthy Habit No 6. Supporting People's Career & Personal Goals

Champion Bosses take the time to understand the career and personal goals of their team members and then provide feedback and support to help them when opportunities emerge.

CHAMPION BOSSES: WHAT HEALTHY HABITS DOES YOUR BOSS HAVE?

If we take a good hard look at our leaders (and ourselves) it is easy to find faults but not always as easy to see the Healthy Habits our bosses may already have. It is just too easy to “cut down the tall poppy” when they try to change for the better, or crush the seeds of hope when only a few redeeming features may be evident.

One of my all time favorite sayings is about seeing the glass half full rather than half empty. I always try to encourage people to focus on the positive characteristics of their bosses. So take some time out now to reflect and ask yourself the following questions:

1. How many different Bosses have I had over the years and how would I rate each boss in terms of the 6 Healthy Habits to drive performance and support staff?
2. Focus on my current Boss:
 - » What Habits are they already a Champion in?
When was the last time I gave them some positive feedback about this?
 - » What areas do they need to improve on and how could I support and encourage their Healthy Habits?
3. Focus on myself as a Boss (whether you are currently a boss or may one day become a boss):
 - » What are my strengths and development opportunities across each of the 6 Healthy Habits of a Champion Boss?

By taking the time to assess and support the 6 Healthy Habits of the Champion Bosses around you, as well as setting your own leadership growth goals, you will be on a path to greater success and happiness in your workplace!

Ride the Waves of Life!

WORKPLACE POLITICS: TOXIC CULTURES & CURES



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A PART of a work team that was a constant source of stress, frustration or anxiety? Have you ever spent far too much time complaining to your friends or spouse about your workplace, seemingly unable to turn off the tap of your frustration and angst? If this is you, then chances are you have been working in a toxic culture.

Being stuck in an unhappy workplace is a very challenging Wave of Life which can easily cause problems in other areas such as your relationship and family, or make you more prone to alcohol use and poor lifestyle choices.

Toxic cultures create office politics. Signs of office politics include cliques, factions, gossip, low morale, poor performance, absenteeism, presenteeism (being at work but not getting anything done), and complaints of bullying, harassment, grievances and counter complaints. At their worst, toxic cultures keep these workplaces in a seemingly never-ending cycle of dysfunction. Let's take a closer look at the three most common types of toxic cultures and their cure.

TOXIC CULTURES IN WORKPLACES: 3 TYPES OF POISON AND THEIR CURE

1. CONFUSION VS. CLARITY

The first and most common toxic culture is where confusion reigns supreme. Nobody in the team seems to know the answer to anything. Team meetings rarely, if ever, happen and are short and superficial. Notice boards are empty aside from faded photos from Christmas parties several years ago and out of date announcements and memos no one looked at anyway. The intranet site, if it exists, still has the IT department instructions on pages needing completion.

Team Performance is a concept unheard of. No one knows the team's KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). When a customer or co-worker from another department complains about a problem, everyone in the team quickly states that it is not in their job description to fix it. Knowledge is power and people use what they know to keep others in the dark and avoid responsibility.

THE CURE TO CONFUSION

The Cure to the toxic culture of Confusion is Clarity. However, it can be a long march to freedom. Starting to get team meetings back on track with regular updates, minutes and deeper discussion about performance issues can be a troublesome task for even the most skilled and patient manager.

Improving the amount, quality and flow of information through regularly updating the intranet, emailing out minutes in real-time after team meetings, and making the notice board become live with real and relevant news about the workplace is another Herculean task.

Increasing Clarity by getting people motivated and engaged when they have been working in a Confused toxic culture—and helping them overcome their learned helplessness, cynicism and apathy—is an achievement worthy of a Nobel Prize!

2. FAVORITISM VS. FAIRNESS

Our next toxic culture is also very common to see in workplaces both large and small and in all industry sectors including both public and private. The toxic culture of Favoritism—and its twin, Nepotism—can divide and destroy teams in workplaces faster than a strike of lightning. The ensuing forest fire of Favoritism can destroy the entire organization.

Favoritism begins in a harmless enough way.... after all we are only human and naturally like some people more than others. What's wrong with that? Nothing, until the insidious friendliness leads to accidental insider information being given to some and avoidance and misinformation to others. Knowledge is power—enabling people to promote the prospects of themselves and their friends, and ensure their enemies are left out and disadvantaged. Team meetings start to become places where only sanitized information is provided. The real deals are done in the corridors and on the phone between meetings.

Job vacancies and promotions seem to be filled by those on the “inside” with no opportunity to apply or be considered. When the toxic culture of favoritism spreads its virus across the organization, abuses of power, fraud, and serious misconduct are rife—just look at the autopsies of the failure of so many of the Wall Street firms in the Global Financial Crisis.

THE CURE TO FAVORITISM

The Cure to a toxic culture of Favoritism is, of course, Fairness. However, bringing fairness into a workplace with a history of favoritism is akin to climbing a high altitude mountain. You can't just climb straight to the top in one push. Instead you have to establish a series of camps, slowly working higher up the mountain as your body adjusts to the altitude before finally climbing to the summit.

Bringing in changes aimed at increasing fairness in the workplace needs to be a staged approach, giving people and systems time to adjust without destroying the team and organization. The first phase involves some of the elements previously discussed in moving from Confusion

to Clarity, namely the increase in amount, quality and flow of information. This allows everyone to participate fairly in the workplace and be able to apply for opportunities of advancement, or raise concerns safely without retribution.

The second and third phases involve the development of teams around two key issues:

1. Understanding and better managing team dynamics and giving and receiving feedback
2. Development planning to encourage cross-skilling and succession, to enable staff to learn more about each other's roles and be able to advance their careers appropriately.

Warning: The summit of a Fair culture is an open and accountable workplace where people are able to work effectively without fear of being on the “outside”. However, if “fairness” becomes more important than actually delivering the products or services the team is ultimately employed to provide, then an insidious “post operative infection” can occur – the toxic culture of Socialism.

3. SOCIALISM VS. PRODUCTIVITY

Our last toxic culture is that of Socialism, a term I use loosely to describe a workplace culture where maintaining harmony and social order in the team becomes more important than productivity and actually delivering the products or services the team was employed to provide. This toxic culture can occur in any workplace but the financial failure of businesses who have this disease means it can only flourish and endure in the public sector where the need to deliver products and services may be secondary to the goals of administration and industrial protection.

The toxic culture of Socialism is evident in workplaces where conflict between teams may flourish and disputes between groups over who is responsible for what can lead to an “ice age” of disputes and industrial conflicts—blocking any organizational growth or change. Socialism-based toxic cultures further shore up the freeze on any produc-

tivity or change using the “shoot first, ask questions later” approach. They argue about fairness and equality on any decisions, and quickly suggest discrimination and breaches of their rights and entitlements under various awards and conditions.

The most succinct way to sum up this issue is that where Socialism is the dominant culture, relationships drive performance. This is in contrast to cultures where productivity drives the culture—performance drives relationships.

THE CURE TO SOCIALISM

Bringing in the cure of refocusing the workplace culture on Productivity is not just like climbing one high altitude mountain as per Fairness from Favoritism, but rather like climbing all fourteen of the 8000m peaks across the planet!

Yet it is equally a more noble and worthwhile objective. Helping the managers, staff, industrial advocates and customers of an organization rediscover their *raison d'être*—the core purpose they are there to fulfill—can ignite a passion and conviction that can inspire amazing transformations and turnarounds!

TOXIC CULTURES AND CURES: YOUR NEXT STEPS

Having reviewed the three toxic cultures of Confusion, Favoritism and Socialism and their cures of Clarity, Fairness and Productivity, how would you rate your workplace at the moment?

What are the positives aspects of the culture in your workplace? How can you focus more of your time and energy on the positive aspects of your workplace culture and get more and more people engaged in growing the health of your workplace?

What are the negatives aspects of the culture in your workplace? Where can you adjust your attitude to minimize the impact of the negatives, or better still, where could you quietly and confidently begin introducing positive changes?

Remember to stay within your circle of influence and also seek help and consider new career options if, despite these changes, you need to move on to a brighter and better future elsewhere.

Ride the Waves of Life!

MANAGING CHANGE AT WORK



AS EACH YEAR ROLLS ON THE Waves of Life keep breaking on the shore. In a year when I had to manage my share of Natural Disasters, Disillusionment with Heroes and Moving House, I have also experienced the Waves of Changes at Work.

Change and uncertainty at work is a known Big Wave (Stressful Life Event) and maybe it is a Wave you have been riding too. It is still affecting much of society due to the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and its knock on effects of the recession/downturn in the global economy.

THE WIDESPREAD IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The impact has been much wider than many people think. Obviously banking and finance have been hit, but major problems are occurring in any organization that needs money to pay wages and provide or purchase goods and services. So almost everyone is affected!

I work in a psychology practice which provides services to government and the private sector. There has been a reduction in budgets and programs for the health and wellbeing of employees. Redundancies and job losses also mean less work for The Stress Surfer.

I have had to change roles and work in other areas, such as supporting people who are now unemployed and need to find a job.

For many people the situation is much worse than having to change roles and work in different parts of their organization.

They may now be unemployed, experiencing financial and family pressures. On top of this they need to be upbeat and optimistic at job interviews. They might face the need to study and learn new skills as technology changes the way our jobs are done.

4 QUICK TIPS FOR MANAGING CHANGE AT WORK

Changing roles at work and delivering different services and to different people is almost like starting a new job. When changes at work occur and you have to adjust to a new role—one you may not have voluntarily chosen or preferred—consider the following tips to Balance the 4 Elements of Your Inner Wellbeing during such a difficult time.

1. Changes at Work are a known Big Wave in life. Give yourself room to feel and express any negative Emotions in a healthy way. This will help you avoid any excess baggage and stay focused and be able to problem solve the way ahead.
2. Mindsets of Blame, and Demanding that life treat you differently, only make things worse. Be Accepting of both yourself and what is happening around you and Responsible for your choices in how you adapt, survive and thrive.
3. Lifestyle changes are inevitable as routines change with new work roles and activities. Look after your sleep, diet and exercise. Keep in touch with positive friends and family and hobbies that fit your budget and time available in your changed circumstances. Avoid excess caffeine, alcohol, late nights and long angry conversations with similarly upset people, as it often makes you feel worse.

4. Reconnect with your Purpose in life. If work was a major way you built a positive legacy then re-invest this energy in family, friends, hobbies, your health and fitness and other endeavors while the transition occurs in your work. Things may take a while to settle down but will do so in time, and with enough patience and persistence on your behalf!

Ride the Waves of Life!

PERSONAL FINANCES: HAPPINESS & LOW EXPECTATIONS



LIVING IN THE WORLD AFTER THE Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has really changed the financial lives of literally billions of people. Not only have there been massive changes in the workplace, but significant knock-on effects in our personal lives—particularly in the area of finances. Being caught in the debt traps of modern life post-GFC are increasingly cruel Big Waves of Life that many of us have to face.

Many of us are now working in the same job but under different terms and conditions, or in new jobs that pay less than they used to. We are also still paying off mortgages on properties that may not be worth what we paid for them—and unable to sell them and downsize without risk of bankruptcy. We are still driving cars that are no longer affordable to own but caught in rental or financing agreements we can't get out of. And we still have families to feed and expectations for new toys, gadgets and holidays.

THE TIDE IS OUT...

If you are Generation X or Y like I am, you may have children and family responsibilities now, but during the last major downturn in the late 1980s you were probably still at school and therefore somewhat oblivious. As such we entered into our adult lives and began building our nests and raising families under a relatively stable economy and rising salaries and job markets (even though it still felt hard at the time!).

Well, the tide of prosperity has definitely gone out now for many of us. As Warren Buffet says, “When the tide goes out you can see who is swimming naked!” Those of us who are underprepared and overexposed to debt are facing some chronic long-term problems financially, socially and emotionally. We have to face the challenges of downsizing. We must adjust our expectations and come to grips with the fact that we cannot “keep up with the Joneses.”

THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS

A favorite saying from a wise friend of mine is worth considering: “The secret to happiness is low expectations.”

Let’s take a look at how Stress Surfers apply this in our lives. We need to balance the 4 Elements of Inner Wellbeing as we downsize and adjust our personal finances to cope with reduced incomes, falling valuations and rising costs.

1. MINDSETS

If the Secret to Happiness is Low Expectations, then your Mindsets are the cornerstone of your success in managing your personal finances. Take an honest look at your situation and Accept the reality of your circumstances. Stop Demanding or Blaming in regard to your circumstances and be Responsible to take the hard decisions. With mindsets of Acceptance and Responsibility on your side, you will adjust your expectations accordingly and succeed in living within your means!

2. EMOTIONS

Sadness and Anger are two primary emotions felt when experiencing financial distress. Some are afraid to feel Sadness and use Anger to hide their true feelings. Conversely people may struggle with the emotion of Anger and instead block this emotion with Sadness. Be true to yourself and avoid emotional baggage.

- » Use Coping Skills such as social support and selective attention to get support and keep a balanced outlook.
- » Use Relaxation strategies to stay calm and focused.

- » More importantly don't forget Problem Solving skills to manage the difficult choices and decisions that need to be made and be open to a range of innovative options and solutions.

3. LIFESTYLE

This is “ground zero” as many of the activities, interests and exercise routines we engage in consume money and time that may no longer be available. Do we have to cancel the gym membership or maybe reduce the number of paid activities we used to do? Diet—in particular the luxury foods we eat and the amount of restaurants and cafés we visit—may need to be curtailed. The good news is that many fresh fruits, vegetables, grains and meats can often be sourced in bulk very cheaply.

4. PURPOSE

When we look back on our lives most of us tend to think more about who we spent time with and how we cared for each other rather than the type of car we drove, the brand of clothes we wore or the TV or stereo we owned. Sometimes, personal financial difficulties help us let go of some unnecessary bad habits and materialistic tendencies that get in the way of enjoying family and friends and being true to ourselves and our life's Purpose.

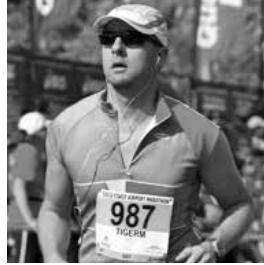
By...

- » Changing your Mindsets to lower your expectations
- » Coping with your Emotions and not suppressing them or bottling them up
- » Making major changes to your Lifestyle to take the losses on the chin early, before it is too late
- » Reconnecting with your Purpose, removing the material distractions of wealth and belongings

... you will discover a simpler and more fulfilling life. With this lower expectation you will indeed increase your sense of happiness!

Ride the Waves of Life!

HEALTH AND FITNESS: STAYING MOTIVATED



MY EGO HAD A ROUGH WEEK recently. Firstly my eldest daughter and I went for a 5km run and for the first time in my life she thoroughly beat me—no doubt a sign of the changing of the guard as her youth and health supersede my age and tenacity! Not cool for my self-esteem as I always prided myself on being very fit.

Secondly, later the same week my partner bought some new digital scales and I made the mistake of actually getting on them! After only a few seconds a flashing sign lit up telling me too much information. My recently acquired love handles (aka muffin top) were now officially confirmed, bruising my battered ego even further!!

HEALTH AND FITNESS AND THE WAVES OF LIFE

Staying fit and keeping to a healthy body weight is not always easy. Rates of obesity and excess weight are alarmingly high in many western nations. In England, most people (61.3%) are overweight or obese. In the US even more of the population is overweight or obese (69.2%). And Australia is also ranked as one of the fattest nations in the developed world with almost 60% of the population overweight or obese.

But there are some reasons for this—we are busier than ever and have less time for exercise and healthy eating. The reality of working full-time and running a busy family makes finding time for fitness

and healthy eating much harder. It is just too easy to simply collect drive-through takeaway after a crazy-busy day and then collapse on the couch exhausted after very little actual physical exercise.

One of the negative cycles that occurs when hammered by the challenging Waves of Life—or having too many crazy-busy days in a row—is lowered energy levels and heightened fatigue. Combine this with some weight gain and before you know it you can get into a negative cycle of low self-esteem and low motivation—making staying fit and healthy even harder.

Let's take a look at some of the things you need to know about staying fit and healthy, and keeping yourself motivated when riding the challenging Waves of Life.

KEEPING YOURSELF MOTIVATED!

When you don't have goals to achieve, or fail at achieving your goals, you can become disappointed, disillusioned and de-motivated—and have problems with low self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the general belief that we are able to cope with the challenges of life and are worthy of happiness. People who have low self-esteem may take fewer risks in life. This is often due to fear of failure. It significantly limits one's opportunities both personally and professionally. Further, people with low self-esteem may neglect their own needs.

In order to keep yourself motivated to stay fit and healthy, and prevent your self-esteem from getting low, you need to set some achievable exercise and diet goals and fulfill them. By doing this you will feel a sense of accomplishment with achieving your goals, as well as the health and fitness benefits. You will also be more confident and motivated to set and achieve bigger goals as one small success builds upon another.

STAYING FIT AND HEALTHY: IMPORTANT FOUNDATIONS

Why stay fit and healthy? When managing stress, research shows that having a high level of physical fitness actually provides a buffer to managing the effects of stress, anxiety and depression and also assists in recovering from illness and injury. Conversely, being unfit makes you more at risk of illness, infection and disease. In order to stay fit and healthy there are three important foundations:

1. Sleep
2. Diet
3. Exercise.

1. SLEEP

Sleep is important, as too little sleep will slow down your metabolism and make weight gain a higher risk. Too little sleep will also leave you tired and fatigued with less energy to exercise. Tiredness and fatigue can also heighten your cravings for comfort food with higher levels of sugars, fats and caffeine.

2. DIET

Diet is an obvious area of focus when talking about staying fit and healthy. Firstly the “amount” of food you eat is important as too many calories lead to excess energy which leads to excess weight gain. So eat in moderation. The amount of food you eat is also important for weight loss as diet is responsible for 70% of weight loss results while exercise accounts for 30%. Secondly the “types” of foods you eat are important when staying fit and healthy. Remember the healthy food pyramid—eating most fruit and vegetables and least fats and sugars.

3. EXERCISE

Finally exercise is important to stay fit and healthy. Exercise provides the benefits of burning excess calories, and increasing your aero-

bic fitness. This also helps your immunity and sends endorphins to the brain, giving you a euphoric sensation at the end of a solid workout. Exercise also helps regulate and improve your sleep-wake cycles, so it is even more important to go for a jog or walk when you're tired and don't want to than when you do—hence the need to stay motivated.

By keeping yourself motivated with lots of achievable goals in the areas of sleep, diet and exercise you can stay fit and healthy—giving you an extra boost when managing the challenging Waves of Life. It can help prevent Wipeouts of stress, anxiety and depression as well as lower the risk of illness, injuries and disease. Sounds like a good deal to me!

Ride the Waves of Life!

RETIREMENT: YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE OR END OF LIFE?



QUESTION: WHEN IS THE GREATEST RISK of accidents or death in climbing the high mountains of the world? Is it (A) on the way up; or (B) on the way down? **Answer:** (B) on the way down—a time when our concentration has lapsed and we are not as careful and focused as we were on the way up...

We are much more at risk of problems in our health and happiness AFTER we have successfully faced a challenging Wave of Life than before it. Retirement is one of the Top 10 Tsunamis of Life and deserves a special mention.

THE PERILS OF RETIREMENT

“Getting there is quicker if you let go—you’ll just slide—it shouldn’t take more than a year...” The words from the song *Downhill Racer* by Everything But the Girl summarizes the perils of Retirement. Retirement from your main job or career immediately changes your routines and social patterns creating a risk of illness—something we have touched on when discussing holidays and vacations. When such changes occur, even if seemingly positive, the disruption of your mental and physical routines itself creates additional stress and pressure on your mind and body.

Many people in high pressure jobs who retire to a quiet life of inactivity do not go on to live for many years. They seem to be unable to adjust to the changed pace of life and instead are overwhelmed with a range of health problems.

Other people from the same high pressure workplaces, who go on to have a “next career” keeping a busy pace—albeit moderated somewhat—in volunteering, completing part-time work, or engaging in other meaningful activity go on to live for many years with comparatively fewer health problems.

This is the core of the Retirement conundrum. When to retire? What to do when retiring? How to slow down enough to compensate for the effects of ageing, but not so much that you end up unfit, bored, unfocused and ultimately unhealthy?

5 QUICK TIPS FOR RIDING THE RETIREMENT WAVE

The answers to these questions are not always easy and depend on your personal circumstances—particularly your health, financial and family needs. However to help you balance the 4 Elements of Wellbeing on the Retirement journey consider the following tips.

1. Retirement is one of the Top 10 Challenging Waves of Life. Give yourself time to plan ahead so that it becomes your next great adventure not the end of your life!
2. When riding the Wave of retirement, give yourself room to feel and express any negative Emotions in a healthy way so you can avoid any excess baggage and stay focused and be able to problem solve the way ahead.
3. Be Accepting of both yourself and this new phase of your life and be Responsible for your choices in how you adapt. Mindsets of Blame and Demanding that life treat you differently only make things worse.

4. To succeed in Retirement make sure your Lifestyle routines are as consistent as possible. Look after your sleep, diet and exercise and keep up regular contact with friends, family and hobbies.
5. Stay connected to your Purpose in life. Remember that maintaining your sense of purpose is another key to successful retirement. Make a plan to re-invest the energy from your career into other areas of your life such as family, friends, hobbies, and your health and fitness.

Ride the Waves of Life!

LEGAL ISSUES: MANAGING STRESS AND UNCERTAINTY



ONE OF THE TOP 10 STRESSFUL Life Events is about legal issues—in particular going to jail. While this experience does not happen to many people, the likelihood of being caught up in some form of legal dispute through work, family, or personal injury is a very common and very stressful Wave of Life!

Well-meaning people might say, “Justice is blind”, “Justice is slow in coming”, “The waiting is the hardest part”, “Uncertainty is the only thing we can be certain about”. These sayings do nothing to help us successfully ride the Waves of Legal Issues. Unless we carefully manage our wellbeing during this time, we can Wipeout in a huge state of stress!

LEGAL ISSUES: COMMON TO MANY OF US

Think about it: if most people drive cars, then a traffic infringement is common enough. We may wish to appeal against it, or it may require some form of further legal process.

What about divorce? If 50% of marriages end in divorce then some form of legal process is inevitable to develop arrangements for finances and children.

What about injuries and illness? Legal issues again emerge when needing to claim a benefit or cover our costs.

But wait... there's more! Education and appealing exam results; unfair dismissals or harassment accusations at work; wills and estates and the division of assets; visas and immigration.... the list goes on!

If we have got to the middle of our lives without facing legal issues we indeed have had a very lucky run! But for the vast majority, we have had to face legal issues in some form or another – sometimes on multiple occasions. Those of us who have been there will know two of the greatest challenges to manage are:

1. Uncertainty through the process
2. The feeling of injustice that can occur.

LEGAL ISSUES: MANAGING UNCERTAINTY AND INJUSTICE

Coping with Legal Issues is a Big Wave that rates highly on the stressful life events scale. Remember, just because we may experience uncertainty and injustice in our lives does not necessarily mean we Wipeout and lose self-control.

But rather, by maintaining balance in the 4 Elements of our Inner Wellbeing (Mindsets, Emotions, Lifestyle, Purpose)—flexibly adapting to the limitations that our circumstances bring us—we can ride through such difficult times. We can keep focused and move forwards with other areas of our lives, while minimizing the events that could otherwise become overwhelming and wipe us out.

4 QUICK TIPS FOR MANAGING THE STRESS OF LEGAL ISSUES

1. Legal Issues are a known Big Wave in life so give yourself room to feel and express any negative Emotions in a healthy way so you can avoid any excess baggage and stay focused and be able to problem solve the way ahead.

2. Mindsets of Blame and Demanding that life treat you differently only make things worse, particularly when managing uncertainty or injustice. Be Accepting of both yourself and what is happening around you and Responsible for your choices in how you adapt, survive and thrive.
3. Lifestyle—routines need to be as consistent as possible. Look after your sleep, diet and exercise and keep in touch with positive friends and family and hobbies. Avoid excess caffeine, alcohol, late nights and long angry conversations with similarly upset people as it often makes you feel worse.
4. Reconnect with and redirect your Purpose in life. If the Legal Issues you are facing destabilize your sense of purpose then reinvest and redirect this energy in other areas of your life such as family, friends, hobbies, your health and fitness while the legal process occurs. Know that things may take a while to resolve, but will do so in time and with enough patience and persistence on your behalf!

Ride the Waves of Life!

HOLIDAYS & VACATIONS: UNEXPECTED ILLNESS AND STRESS



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN WORKING SOOOOO hard in the lead up to a vacation and then find yourself getting sick as soon as you start to unwind?

I finally went away for a few days to surf and relax with family and friends after some very challenging and demanding weeks at work. After arriving in the most beautiful location and surfing some amazing waves on the first day, I woke up in the middle of the night with a sore throat and spent the next few days recovering from a head cold! I thought, “Why couldn’t this have happened before I left? Why now when I am trying to relax?”

WHY VACATIONS CAN BE STRESSFUL

Vacations and holidays, despite being very positive life events (mostly!) are nonetheless ranked as potential Stressful Waves of Life—albeit smaller waves. There are two reasons for this:

VACATIONS OFTEN MEAN A SUDDEN CHANGE OF ROUTINE OCCURS IN OUR LIVES

We go from too busy to no activity at all and this change in pattern can seriously disrupt our biorhythms—the normal cycle of our body and mind. For workaholics who thrive on the busyness of life (yes, you

know who you are!!!) the change in pace is often the catalyst for hidden health problems to emerge.

VACATIONS ALSO CREATE A MAJOR CHANGE IN OUR SOCIAL PATTERNS

We no longer have the daily grind of work or school and the good and bad relationships we face each day but instead spend high amounts of time with people we normally do not see that often. I am sure we can all remember Christmases or Thanksgivings which ended badly with arguments among relatives or friends over festering family issues or baggage from the past!

So it is not surprising that taking a holiday or vacation—while clearly good for your health in the long run—has some pitfalls and risks that need to be managed carefully to ensure it is a place of fun and relaxation rather than sickness and conflict.

4 QUICK TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR VACATION

When you are planning a holiday or vacation consider the following tips from *The Stress Surfer* to balance the 4 Elements of Your Inner Wellbeing and prevent any risk of sickness or conflict:

1. Holidays and vacations are major (albeit positive) disruptions to your normal routines and social patterns. Like any major change you need to ease into it rather than be exposed to sudden change. Plan ahead to allow yourself time to wind down and adjust rather than be too busy in the day's prior. Similarly at the end of your vacation—gradually wind up your routine and energy to prepare to go back to work.
2. If you get sick or get frustrated with friends or family while on vacation remember Mindsets of Blame and Demanding will make things worse. Be Accepting of both yourself and

what is happening around you and be Responsible for your choices to recover quickly and enjoy your time away.

3. Lifestyle changes are inevitable as routines change with new activities. Look after your sleep and diet. If absolutely necessary, keep in touch—albeit much more reduced contact—with any work or other issues which you would otherwise worry about. Avoid excess caffeine, alcohol, and late nights, and make the most of the extra time to rest and exercise.
4. Revisit your Purpose in life. Take some time to reflect on the progress you are making with your goals in life and building a positive legacy. While on vacation, share some of your goals with others and create accountability to guide and support you in achieving these things when you are back in your normal routine.

And above all else, enjoy your holidays and vacations—take lots of photos and create lots of wonderful memories to look back on!

Ride the Waves of Life!

JOB SATISFACTION: THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR JOB? Be honest. Are you happy at work? Whilst we know having a supportive boss and workmates is essential, we sometimes overlook “the elephant in the room” – our own underlying personality.

One of the most common – yet often overlooked – sources of workplace conflict is a mismatch between our job and our personality.

If you are a raving extrovert and have an outgoing personality but have to work alone entering data all day, you are likely to be very frustrated no matter how good your boss and co-workers are. Conversely, if you are a shy introvert and have to constantly sell to customers, the social demands of your job may overwhelm you.

When these mismatches occur we invariably get stressed. We are more likely to under-perform, leading to tension and conflict with our bosses and peers. This conflict can then take on a life of its own. The underlying mismatch may never be discovered, leading to a long and unhappy series of jobs and a sense of job dissatisfaction that we can never truly figure out.

Our personality refers to “the totality of our specific enduring individual characteristics”. Psychologists call these characteristics “traits” and separate them from temporary “states” we may experience such as changes in mood. Most people understand the difference between

states such as anger, sadness, happiness and joy, versus traits such as introversion (shyness) and extroversion (tendency to be outgoing).

However, when it comes to personality in the workplace, it isn't simply about introverts and extroverts. The Work Personality Types model developed by Holland details six types of work personalities: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional. Holland's model suggests that we are not confined to one factor but will be happiest when working in a job that is compatible with our most dominant work personality type.

This intuitively makes sense. After all, Artistic people are not going to want to work in the finance industry nor would Conventional people enjoy working in concert promotions. Similarly, Enterprising types are not going to want a predictable career in the public service.

HOLLAND'S 6 WORKPLACE PERSONALITY FACTORS

Let's take a look at Holland's 6 work personality factors to help us understand our personality and the degree of compatibility we have with the type of job we are currently in.

CONVENTIONAL

People who are high on this factor prefer activities that involve explicit, ordered, systematic tasks to meet predictable organizational demands or specific standards. They may be described as conforming, practical, careful, thrifty, efficient, orderly, persistent and conscientious. Jobs suited to people scoring high on this dimension include: Accountant, Data Processing Operator, Architectural Draftsperson, Credit Loans Officer, Customs Agent, Auditor, and Secretary.

ENTERPRISING

People who rate highly on this factor prefer making things happen and activities that involve the management of others to attain organizational goals. Such people enjoy influencing and persuading others and achieving results. They may be described as influential, ambitious,

energetic, extroverted, optimistic, popular, self-confident and sociable. Jobs suited to people scoring high on this dimension include: Real Estate Agent, Lawyer, Advertising Manager, Politician, General Manager and Sales Representative.

INVESTIGATIVE

People scoring high on this factor prefer the development and use of knowledge. These people are attracted to scholarly, analytical or intellectual activities. They may be described as cautious, critical, curious, independent, precise, rational and intellectual. Jobs suited to people scoring high on this dimension include: Research Scientist, Technical Officer, Professional Engineer, Computer Systems Programmer, Doctor and Veterinarian.

REALISTIC

People scoring high on this factor prefer “action” to “thinking”. This means working with things rather than people, and practical or manual tasks. These people enjoy concrete and technical things such as use of machines, tools and materials. They may be described as persistent, precise and methodical. Jobs suited to people scoring high on this dimension include: Gardener, Baker, Machinery Operator, Mechanic, Sports person and Police Officer.

SOCIAL

People scoring high on this factor prefer working with people rather than things. This includes informing, mentoring, training, treating and interacting with others. They may be described as cooperative, friendly, empathic, generous, thoughtful, helpful, responsible, tactful, understanding and having concern for the welfare of others. Jobs suited to people scoring high on this dimension include: School Teacher, Ambulance Officer, Youth Worker, Nurse, Counselor, Flight Attendant, Primary School Teacher, Social Worker, Receptionist and Public Relations.

ARTISTIC

People scoring high on this factor prefer working in unstructured environments that enable them to use their creativity and imagination. They work best when they are in a role where they do not have to follow a clear set of rules and have the freedom and flexibility to use their ingenuity. They may be described as creative, imaginative and visionary. Some examples of jobs suited to people scoring high on this dimension include: Actor, Fashion Designer, Author, Dancer, Photographer, Musician, Journalist, Graphic Designer, Singer, Artist and Entertainer.

JOB/PERSONALITY MISMATCH – UNCOVERING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Take a few minutes now to complete the following exercise to assess the match between your current job and your personality:

1. Using the 6 work personality factors outlined above score yourself out of 10 for where you are most compatible – with a score of 10 representing complete compatibility. Note the highest and the second highest factor as well as the lowest and second lowest factor.
2. Write down all the different activities in your current job. Now go through the list of activities and place a tick against the activities you like the best and a cross against those you dislike the most.
3. Crosscheck the likes and dislikes against your highest and lowest work personality factors. Is there a link between your underlying personality and the activities you dislike in your job? If so, then making some changes beyond simply adjusting your attitude will be needed.
4. If there is a mismatch between your job and your personality, before taking the drastic step of changing jobs or careers

consider how you could adapt your job to allow you to focus more on the compatible activities. Talk this through with a career counselor or life coach before talking to your boss.

By taking the time to properly understand your work personality and how this contributes to job satisfaction you will uncover the elephant in the room and avoid any unnecessary conflict or tension with your boss and co-workers.

Ride the Waves of Life!

HAPPY WORKPLACES: THE ROLE OF FUN & PROFIT



A HAPPY WORKPLACE CAN SEEM LIKE a pipe dream for those of us who haven't yet won the lottery and have to face the challenging Wave of Life of working in a job that is less than satisfying. In a previous chapter I examined Toxic Workplaces and gave readers an overview of the toxic cultures of confusion, favoritism and socialism. To bring some balance, let us also examine some of the important aspects of Happy Workplaces.

If we shine the spotlight on happy workplaces and specifically look at high performing teams we can see two important success factors in every happy workplace: (1) Fun – high engagement among team members; and (2) Profitable performance and achievement of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

Each member of the team needs to fulfill a role important to each of these two success factors in order to create a happy workplace. Let's unpack the roles we may play in each of the two factors of Fun and Profit.

FUN – KEY ROLES IN HIGHLY ENGAGED TEAMS

There are three different types of roles that team members fulfill in creating a highly engaged team with the sense of “fun” that enables

the team to achieve its goals. The three different roles that create Team Engagement are:

1. **The Helper / Supporter** – People who fulfill this role in a team seek to have a deeper understanding of the needs of each individual team member in terms of both personal and career goals and where these fit in the broader organizational strategy. They know what makes their colleagues tick. They create a sense of support and fun when they are able to connect and support their colleagues at an individual level.
2. **The Encourager / Motivator** – People in these roles often set boundaries around their work and personal lives. They seek to support team members with affirmations of support and motivate them by being enthusiastic and encouraging at team meetings. They interact and communicate in a cheerful, fun and positive way despite being mainly work-focused.
3. **The Connector / Communicator** – People who fulfill this role are mainly focused on harmonious relationships within the team. They strive for collective goals and ensure objectives are logical, achievable and clearly communicated to the rest of the team. They like regular interaction and enjoy getting the job done, achieving goals and meeting targets.

PROFIT – KEY ROLES IN HIGH ACHIEVEMENT TEAMS

High Performing teams are able to deliver results and achieve or exceed goals and any “stretch targets” that are set. The key roles identified within a High Performing Team are:

1. **The Visionary / Strategist** – This is a key role in a high performing team. These people are able to assist the team to get results by providing a shared understanding of the role they play in both the goals and objectives of their team and the broader mission and strategy of the organization. They help

the team feel they are connected to organizational goals and contributing to whole-of-company outcomes.

2. **The Driver / Achiever** – People in this role help the team achieve by focusing on team-specific results rather than vision and strategy or personal relationships. They like to work collaboratively to ensure both individual and team-based results are achieved. They strive towards self-improvement, stretch targets and friendly competition.
3. **The Regulator / Enforcer** – People who fulfill this role help a team achieve by focusing on ensuring equitable goals and targets are set. They have a strong belief in individual accountability to deliver on commitments as a foundation for individual and team success. They strive towards this at all times.

FUN & PROFIT: WHAT ROLES DO YOU PLAY?

For a team to succeed each of us needs to be aware of the roles we play in how our team engages effectively (Fun) and achieves results (Profit). If we are not aware of how we contribute to these two success factors we can create an unhappy workplace. Conflict, dysfunction and toxic cultures can develop.

Let's take some time now to examine the two roles you play in the success of your team. Ask yourself the following questions:

- » **Is my Team Balanced** in the focus we place on both achieving results (Profit) and working together effectively (Fun)? If not, where is the imbalance and what can I do about it?
- » **Focusing on Fun – How Our Team Engages:** What is the main role I play in making this a success? What risks and possible areas of conflict would my role have with other roles in the team which may create barriers to team engagement?

- » **Focusing on Profit – How Our Team Gets Results:** What is the main role I play in making this factor a success? What risks and possible areas of conflict would my role have with other roles in the team in promoting high levels of profit and achievement?

By taking the time to understand the roles you play in helping your team have Fun and make a Profit, and being aware of the risks of personality clashes and conflicts with the other team roles, you make the most of your strengths. This enables you to maximize your contribution to the success of the team and create a Happy Workplace!

Ride the Waves of Life!

THREE

RECOVERY & DISORDERS

STRESS WIPEOUTS AND SELF-AWARENESS



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN STRESSED TO the max? What happens when you are fully stressed out? Do you feel extreme levels of tension, anger or sadness? Do you want to run away and escape, or confront the situation as soon as possible?

In order to ride the challenging Waves of Life as opposed to Wiping Out we need to understand our own body’s reaction to stress, and control the stress response to make it more helpful than harmful. In order to understand our stress response let’s first explore the concept of Wiping Out for Surfers.

WIPEOUTS FOR SURFERS

When a surfer wipes out, they lose control of the surfboard, and fall off into the crashing wave. They get held down in the impact zone of the wave and become distressed and disoriented so they don’t know which way is up. There are two categories of wipeouts – minor wipeouts and major wipeouts.

Minor wipeouts are where a surfer falls off while either taking off, duck diving under an oncoming wave, or falling off while turning on the face of the wave—but they are able to either dive back behind the breaking wave or out in front of the wave and avoid the full force of the impact zone.

Major wipeouts are where a surfer goes over the falls. They free fall down the face of a steep wave and then get caught in the impact zone, feeling the full crushing force of the breaking wave. A surfer usually falls victim to a major wipeout on bigger waves when attempting a late take-off, or when simply trying to avoid an impending wave as it breaks directly on top of them.

WIPEOUTS FOR STRESS SURFERS

When a Stress Surfer wipes out, they become unbalanced and unable to “stay on their feet” when the Waves of Life hit. They worry too much, drink too much, make bad lifestyle choices, lose their sense of purpose and meaning—all of which slows down their recovery and makes it harder to surf the Waves of Life coming in behind. When they face stressful situations, they can end up feeling depressed, anxious or stressed. Stress Surfer Wipeouts are akin to the psychological state of “burnout” with two types worth mention:

1. Brownouts
2. Blackouts.

BROWNOUT

As a brownout begins, a Stress Surfer’s initial energy to cope with the challenging Waves of Life gives way to chronic fatigue and irritability. Eating and sleeping patterns change and escapist behaviors such as drinking, partying, shopping binges, or avoiding people or places they find demanding are likely. As a brownout gradually gets worse they become increasingly frustrated and angry and blame everyone else for their difficulties. They can become openly cynical, detached, and critical and are on the verge of a more serious Wipeout—Blackout.

BLACKOUT (FULL SCALE BURNOUT)

Unless the Wipeout process is interrupted, Brownouts eventually turn into Blackouts. This is where a Stress Surfer becomes highly distressed and experiences an overwhelming sense of failure and a major

loss of self-esteem and self-confidence. They can become clinically depressed, anxious or stressed and are at risk of major health problems.

WIPEOUTS: KNOWING YOUR SIGNS OF STRESS!

Everyone is different, and our bodies will have different ways of showing us we are stressed. Maybe the people closest to you can tell you what happens to you when you are stressed, even when you cannot. When my little daughter drew this picture of me and called it “Happy Daddy” —with stress lines all over my face—it was pretty clear I was not aware of my own signs of stress.



- » The symptoms of Stress include: Physical tension, irritability, social withdrawal, poor concentration, tearfulness, anger, increased blood pressure and sleep disturbance. When stress becomes too intense, it can cause anxiety and depression.
- » The symptoms of Anxiety include: Increased nervousness and fearfulness, increased heart rate and breathing, poor concentration, physical tension, panic attacks and forgetfulness.
- » The symptoms of Depression include: Low mood, thoughts of hopelessness, lack of interest in enjoyable activities, social withdrawal, low libido, low energy levels.

What are your signs of stress? How do you know you are at risk of Wiping Out? What are the signs and symptoms that tell you of an impending Minor Wipeout or Brownout? How do you prevent your

stress reactions from taking you “over the falls” of Major Wipeout or Blackout?

Take some time today to increase your self-awareness so next time a challenging Wave of Life hits you can prevent a Stress Wipeout.

Ride the Waves of Life!

ILLNESS, INJURY, RECOVERY & “SURF SAFETY”



ILLNESS AND INJURY AND THE SETBACKS and delays in Recovery that often accompany them are Big Waves of Life. Recently I was visiting one of my friends who was getting quite stressed out by some recent setbacks to his recovery from illness and injury.

We had gone for a long walk along his local beach and as he talked more about his personal health challenges and setbacks in recovery he paused and looked out at the waves breaking in the surf and said:

“You know Pete, when I think about my recovery and setbacks I have had lately, it’s just like getting caught in a Rip. It’s not the Rip that drowns people. The Rip simply carries you away from shore. It’s the fact that people panic and try to swim against it that causes them to drown.

“When I was a kid I never worried about being caught in a Rip as I knew that if I just relaxed and went with the energy of the ocean, once I was out of the Rip behind the breakers, I would find another way back to the shore.

“You know I think I’ll just have to take it one day at a time and accept the setbacks. Struggling and getting frustrated will only delay my recovery further.”

GETTING CAUGHT IN THE RIPS AND CURRENTS OF LIFE

My friend was absolutely right! The “Surf Safety” metaphor about surviving getting caught in a Rip was perfect for his Recovery from Illness. When we have a major injury or illness it is like being caught in a Rip. The first thing we need to do is not panic or get frustrated but stay calm and accept what is happening. Just like the Rip only lasts until we are outside the breaking waves, the initial stage of major injury or illness does not last forever.

But if we push ourselves too hard before we are fully recovered we can aggravate our injuries or relapse with our illness, just like panicking and trying to swim against the Rip. Instead we need to be patient and wait till we are outside the Rip before we swim to shore—and be recovered enough before we begin the journey back to the routines of our normal lives.

4 QUICK TIPS FOR MANAGING ILLNESS, INJURY AND RECOVERY

When you are struggling with the Big Waves of Illness and Injury consider the following tips to balance the 4 Elements of Your Inner Wellbeing.

1. Illness and Injury are Big Waves or Tsunamis depending on how severe they are, so set get your Mindset right to Accept what is going on rather than Worry about the future. Encourage your own recovery and avoid the mindset of Demanding things to be different. Finally don't lash out and Blame but instead be Responsible for your mindsets and make the most of what you have.
2. Emotions—give yourself room to feel and express any negative Emotions in a healthy way so you can avoid any excess baggage and stay focused and be able to problem solve the way ahead. Illness and Injuries cause many disruptions in our lives and sadness is somewhat inevitable when oppor-

tunities are lost, but it does not have to lead to depression if managed in a healthy way.

3. Lifestyle changes can often be massive due to limitations arising from your injury or illness. Be medication compliant when prescribed and look after your sleep, diet and exercise as best you can. Stay in touch with positive friends. Avoid late nights and long injury or illness-focused conversations as it often makes you feel worse.
4. Stay in touch with your Purpose in life. If your illness or injury has disrupted things you do to build a positive legacy then reinvest this energy in family, friends, and interests while your recovery occurs. Be open to making changes to life goals and adapting your mission should major changes be necessary.

Finally, in the words of Winston Churchill “Never Give Up!”

Ride the Waves of Life!

GRIEF AND LOSS ARE HEALTHY EMOTIONS



WHEN A LOVED ONE DIES OR relocates or no longer communicates with you, feelings of sadness, loneliness and other emotions are inevitable.

There was a lot of attention in the media when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) planned to make Grief and Loss a diagnosable psychological disorder. This is very uncool as grief and loss is not a disorder but rather a normal pattern of negative emotions we experience during our lives. Diagnoses are only for abnormal conditions—shame on you APA!

GRIEF IS NATURAL AND NORMAL

Grief and Loss are a normal part of the healing process for emotional wounds. Just like physical wounds such as cuts and abrasions where the wound must first weep, scab, peel, then scar and finally fully recover, the emotional wounds of Grief and Loss also pass through several stages.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her seminal work *On Death and Dying* and more recently in her follow up work *On Grief and Grieving* showed the normal and natural stages of grief and loss. These include initial Denial, then Anger, followed by Bargaining, symptoms of Depression and then finally Acceptance—all important stages. They are passed through in varying degrees by us all on the road to recovery.

Each of these stages is normal in its own right and only a problem if we get stuck in such a stage for too long.

GRIEF CAN BE HEALTHY

For example, initial Denial is not necessarily bad in that suppression of some aspects of a tragedy can help us to pace our feelings of grief. As Kubler-Ross says: “There is a grace in denial. It is nature’s way of letting in only as much as we can handle.”

Anger can also have its productive side. Being angry at the universe or others can give a point of focus where other emotions can leave you detached and numb. Anger can also be productive. So can Bargaining, where you can turn negative energy into promises to lead your life better or make a difference in the future. This can bring honor and a positive legacy from tragedy.

Depression, or the deep and profound sadness about a loved one no longer with us, is an important phase in realizing who we are and what we have lost. Through such profound negative emotions we can recognize the void created in our lives. Once Accepted, we can begin the task of forming new relationships, bringing the best of ourselves forwards with the growth and fruits of change that the grieving process has produced, making us better human beings.

Importantly, the length of time and way in which people behave in each stage of grief varies enormously so having a supportive and flexible approach is vital. However if after a month or two people are not showing signs of shifting stages OR their grief is causing other problems such as relationship conflict, substance use, work and family problems or clinical depression, then professional interventions and diagnoses may be needed.

GRIEF AND THE ELEMENTS OF WELLBEING

When traveling through the dark shadows of grief and loss or supporting someone on this journey, the following tips will help to balance the 4 Elements and Ride the Wave of grief safely into recovery.

1. Grief is the largest wave of all to ride weighing in at 100 points on the Stressful Life Events scale. When hit by this tidal wave or tsunami, the first and most important step is to recognize the wave and brace yourself for the subsequent rollercoaster of physical, mental, social and emotional reactions. Give yourself plenty of space and time to recover, as this is a long-term recovery process.
2. When riding such a large wave as grief, wiping out can happen either gradually or suddenly. Pre-planning how to take time out from major work or family commitments if needed is vital. So is putting your key friends and family on alert should you need to “download” or have a friend close by.
3. Mindsets are where the grief and loss rollercoaster hits the strongest. Denial and Anger can trigger unhealthy patterns of Blame and Demand, and Bargaining and Depression can elevate your tendency to Worry. Regularly assess your thinking patterns to make sure you stay on the healthy side of the equation using the Mindsets of Acceptance, Encouragement and Responsibility to stay in control of the grieving process and nurture yourself and those around you.
4. Emotions are extremely powerful forms of energy in grief. Avoid over-focusing on negative emotions and have healthy distractions and good social support and interest to shift your mood when emotions are overwhelming.
5. Lifestyle choices are critical to successful recovery from grief or the despair that leads to diagnosis of clinical conditions. Respecting your sleep, diet and exercise needs is critical.

Recognizing when these are not working and making adjustments is vital to preventing more serious problems.

6. Purpose can be a make or break zone during times of grief and loss. When faced with the loss of a loved one our core sense of purpose can be completely challenged. It is at times like this when the support of family and friends, the faith in a higher power or God, or the commitment to make a positive difference to others can be the salvation that leads us out of depression and into acceptance and forward into life.

Ride the Waves of Life!

DEPRESSION: WIPEOUTS & RECOVERY



IT IS A NORMAL EXPERIENCE TO feel down, sad and low at times, particularly when stressful waves of life hit us or those we care about.

Usually these feelings of sadness resolve and fade away as other good things occur in our lives and time passes.

However, for some of us these feelings of sadness and low mood can be experienced in a severe form of Wipeout and are maintained for longer periods of time. This type of more severe and longstanding sadness and low mood is often referred to as depression.

DEPRESSION—WIPEOUTS & THE IMPACT ZONE

Depression is a clinical condition where severe and long-term sadness and low mood occur. The impact zone of depression also includes other symptoms such as:

- » Weight loss or weight gain
- » Difficulty sleeping or excessive sleeping
- » Loss of interest in pleasurable and fun activities
- » Poor attention, concentration and memory
- » Irritability and restlessness
- » Re-occurring negative thoughts about yourself, your current situation and your future.

Depression does not resolve overnight but rather takes time to fix. More severe conditions may also require specialized treatment and support from mental health professionals.

DEPRESSION—RECOVERY & THE 4 ELEMENTS

In order to begin the journey to overcome Depression or prevent sadness and low mood from getting any worse, we need to implement strategies from *The Stress Surfer's 4 Elements of Inner Wellbeing*.

1. MINDSETS—WORRY AND NEGATIVE THINKING

Worrying, or excessive rumination on possible future negative events, and negative thinking about yourself, your world and the future are frequently occurring types of negative-thinking patterns people with depression experience.

When the Mindset of Worry takes over, fight back with thoughts of the present—the here and now—and the mindset of Acceptance.

When Negative thoughts take over, think positively.

- » Make a list of your skills, talents, and achievements.
- » Identify the three beautiful things in your environment.
- » Reminisce about a time when you were really happy, successful, or content.

2. EMOTIONS

Low moods are the powerful emotions of depression. Coping strategies for Depression include:

- » Seeking Social Support—talking with colleagues, family or friends, avoiding excessive discussion of negative thoughts and feelings but rather focusing on positives.
- » Distraction and Activity—Keep yourself busy and your mind focused on tasks. Avoid unstructured time where your mind may wander and dwell on negative issues.

- » Problem Solving is an important strategy to develop solutions when you need to implement changes in your work, home, finances or interests to better manage your emotional energy.
- » Finally, practicing regular relaxation activities such as slow deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation is vital to manage any additional tension or stress.

3. LIFESTYLE

To recover from Depression you need to carefully manage your lifestyle—in particular your sleep, diet, exercise and interests.

- » Changes in sleeping patterns (both excessive sleeping and insomnia) are common in individuals experiencing depression. Make sure you get up at roughly the same time every morning regardless of how tired you feel. Avoid sleeping during the day or taking naps in the early evening before bedtime.
- » Maintain a healthy diet and reduce tea and coffee intake to a maximum of 4 cups per day. Do not have any tea or coffee after 3 or 4 pm.
- » Interests and Exercise are also important as people with Depression often stop doing previously enjoyable interests and stop exercising.
- » Be as active as possible despite fatigue. Try to keep engaging in activities to fill up any spare hours of the day. Activities may include exercise, socializing with friends and family, or even routine household chores.
- » If activity seems impossible, try to force yourself to do three things each day. Even the smallest amount of activity is better than no activity at all.

4. PURPOSE

Stay connected to your Purpose in life.

Many people with Depression have negative thinking patterns about themselves, their world and their future.

Their sense of purpose can become lost in a sense of hopelessness about their current mood and circumstances. They can lose touch with the clarity they may have had about life goals and purpose prior to becoming depressed, and are at risk of making bad life decisions.

Do not make any major life decisions, such as quitting your job or getting married or separated while depressed. Remember, you may not be seeing yourself, the world, or the future in an objective way when you are depressed.

Stay connected to your pre-depression purpose and focus—do something each day. Small acts of kindness or small daily challenges will help you maintain your connection through the recovery process.

Ride the Waves of Life!

ANGER & AGGRESSION: WIPEOUTS & RECOVERY



ANGER IS COMMONLY DEFINED AS FEELINGS of frustration, annoyance, and hostility. Where anger is more intense, its more extreme expression—aggression—is defined by a range of threatening and harmful verbal and physical behaviors directed at others.

Both anger and aggression are important problems that cause a range of personal, family, social and workplace troubles.

ANGER—WIPEOUTS & THE IMPACT ZONE

While anger is a normal human emotion, intense anger and aggression in extreme forms can lead to violent behavior, criminal charges, separation and divorce, termination of employment and a complete breakdown in a person's social environment. This creates the risk of secondary psychological problems such as depression.

Effective anger management skills are vital to prevent harm to self and others, and prevent secondary social problems and possible further psychological distress.

People with anger problems can get into trouble not due to the anger itself but due to its intensity and subsequent aggressive behavior such as yelling at others, hitting, pushing, assaulting others, breaking objects.

Often people with anger problems either feel angry towards themselves for their lack of self-control or may feel justified in their actions because of the provocation from others, despite the subsequent negative consequences.

ANGER—RECOVERY & THE 4 ELEMENTS

Many Waves of Life can make us angry, but no matter what waves life throws at you, do not let anger turn into aggression.

Practice staying calm. Don't give up and Wipeout in a sea of aggression and risk hurting yourself or the people around you. The Stress Surfer's tips to manage anger use the 4 Elements of Wellbeing.

1. MINDSETS

Mindsets of Acceptance and Responsibility are better than Demanding and Blame!

Anger is a normal emotion but unhealthy outbursts of aggression are a result of the mindsets of Blame and Demanding—thinking that your reactions are entirely the other party's fault and that they "should" have acted differently or done what you had wanted them to do.

Accept that you cannot change what has now happened and be Responsible for your own reactions—choosing to stay calm and make healthy decisions.

2. EMOTIONS

Manage Your Emotions—Anger is a very powerful emotion.

Be present—accept your emotions and be sensitive to increasing or decreasing levels of anger. Learn to know your own warning signs and practice relaxation techniques to stay calm.

If stuck in a difficult situation distract yourself when unable to do anything and Problem Solve when action is needed.

Don't get over-focused on what is making you angry nor give up on looking for a solution when needed.

3. LIFESTYLE

Stay fit, eat healthy, sleep well and keep exercising—be flexible and creative in your approach to keep these things going.

When you are angry it can be harder to sleep and exercise can be neglected. Exercise is a great way to burn off the unhealthy energy that anger can create and also helps you sleep better.

Avoid excess caffeine, alcohol, late nights and long angry conversations with similarly upset people as it often makes you feel worse.

4. PURPOSE

Re-evaluate and reconnect with your Purpose in life.

If the Waves of Life that have caused your anger have changed the way you see your purpose in life and legacy, then redirect this energy. Engage in small acts of kindness with family and friends. Pursue challenging goals with your interests and health and fitness, while you re-evaluate and adjust your sense of purpose.

Ride the Waves of Life!

ANXIETY: WIPEOUTS & RECOVERY



ANXIETY IS A HELPFUL AND HEALTHY reaction when faced with a seriously threatening situation but a very unhelpful and unhealthy reaction when you are simply worried about something.

Anxiety describes the physical, psychological, and behavioral changes that allow you to deal with threat or danger. These changes are known as the “fight-or-flight” response.

Signs of the fight-or-flight response include:

- » The mind becomes hyperalert—scared and worrying about possible harm to self or others.
- » Heart rate speeds up, blood pressure rises and breathing becomes fast and shallow.
- » Sweating increases, your mouth becomes dry and muscles become tense and trembling.

ANXIETY—WIPEOUTS & THE IMPACT ZONE

The fight-or-flight response is of no use for any situation that doesn't require running away or fighting. As such, it becomes a Wipe-out in most situations which we find ourselves worrying about.

It can be totally debilitating to find ourselves in the impact zone of being scared, hyperalert, tense, sweating and hyperventilating when we are either:

- » Missing someone or leaving someone (Separation Anxiety)
- » Apprehensive about an upcoming exam, sporting contest, competition or presentation (Performance Anxiety)
- » Seeing something that is usually harmless yet we are afraid of (e.g. spider phobias etc).

However, because the fight-or-flight response was useful in our ancestors—when humans had to deal with physical dangers—this response is still a part of our functioning.

In order to overcome anxiety, we need to manage the effects of the fight-or-flight response using the Stress Surfer's 4 Elements.

ANXIETY—RECOVERY & THE 4 ELEMENTS

Many waves of life can cause anxiety. No matter what waves life throws at you, the moment you start to feel anxiety put strategies into place to reverse the fight-or-flight response and stay calm and focused.

These are The Stress Surfer's tips to manage Anxiety use the 4 Elements of Wellbeing.

1. MINDSETS

Worry is the dis-ease and Acceptance is the cure!

Worry is the Mindset that causes the dis-ease of Anxiety. Worrying about possible harm to yourself or others—be that missing someone (separation anxiety), failing at an important task (performance anxiety) or fear of harm from a usually harmless creature (i.e., spider phobia)—can be all-consuming and incredibly distressing.

Instead of the dis-ease of Worrying adopt a mindset of Acceptance as the cure. Acceptance is about being present—living in the here and now. Acceptance means you do not need to worry about harm in the future, nor failing at tasks you have not yet tried, nor possible pain and

suffering from the bite of a potentially harmless creature which has not bitten you.

2. EMOTIONS

Anxiety is a very powerful emotion. The physiological symptoms of fight-or-flight need to be reversed using relaxation techniques such as slow deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.

Learn to know your own early warning signs of anxiety, and practice breathing and relaxation techniques as a preventative strategy.

3. LIFESTYLE

Stay fit, eat healthy, sleep well and keep exercising.

When you are anxious it can be much harder to sleep. Anxiety can leave you feeling exhausted yet unable to sleep. Often, getting out of bed and writing down your worries can help you to sleep.

Exercise is a great way to burn physical energy to balance the emotional energy being spent, and can help you sleep better.

Avoid excess caffeine, sugars and alcohol, and conversations with similarly anxious people, as these things often make your anxiety worse.

4. PURPOSE

Reconnect with your Purpose in life.

Many anxious people have a more deeply rooted fear of dying, and uncertainty about the purpose and direction of their life. Alternatively, the waves of life may have changed how you can achieve your sense of purpose and life goals, leaving you anxious and uncertain.

Reduce your anxiety by reconnecting with your sense of purpose and setting realistic goals and challenges for yourself, aligned to the reality and opportunities of your circumstances.

Ride the Waves of Life!

PAIN & THE WAVES OF LIFE



I WAS ON HOLIDAYS RECENTLY PLAYING with my kids when I severely strained my right shoulder and upper back whilst “piggybacking” them around a park. At first I thought it was just a pulled muscle or two and that a bit of rest and recovery over a few days should put things right – but it didn’t...

The pain stayed with me despite my rest and recovery attempts. Over several days the initial acute pain of injury subsided. However, the chronic ongoing aching sensation began to interfere with sleep and mobility as I tried to get around and complete routine household tasks. The pain made it hard for me to concentrate and more irritable to be around. Within a week or so I was feeling really frustrated and upset about the impact this nagging painful injury was having on my life.

This was not the first time in my life pain had been a major problem. In my younger years, severe injuries to my shoulders had prevented me becoming a professional full-time climber and mountaineer. This caused a major rethink of my life – leading me into my current profession...

THE EXPERIENCE OF PAIN

Pain is a distressing bodily sensation that affects everyone at various times during their lifespan. Pain can arise as a result of:

- » severe physical injuries, such as major strains to muscles in the back, legs, arms and neck; inflammation or damage to tendons, bones and joints; major burns and lacerations
- » chronic health problems, such as cancer; degenerative diseases; arthritis; emphysema
- » less severe more common conditions, such as headaches; period pain; gastrointestinal upsets; colds and flus.

The experience of pain is universal. However, the severity and duration of pain symptoms differentiates episodes of minor pain and discomfort from more severe acute and chronic pain.

Acute pain refers to symptoms of severe pain, distress and discomfort as a result of an identifiable condition with the symptoms occurring for less than three months. People with acute pain usually receive medical treatments to resolve or manage the condition causing the pain. They may also be taught pain management skills to improve (a) short term coping skills to manage potential negative thinking and (b) reduce physical tension associated with secondary stress and anxiety during the recovery period.

Chronic pain is a more pervasive and long-term condition. Pain symptoms continue despite medical intervention, or despite a lack of clear diagnosis. Chronic pain patients often report severe and distressing pain which may be inconsistent with medical opinions. The endless search for a medical diagnosis and cure, combined with inconsistent medical evidence, often leads to immense frustration, anger, anxiety and depression, further complicating and increasing the severity of pain symptoms. Chronic pain is caused by several different factors including biological, psychological and social factors – and given the complexity of chronic pain, it requires specialized coping skills and support strategies.

THE WAVE OF PAIN: DR PETE'S PAIN MANAGEMENT TIPS

When you are in pain and unexpected Waves of Life occur it can be much harder to cope with even the smallest waves. Stress wipeouts are much more likely – unless of course you have great pain management skills.

Pain Management skills consist of (1) coping skills to manage potential negative thinking and physical tension (2) broader coping skills to manage secondary depression and stress (3) more advanced relaxation and mindfulness techniques (4) activity scheduling, pacing and (5) life goals and disability adjustment issues.

Here are the pain management techniques I personally find most helpful:

1. CHANGING MINDSETS

Shifting from Worry to Acceptance and Demanding to Encouraging using the ABCDE techniques. When I am in pain my mindset can make things so much worse – or so much better!

On many occasions I have found myself fretting and worrying when I felt a twinge of pain in an old injury site – concerned I had re-injured myself and was back to square one again after months of physiotherapy and rehabilitation. I had to learn to control this Worry and be much more Accepting of the gradual recovery process. I needed to accept small setbacks without “catastrophizing” them into full blown relapses with accompanying anxiety and depressive symptoms.

The other mindset trap I regularly fell into was being too Demanding on my body to recover quickly rather than a more Encouraging and nurturing approach.

2. PACING & ACTIVITY SCHEDULING

Another favorite pain management technique I use is called Pacing or Activity Scheduling. I had to learn how to slow down and lower my expectations about what I could or couldn't do/achieve each day when

my pain levels were high. I also had to learn to feel satisfied with smaller achievements and improvements, rather than trying to do too much too quickly only to cause injuries to flare up and pain levels to increase.

3. MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Learning to simply be “present” and aware of my pain without reacting to it through Mindfulness Meditation was extremely helpful in managing chronic pain problems. I used a few different strategies but “Counting Down” remains one of my favorites for re-grounding myself when pain becomes overwhelming. This involves observing five things in my environment I can See, Feel and Hear and then repeating the exercise down to 4 things....3 things... and so on.

4. SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS

In amongst the existential frustration of slow recovery or the limitations and lost opportunities of debilitating injuries, engaging in Small Acts of Kindness to yourself and your loved ones can still make each day so much brighter. I like to eat a favorite food, watch a great movie on TV or listen to my favorite music each day to be kind to myself. I also take the time to give positive and encouraging feedback to close friends and family each day to “pay it forwards” and brighten up my day when pain may otherwise make life dull and dreary.

So if you have to manage pain at times in your life – be it acute pain or chronic pain – remember the importance of pain management techniques. They can lower the intensity of pain and give you more energy to focus on the challenges and opportunities of each day with a positive attitude to make the most of your life!

Ride the Waves of Life!

CAN YOU REALLY CONTROL HOW HAPPY YOU FEEL?



*“If you want the joy of rainbows, you gotta
put up with the rain.” ~ Unknown*

I HAVE SPENT MY ENTIRE LIFE believing you can change how happy you feel at any given moment. I have posted numerous blogs on the subject, tweeted and re-tweeted over a thousand comments, and have written five books on living a happy life and improving your wellbeing.

More recently though, I read a series of articles in response to a social media campaign called “100 Days of Happiness”. A number of leading Psychologists and Psychiatrists were openly critical of the notion that you could be continuously happy for 100 days. Here’s an excerpt from one article summarizing what many experts from around the world had to say about being continuously happy:

“According to the site (100 Days of Happiness) 71 per cent of people who took up the challenge were unable to complete it, citing ‘time’ as the main reason. But according to clinical, health and forensic psychologist Dr Bob Montgomery it simply won’t work because it’s an impossible challenge to begin with. ... As humans, we can’t ever be happy all of the time. ... Most people have mixed feelings in any single day and it’s important to accept the good with the bad. ... If you want the chance to feel good you need to accept there’s a risk of feeling bad.”

BEING HAPPY – WHAT WE CAN & CAN'T CHANGE

FIRSTLY THE BAD NEWS: WHAT WE CAN'T CHANGE BY OURSELVES

When it comes to feeling happy there are some important factors that we cannot change by ourselves. These are Genetics & Biologically-driven mood states. There is no doubt that genetics and our own biological mood state can impair our ability to feel “happy”.

Research has clearly shown there is a genetically inherited vulnerability for depression and anxiety disorders in some people. There are a multitude of medical conditions that can interfere with normal hormone levels regulating mood. In addition, there are life stages where our bodies undergo significant changes, temporarily lowering our mood. In these cases a very important part of being able to feel “happy” is related to receiving appropriate medical treatment.

BUT... I can tell you from firsthand experience of working with hundreds of people that have the genetic and biological handicaps described above, and who are not yet experiencing the full benefit of medical treatment, that serious and continued effort into managing the 4 Elements of their Wellbeing resulted in them being able to experience happy moments despite their mood state or medical conditions. More importantly, it prevented any worsening of their condition and maximized their recovery.

THE GOOD NEWS: WHAT WE CAN CHANGE BY OURSELVES

When it comes to feeling happy, some of the most important factors are within our control – namely our approach to managing The 4 Elements of Wellbeing: Mindsets, Emotions, Lifestyle and Purpose.

1. MINDSETS & FEELING HAPPY

Mindsets – The power of the mind is truly amazing! Our ability to stay focused on positive aspects of challenging situations or remain hopeful and optimistic despite problems we may face is vital when it comes to creating the potential for feeling happy.

The Mindset of Acceptance and living in the present moment will always be better than the Mindset of Worry and negative thinking about the future. The Mindset of Encouraging will always be a better way to think about relationships than the Mindset of Demanding and trying to control other people against their will. The Mindset of Responsibility will always create more self-empowerment as opposed to the disillusionment and helplessness created by the Mindset of Blame.

So if your Mindsets allow you to Accept and live in the moment, Encourage people rather than dominate them, and be Self-Responsible rather than blaming others, you will think in ways that will invariably lead to happiness despite the ups and downs of life.

2. EMOTIONS & FEELING HAPPY

Emotions – There are only four Primary Emotions (Fear, Sadness, Anger, & Joy) and only one of these is linked to happiness (Joy). Clearly we need to manage our emotions to maximize the Joy in our lives and minimize the other three. However, let us never forget that all four primary emotions are normal and need to be felt to some degree as part of living a normal life. To manage our emotions successfully we need to identify the situations that trigger our emotions, Problem Solve these situations where change is possible, or use Coping Skills where we must endure situations we cannot change.

3. LIFESTYLE & FEELING HAPPY

Lifestyle – When it comes to feeling happy the lifestyle factors of Sleep, Diet, Exercise and Social Support are core foundations to maintaining our wellbeing and thus being able to feel happy.

- » **Sleep** – a guaranteed way to feel “Unhappy” is to not get enough sleep and become tired, irritable and moody. Getting enough sleep would arguably be the most important foundation of being able to feel happy in life – yet most of us do not pay sufficient attention to getting enough sleep!
- » **Diet** – The healthy food pyramid has been around for decades reminding us of the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables and the downsides of sugars, fats and caffeine. Yet how many of us have a good diet? Most of us feel a sense of happiness and clarity after a strong coffee or tea, yet suffer the tension and agitation that invariably follows. Many of us are also far too familiar with the “sugar high” of snacks and chocolates, only to suffer the “sugar low” when the initial rush is gone. Diet is also arguably as important as sleep in creating the foundations of feeling happy.
- » **Exercise** – There is an overwhelming amount of evidence to show that regular intense exercise produces “happy chemicals” or endorphins in the brain that lead us to feel happy. Despite this, the majority of us do not get enough exercise. We miss out on the “happy chemicals” but also on the other benefits such as improved sleep and weight management.
- » **Social Support** – There is an old proverb, “birds of a feather flock together”. The people you associate with will either help you be positive and feel happy and optimistic about life or make you feel negative, angry and frustrated. Are you spending time with the right people to help you feel happy?

4. PURPOSE & FEELING HAPPY

One of the big secrets to happiness is having a clear sense of Purpose in your life. People who have a strong sense of purpose are almost always “happier” than those who do not – regardless of the level of wealth, poverty, fame or status. If anything, there seems to be a pattern of increasing unhappiness as people acquire extreme wealth or fame.

I am sure you have seen the laments of movie stars and millionaires who talk about the price of their success and how much happier they were in their earlier years when they had a much stronger sense of purpose and ambition to succeed. The only way out of their newfound unhappiness will be to gain some meaningful and challenging goals in their lives where Purpose will once again rise like a phoenix and their sense of happiness will return.

THE ANSWER: CAN YOU REALLY CONTROL HOW HAPPY YOU FEEL?

So let us return to the question: “Can you really control how happy you feel?”

My answer is YES! However, the height of the feeling of Joy you experience and how often it happens will largely depend on: (1) the effort you make to Balance the 4 Elements of Your Wellbeing, (2) surrounding yourself with optimistic and positive people, and (3) your ability to proactively maintain your health.

Also remember that as you maximize your daily happiness, don't forget we must all ride the highs and lows of life just as the saying goes: “If you want the joy of rainbows, you gotta put up with the rain.”

Ride the Waves of Life

FOUR

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIPS & THE WAVES OF LIFE



WITH ALL THE PRESSURES FACING MANY couples and families today, it is no wonder that divorce rates are hovering at 50% in most western nations. Forming new relationships during mid-life and living in blended families are increasingly frequent challenges faced by many people (including me).

SO WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR RELATIONSHIPS?

Where is the love that keeps us together and why do things change? How is it that the challenging Waves of Life seem to bring out the best in some relationships yet bring out the worst in others? Why do some people change over time and grow apart? Why do we struggle to spend quality time with the people we claim we love the most?

And when we do spend quality time together why do the topics of finances, children's issues and household chores seem to become more important than our love for each other, or revisiting happy memories and planning new exciting adventures together?

The questions come easily to many of us but the answers seem to be either:

1. Difficult to define
2. Simple in theory but almost impossible to put into practice.

RELATIONSHIPS: PREVENTING WIPEOUTS & RIDING THE WAVES OF LIFE

Being in a relationship can be both a source of comfort, support and fun, and also, at times, a source of distress, frustration and despair. Relationships go through phases of development with normal highs and lows in attraction, energy and enthusiasm. These fluctuations are also influenced by other issues including:

- » Our own level of tiredness
- » Skills in communicating, problem solving, and managing stress
- » Our ability to deal with Waves of Life in areas such as work, family and finances
- » Our own dreams, goals and expectations.

DYSFUNCTIONAL PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

There are a range of challenging Waves of Life which can put a lot of strain on a relationship. However a Wipeout will only occur if the couple cannot manage the Wave successfully and instead develop dysfunctional patterns of interaction namely:

1. Inability to Communicate Effectively
2. Inadequate Partner Support
3. Lack of Quality Time and Enjoyable Shared Experiences.

Let's take a look at each one of these issues and look at how to prevent our relationship from Wiping Out when faced with the Challenging Waves of Life.

1. INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Poor communication is an issue in practically all problems within relationships. The way people talk (or don't talk) to one another

can cause great distress and tension within a relationship. Examples of poor communication patterns include:

- » Demand—withdrawal
- » Labeling, blame
- » Emotional invalidation and ineffective listening.

There are many strategies to enhance relationship communication. Some key tips for relationship communication include:

- » Removing all distractions when trying to communicate
- » Not speaking while your partner is speaking
- » Most importantly, building your partner up and using encouraging words when speaking.

2. INADEQUATE PARTNER SUPPORT

In order for a relationship to survive and flourish, each partner needs to feel that they are receiving adequate support. Having your needs met is a combination of both having realistic expectations about your partner's ability to meet your needs and creating an environment where they are aware of, and able to meet, your needs for support. Common problems in this area include:

- » Having unrealistic expectations about your needs
- » Placing unrealistic demands on your partner
- » Failing to communicate and problem solve to enable your needs to be met.

Increasing partner support and meeting needs requires many skills and energy. Key strategies to promote partner support include:

- » Taking time out to identify what your needs for support are
- » Communicating clearly to your partner your expectations and check their understanding
- » Being forgiving and patient as humans aren't perfect.

3. LACK OF QUALITY TIME AND ENJOYABLE SHARED EXPERIENCES

This is another area that frequently causes problems in relationships.

- » Lack of quality time can be a problem when couples are tired and distracted, and when they do get time together, end up arguing or failing to enjoy each other's company.
- » Lack of shared enjoyable activities can be a problem when couples don't have shared interests which they can both participate in and enjoy together.

To increase quality time and enjoyable shared experiences try the following:

- » Firstly, plan ahead for regular time together and ensure the quality by removing distractions and staying focused on pleasant topics and experiences.
- » Secondly make enjoyable shared experiences an ongoing growth area by expanding your shared interests and trying new things together. Review them so that you develop even more enjoyable activities together.

GETTING IT RIGHT....

By working on communication, increasing the effectiveness of partner support and setting a schedule for more quality time together, most relationship Wipeouts can be avoided. Furthermore, while relationships are definitely a two-way street and both parties need to be committed, it is fair to say that "the harder you work on your relationship together, the luckier in love you become!"

Ride the Waves of Life!

HAPPY FAMILIES: CLEAR BOUNDARIES & INCLUSIVE PLANNING



WHEN I THINK ABOUT GROWING UP, my happiest times were when I felt like I had a clear understanding of our family's rules and boundaries and also when I was included in discussions about some of the big decisions we made regarding the Waves of Life we faced.

Conversely, I was most uneasy and uncertain when there was conflict in the house or when my parents were not communicating and I would be left out of the discussions about what was happening and told only as changes were occurring.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES: THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY RULES

Having a clear set of short, simple and easy to understand family rules is widely accepted among Child Psychologists as being an essential foundation for building happy families and confident children. In order for a child to feel genuinely happy and confident they must first feel secure and safe in their relationship with their parents and siblings.

One of the first ways we feel safe in life is through understanding boundaries about what is and is not acceptable behavior as infants. Babies and very small children quickly learn about the rewards they get when they are kind and sweet through the smiles and cuddles of their

parents. Conversely, they sense the tension and stress in their parents' voices when they are unsettled and/or misbehaving.

As we grow and learn to walk, talk and begin socializing with other children, we quickly learn that there are a range of rules and expectations around us. Healthy families make these rules clear and obvious and make the rewards and punishments around these rules fair and easy to understand. Through this process a child learns to have confidence and certainty both in the rules and how to behave to maximize their happiness.

Conversely, unhealthy families do not make rules explicit or clear and adjust their parenting style depending on their own mood or tiredness which sends constant mixed messages to their children. As a result, anxious and oppositional behaviors can emerge with the children learning to "split" or play-off one parent against another. This increases their oppositional and defiant behavior as well as leaving them feeling confused and uncertain about how to get additional love and affection. In turn they become somewhat helpless, anxious and withdrawn.

By having clear and simple Family Rules and communicating clear boundaries you give your children certainty and confidence not only in the wider family environment but also within themselves. They have a clear understanding about what they need to do to be well behaved and experience positive rewards, and in turn a sense of greater happiness. By not communicating your boundaries clearly and letting your own mood or tiredness drive how you enforce rewards and consequences of the rules and boundaries you set, you will create inconsistencies and uncertainties. This leads to unhappy children who are more anxious and helpless and may react with misbehavior.

SHARING THE JOURNEY: INCLUSIVE PLANNING

The second important pillar of a happy family is based on the notion of "inclusive planning." The term "inclusive" means to involve people. This does not mean to give them an equal say nor does it mean to necessarily agree with their ideas but rather to take them on the

journey with you so they understand why things are happening and are better prepared to manage change.

Being inclusive does have one important proviso—keep in mind your child’s age and comprehension level when engaging with them about any future plans. Use language and a format they can comprehend. Also, while seeking their input is important, ensuring they are given an appropriate amount of say in a matter relative to their role in the family is essential.

Giving children too much information can be overwhelming if they don’t have the ability to understand. Similarly, failing to inform them of relevant information at all is disrespectful of their legitimate membership of the family. It will make any changes more likely to be distressing as they will be unexpected and sudden.

When including children in family plans it is important their input is treated fairly according to their role. Do not belittle their input if the decisions being made have a big impact on them. Also do not let them have the final say in matters if they are not the true decision maker, as this distorts their role and disempowers you as the parent—teaching them a bad life lesson.

When inclusive planning is done well a major event like a family holiday, relocation to another house or renovations and extensions can become a fun adventure that everyone feels a part of. Where plans are not inclusive, family members can feel surprised and upset by sudden changes, or resentful and belittled by not having input into their own future.

INCLUSIVE PLANNING & CLEAR BOUNDARIES: YOUR FAMILY’S CURRENT STATUS?

Take a moment to stop and reflect on how well your family is doing at the moment on these two important pillars of happy families.

1. Do you have clear and simple family rules and boundaries? Are these easily understood by all family members? Are any consequences and rewards implemented fairly and quickly?
2. Do you have regular family meetings to give opportunities for inclusive planning of upcoming events and decisions? Are family members views and opinions factored into decisions appropriately?

What are the next steps you can take to make these two important pillars even stronger in your family to further increase your family's happiness?

By setting clear boundaries around Family Rules and being inclusive in holding regular family meetings and seeking input at appropriate levels for any plans and decisions, you can almost guarantee that a clear, strong and happy family identity will form and be able to withstand any Waves of Life over the years ahead.

Ride the Waves of Life!

REMOTE WORKERS: FAMILIES & THE WAVES OF LIFE



DR PETE OFFICIALLY BECAME A FIFO recently! FIFOs are a rapidly growing workforce of people who “Fly In and Fly Out” of regional, remote or overseas locations where they work while having their home and family in another location.

The Waves of Life for a remote worker can have some serious ups and downs.

On the positive side, we get the variety of regular changes in locations, and meet new and interesting people, plus the chance to regularly have a break from the routines and pressures of home and family.

On the negative side, we have to manage the expectations of relationships, friends, families in our normal life—even when we are away. We have to deal with the challenges of maintaining our own personal health, with loneliness at times, and keeping up our own healthy lifestyle—especially exercise and diet when our work locations may give us very limited options.

When we get the balance right, being a remote worker can be a really interesting and fun adventure.

When we get this wrong, we can experience a range of challenging Waves of Life in our relationships, family, personal health and stress levels. If we don’t adapt quickly, we risk major Wipeouts in both our work and personal lives.

Let's take a look at the challenging Waves of Life remote workers face when on deployment.

CHALLENGING WAVES OF LIFE FOR FIFO WORKERS ON DEPLOYMENT

1. SLEEP AND FATIGUE

Issues for remote workers include:

- » Adjusting to changed climate
- » Sharing rooms with others
- » Additional light or noise
- » Changes to shift patterns
- » Uncomfortable bedding.

Wipeout Prevention:

- » Listen to music before bed to relax.
- » Use an eye mask and earplugs for noise and light.
- » Have bedclothes to match climate.
- » When shift patterns change, adjust sleep/wake time in days prior.
- » Take preferred sheets/pillowcases to replace uncomfortable bedding.

2. PERSONAL HEALTH

Issues for remote workers include:

- » Having appropriate medications
- » Having medical, dietary and personal health supplies to maintain health and hygiene.

Wipeout Prevention:

- » Prior to travel, research the health risks for specific location and visit travel doctor for immunization and prescriptions.
- » Fill back-up script for medications, have extra supplies of needed medicines, health and dietary products.

- » Try to get regular exercise and have a healthy diet while away.

3. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Issues for remote workers include:

- » Unfamiliar places with differing levels of personal space
- » Sharing living space with room-mates with different tidiness and hygiene expectations.

Wipeout Prevention:

- » Bring personal reading light and small belongings that reinforce routine.
- » Have secure storage space for any books, music, note pads etc.
- » Have clothesline and spaces to store clothes.
- » Have good communication skills to negotiate issues with roommates.
- » Have clothing suitable to the climate and hygiene products for yourself.

4. RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY

Issues for remote workers include:

- » Maintaining contact and support while away from partner and family.
- » Managing any loneliness or sadness on deployment.

Wipeout Prevention:

- » Spend quality time with partner and family pre/post deployment.
- » While on deployment keep to a regular schedule of phone contact and use email and texts to regularly sending supportive positive messages.
- » Also make friends with coworkers and get involved in group activities.

5. CONFLICT: AWARENESS OF DIVERSITY

Issues for remote workers include:

- » Cross-cultural and personality—quickly adjusting to working with people with differing personalities and cultural expectations to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Wipeout Prevention:

- » Cross cultural—make sure you understand both your own and other people’s cultural issues and expectations to prevent unnecessary conflict.
- » Personality—recognize and accept different personality types and be self-aware to prevent personality clashes.

6. RELAXATION AND EXERCISE

Issues for remote workers include:

- » Change of routine.
- » Limited time or access to normal relaxation activities and exercise preferences.

Wipeout Prevention:

- » Take books, journals, personal DVDs, laptop computers, iPads etc. with power supply adapters.
- » Take walking shoes and exercise clothes. Quickly learn available exercise options on deployment and get a routine established.

PREPARE A WELLBEING PLAN

I personally like to use a simple wellbeing plan to map out my approach to every deployment and make sure I have got a Wipeout prevention strategy for each of the Waves of Life I face.

Remember the positives for FIFOs include variety of people, locations and experiences. Watch out for the negatives of strained relationships and lifestyle problems. Plan ahead and get it right so that being a FIFO will be a fun and rewarding adventure!

BEING APART: THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE



QUESTION: WHAT DO REMOTE WORKERS AND separated families have in common?

Answer: Having to cope with regularly Being Apart from loved ones.

Occasionally having to spend time away from people you love is not an overly large Wave of Life and indeed as the saying goes, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” However, Being Apart as a regular event—which is common to both remote workers and separated families—can create attachment problems and unending cycles of grief and loss as well as dysfunctional patterns of sadness and loneliness for many people.

Remote workplaces are an increasingly common part of many jobs today. People working in specific construction, mining or infrastructure jobs are often away for weeks at a time. Some of my friends work in consulting and sales roles and also have to travel and spend time apart from loved ones. Also many families across the world are increasingly having the breadwinner live in another city, state or country while the family either remains in their hometown or prepares to re-

locate—often many months later. In these situations Being Apart can lead to serious attachment problems and distress.

Separated families also face the challenge of Being Apart, as parents see the children on a shared-care schedule of contact. While they may enjoy the benefits of rest and recovery when the children are not around, they also face the adjustment of regularly changing routines and social patterns as they cycle in and out of living with their kids. Recently I was attending a support group for parents in separated families and the emotional impact of Being Apart was by far the greatest source of stress among participants. It was described as “a wound that refuses to heal.”

BEING APART: FROM HONEYMOON TO NIGHTMARE

Being Apart from loved ones does have some genuine positive benefits – particularly in the initial stages or “Honeymoon”. You get a chance to rest, reflect and have some time alone and with other people to better balance and shape your perspective. This can then increase the quality and strength of your relationships later by having new experiences to share and perspectives to discuss with your loved one when you next see them. You also get to harness the energy of missing your loved one in a positive way, and have an increased focus on their importance in your life. This makes time spent together of greater quality.

On the other hand, ongoing cycles of Being Apart, if not well managed, can become a “Nightmare” where your sadness, loneliness, grief and loss overwhelm your ability to maintain positive relationships with loved ones. You may adopt negative attitudes, make poor lifestyle choices and end up unable to maintain your sense of purpose about your relationship when you are away. When you return you cannot refocus and reattach in a healthy way—leading to major adjustment problems such as arguments and avoidance when you would much rather be close and caring of each other. When this cycle sets in, relationships break down. The cycle of Being Apart can lead to the end of

relationships rather than be a source of inspiration to improving relationships.

BEING APART: THE 4 ELEMENTS OF WELLBEING

In order to prevent the permanent loss of relationships when being apart and successfully ride this Wave of Life we need to successfully manage the 4 Elements of Wellbeing.

1. MINDSETS

Worry and Demand frequently appear as unhealthy mindsets:

- » Worry that you are missing your loved ones and whether they are safe and not at risk of harm.
- » Demand that when you do see them they equally have missed you and are focused on you at the same level of importance.

These unhealthy mindsets need to be replaced by Acceptance and Encouragement.

- » Acceptance in that we need to make the most of each day and person in our lives in the present moment and accept what we cannot control.
- » Encouragement in that we need to influence but not control our loved one's desire to be attentive to our needs and our relationship as well as respect their ongoing individual growth and development separate to us when they are less interested in us than we would like.

2. EMOTIONS

There is a lot to be said about managing the emotions of sadness and loneliness and the grief and loss when missing loved ones. Unlike the grief from permanent loss of loved ones the grief of Being Apart cycles through regularly and can become a wound that never seems to quite heal. Recognizing these powerful emotions and developing ef-

fective coping strategies is crucial to maintaining your wellbeing when Being Apart.

- » Staying relaxed when sad or lonely is important as is distraction—keeping yourself busy and avoiding painful reminders like pictures or photos when sad.
- » Make sure you problem solve during your time apart so you stay busy and engaged.
- » Pre-plan any contact with loved ones when you're away so you are positive and engaged with them and don't burden them with negative emotions.

3. LIFESTYLE

Sleep, Diet, Exercise and Fitness—a healthy body is a great buffer to ward off the mental challenges of Being Apart and missing loved ones. Make healthy exercise and diet a top priority when you are Apart from loved ones.

- » Have exercise equipment handy wherever you are and do whatever recreational and fitness activities are available every day, even when you don't feel like it.
- » Eat well and have a balanced diet.
- » Sleep is a “life preserver” when Being Apart, so make it a priority and avoid late nights or irregular sleep/wake routines.

4. PURPOSE

This would have to be one of the most important areas of wellbeing when managing the stress of Being Apart.

- » When sad or lonely reframe this as confirmation of how much you care for your loved ones.
- » Revisit happy memories when in a positive mood and take some time to plan ahead for special events and topics to engage with loved ones to further grow your relationships when you next interact with them.
- » Take a long-term view of any periods of separation and stay committed to the longer term relationships you have.

- » Stay in touch with your underlying values and purpose as well as keeping a balanced outlook to keep your own growth and development moving forwards as well as your focus on loved ones.

In short, when it comes to Being Apart and managing the Tyranny of Distance you can go one of two ways. Either learn to Ride the Waves of Being Apart and turn the time spent apart into a powerful motivating force where “absence does make the heart grow stronger” and enables higher quality and deeper positive relationships; OR become overwhelmed by Being Apart and the ensuing loneliness where “absence makes the heart grow weaker” and the need to permanently detach in order to survive is greater than the will to endure time Being Apart in order to preserve and grow your relationship.

Take some time to reflect on how you manage Being Apart so next time this challenging Wave of Life hits you can prevent a Stress Wipe-out.

Ride the Waves of Life!

HAPPY CHILDREN PT 1: GIVING VS. LEARNING (& EARNING)



“YOU CAN GIVE A MAN A fish and feed him for a day or teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.” (Unknown)

Raising children is said to be one of the most challenging but also one of the most rewarding Waves of Life. As a father of two girls heading towards their teenage years I would have to agree. In trying to be a super dad, it seems there are ever-increasing expectations on my time, energy and money.

As kids grow older their lists of wants and needs seem to get bigger and bigger. Yet it seems like every time the latest technology device or toy has been bought, movie has been watched, theme park has been visited or fashion accessory acquired it is quickly replaced by a new want which rapidly becomes a need. Moreover, the cycle of the kids wanting and needing more and me fulfilling them seems to get faster and faster as they get older, in turn making me poorer and poorer—yet the kids don't seem to be any more content or satisfied with life.

A BETTER WAY

Surely there must be a better way than this? It seems that the more I give to make them happy, the more it takes for them to actually be happy...

Looking back to my childhood, I remember having needs and wants similar to my kids but my parents did not have the money nor

means to give me what I wanted. I was at times angry and frustrated with them. Instead of them getting angry towards me in response, they stayed calm and implemented a system of “pocket money” where I had to do household chores to earn money to buy the things I wanted.

As I grew older I came to accept the limitations of my parents, yet still had to find a way to fulfill the ever-increasing cost and size of my ambitious needs and wants. Accordingly, I learned an increasingly large set of skills in household chores, gardening and maintenance, and began doing odd jobs for the neighbors. This pattern kept me learning and earning into my teenage years and laid the foundations for a strong work ethic and later business successes.

Interestingly, even though I remember being angry and frustrated with my parents at the time, I never carried this sense of frustration into adulthood. Rather, I have a sense of gratitude for their commitment to teaching me how to learn real world skills and earn the money I needed for my needs and wants.

Perhaps it’s about time I took some of the “good lessons” I learned from my childhood and passed them onto my children?

QUICK TIPS FOR PARENTS: TURNING GIVING INTO LEARNING & EARNING

1. Keep “gifts” limited to birthdays, Christmas and very special occasions to allow some room for needs and wants to turn into opportunities for learning and earning.
2. Make sure there are plenty of opportunities for your children to talk about what they want and need and spend time with them learning about their interests and goals. Help them prioritize their needs and wants so they can self manage and separate between their short-term wants and longer term needs.
3. Put the effort into setting up some basic chores and pocket-money systems. Develop a list of extra tasks which they

can learn to do and earn additional money for bigger savings goals.

4. When kids express disappointment about not being able to get what they want, don't give in and miss the opportunity for them to learn and earn, nor react in frustration and lecture them about how much they already have. Instead take on the role of coach and cheerleader, and encourage them to keep working towards their goals.

Ride the Waves of Life!

HAPPY CHILDREN PT 2: TIME—QUALITY VS. QUANTITY



BEING A PARENT IS A BIG Wave of Life and can be a constant juggle and at times a struggle. However, the rewarding moments are beautiful and can be hard to describe in words.

In between these moments are lots of hard work, demands, responsibilities and commitments not only to your children but also to your spouse, your family and friends, as well as your job. Sometimes it seems that there are not enough hours in the day and it is impossible to balance all the demands on your time.

THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A GOOD PARENT

Many parents struggle with a sense of failure when they are unable to meet all of the time commitments their children demand: to be at school pick up/drop off; to drive them to all the right parties; to play with them and entertain them endlessly on school holidays or weekends; to stay up late when they can't sleep; to see all their sporting matches, dance concerts or competitions... the list can be endless.

Sometimes we try so hard to be all that our kids want us to be ahead of meeting our own needs that we end up having problems at work, conflict with our spouse, or get depressed and run down with inadequate time for rest, relaxation and reflection. The situation becomes so

much worse as our kids become frustrated with us. We may in turn become angry and irritable when we would rather be loving and patient.

In these situations we are heading for a Stress Wipeout which will cause further problems for both ourselves and our children. Clearly, just like the safety talk on the aeroplane we need to put our own oxygen mask on before we can help our kids.

What to do? It seems that something will have to give? I was recently talking this issue through with some other parents who are also psychologists. One of them told me about some research on parenting which showed the importance of quality over quantity when spending time with our kids. They spoke about how a child will be much more attached and have higher self-esteem and self-confidence when they have regular contact with their parents which is of a high quality, more so than lower quality but constant contact.

HIGH QUALITY & LOWER QUALITY TIME WITH YOUR CHILDREN

What does “high quality” and “low quality” parenting time actually mean?

The quality of the time refers to the intensity and level of engagement with your child. High quality time is where you are highly engaged when interacting with your child. When you spend time with them do you actively play together—share your imagination and ideas with them and effectively listen to what they’re saying? Lower quality time is when you are not engaged with your children even though you may be physically present. When spending time with your child, do you passively sit together and watch TV, set them up with activities you can then ignore, or send them outside or up the street to play with other kids?

Spending lower quality time with your children passively interacting with them does not build their sense of trust and attachment with you. In contrast, spending higher quality time actively engaging with them (even if it is only for short periods of time) gives your children

a strong bond with you. It also creates a sense of both fun and trust in what you have to say, in teaching them about the world and in helping them grow up into well-behaved young adults.

So what does this mean for you and the expectations your kids have in regards to how you spend time with them?

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PARENTING TIME

Here are four quick tips for busy parents to improve the quality of your parenting time.

1. Remember, it is not the total amount of time you spend with your children but rather the quality of the time you spend with them that is most important in helping them to feel happy and attached to you as a parent and to have high self-esteem and confidence in the world.
2. Be realistic about how much time you have available to spend with your children. Talk to them about this in an age-appropriate way and do some inclusive planning with them about how you will spend your time together.
3. Do not let their demands overstretch you to the extent your own health and wellbeing suffers—remember the airline safety message to put on your oxygen mask first before you help others. Also be resilient and maintain a supportive attitude when children may become upset and angry in response to setting limits and saying “no” to their additional demands. Remember that raising confident healthy children is more like a marathon than a sprint—so take a long-term view of things.

4. When you do spend time together make sure it is high quality and ensure you are actively engaged with them, asking questions and listening to their views and opinions. Don't be passive and simply sit and watch them. Don't forget to share you own ideas and stories with them too as sharing information and doing activities together forms strong positive relationships.

Ride the Waves of Life!

FAMILY INDECISION: NOT DECIDING IS DECIDING!



“Whilst I may not have the key to success, I do know that the key to failure is trying to please everybody.”

“Does the dog wag the tail or is the tail actually wagging the dog?”

HAS THIS EVER HAPPENED TO YOU?

Scene 1: You are having a family talk about a forthcoming holiday and discussing a range of possible activities only to hear your kids say, “I don’t mind” or, “Whatever.” You then go ahead and book the activities only to be told later, “I don’t want to do that activity.” Or worse, during the activity the kids are withdrawn and bored ruining it for everyone...

Scene 2: You’re away for a couple of days with family and friends. After waking and enjoying a coffee and breakfast you start a conversation about planning the day ahead. As you begin to suggest ideas, people start looking nervously at one another with, “That sounds good, but I’m not sure”, or, “Maybe we could do that later”, or, “Let’s see what everyone else wants to do” (only to have other people tell you they don’t mind either). Before you know it hours drift by and the day becomes wasted in a state of inaction, or you head off alone to do something worthwhile only to be labeled as selfish later...

Hmmm – can you relate? Most people in larger families or with big social networks will have seen these types of scenarios many times. So, what’s wrong with Scene 1 & 2?

INDECISION: NOT DECIDING IS DECIDING!

The answer of course is the toxic power of Indecision – the suspense and wasted opportunity that is created by people not giving their true opinions (driven by avoidance or laziness) when asked.

In Scene 1 it is obvious after the fact that the kids really didn’t want to do the holiday activities judging by their poor behavior. However, their false statements of “I don’t mind” only lead to disappointing experiences for everyone. If only they had either (a) genuinely had a flexible approach implied by their lazy statements of “I don’t mind” instead of their subsequent bad attitude (and thus at least attempted to enjoy the activities), or (b) actually stated their preferences rather than succumb to avoidance due to the risk of conflict. Then if they couldn’t be accommodated, they could have opted out of the activities so others could still have fun.

In Scene 2 it is obvious that the stalemate that builds up over the course of wasted hours among family and friends is driven by our lack of responsibility to share our own views. Too harsh? Not really. In this instance if people simply wanted to relax and sit around they merely needed to say so and allow others to go out. Instead they showed laziness in not communicating clearly and accurately. Or if they had other preferences, instead of avoiding the issue (fear of conflict), if they had the courage to simply state their preference, then these “grown ups” could start to accommodate each other and actively do things to enjoy their time away together.

Let’s be honest and stop kidding ourselves. In both these scenarios the Indecision is actually a Decision, and a very unhealthy one, to avoid responsibility instead of taking responsibility to seize the moment and do something we would like to do.

A CULTURE OF INDECISION: THE TAIL WAGS THE DOG

Where families adopt this pattern of indecision regularly there can be a lot of hidden anxiety among the children. Healthy communication can be eroded with excessive emphasis on guessing people's moods and whims rather than simply asking them directly. Relying on "mind reading" or "mood reading" when statements such as "I don't mind..." are made, leaves huge room for error.

Misunderstandings can abound in this environment, leading to countless missed opportunities for wonderful shared experiences together. At its worst, it creates cliques and conflicts due to miscommunication. This can fester over time into more serious dysfunction and family breakdown.

When a culture of Indecision dominates the family dynamics, "the tail wags the dog". Everyone refuses to provide their own direct opinions and instead is constantly second guessing other's moods and preferences, bringing the family's ability to function to a slow and grinding halt.

FIXING A CULTURE OF INDECISION: YOUR FAMILY VALUES

Your Family's Values are a key driver to address the dysfunctional dynamics of indecision.

In our family we have a rule "Say what you mean and mean what you say". We hold each other to account over this regularly, to avoid the insidious creep of indecision through fear avoidance or laziness. This rule (and more importantly holding each other to account for it) has made our family dynamics strong, positive and clear. It has helped us make the most of all the opportunities that life brings to get us together and have adventures.

INDECISION: YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?

How does your family fare when it comes to Indecision? Do people mean what they say and say what they mean OR does avoidance or laziness rule the day when it comes to stating opinions and preferences to make decisions? Whatever your answer, what further steps can you take to avoid the tail wagging the dog?

Ride the Waves of Life

FAMILY VALUES: UNDER PRESSURE & CELEBRATING SUCCESS!



“If you don’t stand for something you will fall for anything.” ~ Unknown

WHAT ARE YOUR FAMILY’S CORE VALUES? What are the foundation stones, the key principles, the non-negotiables that provide a guiding light to show your family the way ahead when facing the challenging Waves of Life?

FAMILY VALUES: NAVIGATING THE STORMS

Having a clear set of Family Values – expressed in favorite sayings, mottos or quotes that everyone in the family is familiar with and able to apply to their lives – is vital to strengthening the relationships among family members. Family Values ARE NOT a list of simple (and essential) “house rules” about cleaning your room, doing chores etc. Rather, they are a powerful set of guiding principles family members can hold each other accountable to when navigating the challenging Waves of Life.

Strong cohesive family relationships are essential for two key reasons, (1) to increase the sense of support we feel in challenging times as well as (2) to maximize our combined sense of joy when we celebrate

successes with our loved ones. Having clear family values also enables us all to collectively set goals and pursue common interests.

FAMILY VALUES: EACH FAMILY IS UNIQUE

There is no “one size fits all” approach to Family Values as each family is unique. However, your Family Values should provide at least: (a) a clear understanding of how you want to behave with each other, (b) your preferred approach to managing risks and opportunities, and (c) your preferred approach to managing stress and maintaining wellbeing.

DR PETE’S FAMILY VALUES

Our family has developed a set of values that has remained constant over many years and guided us through many challenging Waves of Life. These mottos and sayings have come from a range of places but have now become deeply personal and meaningful to the way we function as a family.

You can see them in this photo of the canvas print which hangs on the wall in our kitchen/living room. I’ll give you a quick tour of each of our Family Values:



1. “**Hakuna Matata**” – This simple saying which means “Do not worry” comes from the movie *The Lion King*. It is also a long standing Swahili catchphrase I heard constantly from the locals whilst climbing Mt Kilimanjaro in Africa. When the kids were really young they could easily understand this

saying because they'd seen it in a movie, and apply it immediately to whatever they were worried about. Living a life with less worry continues to be an important goal for us as a family so it remains a core value.

2. **“If I lost it all tomorrow I’d get it back in half the time!”** – It’s a bit of a long-winded saying we made up after I saw the complete trust and vulnerability my children had as they started to interact with others in the community. I remember seeing my 4-year-old daughter pay for some presents for her mother and be given the wrong change by the shopkeeper. She was so naïve and vulnerable to the uncaring actions of others. The solution was not to wrap her in cotton wool. It was rather to teach her to be resilient and sensible in life, but not to worry if things went wrong. Instead, she could learn and grow from every experience and stay optimistic about the future.
3. **“Kindness”** – There is no need for a long explanation here. Kindness is always necessary and no one needs to be treated in an unkind way – especially our loved ones.
4. **“Say what you mean and mean what you say”** – Sarcasm and mixed messages have at times caused conflict in our household. People have also agreed to things and then later complained about it causing frustration among the other family members. This saying helps us to be truthful and honest about our feelings and intentions and be accountable for the commitments we make to each other.
5. **“Titanium”** – A more recent addition to our Values, the word “Titanium” has helped us remain strong and united when enduring difficult circumstances. It helps us envisage a protective shield around our family when facing difficult circumstances.

FAMILY VALUES UNDER PRESSURE & CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Our Family, like all families, has had to manage numerous ups and downs. We have, at times, had to endure challenges that put relationships under severe strain. We have had to make a number of difficult decisions, due to circumstances beyond our control, in order to preserve our basic living arrangements.

We have also had our “ups”. We have had amazing positive experiences together and shared many carefree, kind and beautiful moments together. We have also been able to provide honest, clear feedback to each other, not only about where we needed to improve but also about our achievements and strengths.

IS IT TIME TO REVIEW & REFRESH YOUR FAMILY VALUES?

What are your family values? How often does your family stop and reflect on them? How have they helped you navigate the storms of life? How do they turn the “good” times into “great” celebrations?

Get your family together at the next opportunity and take some time out to review and refresh your Family Values so that your family will continue to grow stronger and closer despite the challenging Waves of Life!

Ride the Waves of Life

THE RESCUER'S DARK LEGACY



*“Sometimes the Hero unwittingly ends up
the Villain.” ~ Simon Thatcher*

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS a Compulsive Rescuer? Do you know someone who gets their thrills by helping people escape their (often self-inflicted) first-world problems? If you took a good look at their inner circle of friends, are they the most stable and successful person?

Could that “someone you know”, really also be you at times?

If you answered yes to any of the above then read onwards my friend, for this should be of interest...

Welcome to Compulsive Rescuers Anonymous! The place where compulsive rescuers can get a step-by-step guide to give up the need to compulsively help others in order to make themselves feel good. The place where compulsive rescuers can learn to channel their desires into leaving a positive legacy on the world instead of the Dark Legacy they often unwittingly create.

I have been a long time member of this club and am now well on the road to recovery, albeit with a few relapses along the way.

What’s wrong with being a Rescuer I hear you say? Well it depends on how compulsive your addiction is. Don’t get me wrong, the world

sincerely needs more selfless and giving people ready to lend a hand, offer help, provide a supportive ear, offer some wise counsel, sacrifice their own needs for the greater good. HOWEVER if this is done for the wrong motive, or in the wrong way, then we may not leave a positive legacy and instead create a Dark Legacy ultimately doing more harm than good.

THE DARK LEGACY

Helping others simply to make ourselves feel good or helping others in a way where the other person doesn't have to face the consequences of their actions can be a disaster!

Instead of helping people become more resilient and responsible we can accidentally create:

1. **Dependency** – people over-relying on us to meet their needs
2. **Hostility and Anger** – people becoming angry at us when we withdraw support after the crisis is over
3. **Disempowerment** – people passively waiting on being rescued instead of problem solving, innovating or adjusting to their circumstances
4. **Laziness and Entitlement** – people simply becoming accustomed to complaining and blaming, and believing they should not have to solve their problems, as the government, society or others “should” sort it out for them.

In these circumstances, whilst you may be initially seen as a Hero in the eyes of the people you help, as time passes a darker legacy emerges. You unwittingly become the Villain as they begin to blame you for the recurrence of problems or failure to meet their demands for help when future problems strike.

THE CAUSE OF THE DARK LEGACY

When it comes to rescuing people we clearly need to continue to help those who are in need and require help. But why would seemingly well-intentioned, hard working, kind, good-natured people end up accidentally creating such a Dark Legacy?

“You can give a man a fish and feed him for a day or teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.” ~ Unknown

The cause of the Dark Legacy is well summed up in the famous quote above. That is, we often end up giving people fish rather than teaching them to fish – and this can happen for a range of hidden, yet entirely understandable reasons

3 REASONS COMPULSIVE RESCUERS GIVE INSTEAD OF TEACH

1. BEING CRITICIZED OR ACCUSED OF BEING UNCARING

Rescuers hate it when people accuse them of being uncaring. Let's face it, people hate having to learn when stressed, and will always like someone more if they simply give them what they want. They may indeed dislike, or even hate, the person who attempts to teach them how to help themselves. This is a sure fire guilt trip to the Rescuer, causing the Dark Legacy of giving instead of teaching to emerge.

2. THE EFFORT OF TEACHING VERSUS GIVING

It is harder to teach someone something than simply do it for them. Compulsive Rescuers want the immediate “feel good” hit they get from instant results rather than putting in the effort of working out the best way to teach someone something important to help them be more resilient and responsible.

3. THE RISK OF ‘NOT BEING NEEDED’ IF PEOPLE ARE NOT DEPENDENT ON YOU

Compulsive Rescuers need to have a group of people around them who they can help. Otherwise, when socializing among equals, they fear being disliked or having no special talents that are desirable to their peers.

PREVENTING THE DARK LEGACY

So let’s not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Rather, let’s find a way to put a stop to unhealthy Compulsive Rescuing and instead become a powerful helper and supporter – helping people to be more responsible and resilient in the circumstances of their lives.

To prevent the Dark Legacy and indeed ensure that your Rescuing and Helping will leave a positive legacy, take a moment to consider the following points of self-reflection:

1. Does my self-esteem depend on whether other people find me helpful and useful? If I was able to help people and they never knew, or worse, got frustrated or annoyed with me, would that bother me?
2. When I help someone, do I consider how far my help will go so there is room for them to also solve the problem, or do I prefer to be the Hero and solve all their problems for them?
3. Am I a patient and effective teacher and listener, or do I get easily frustrated when I have to teach others how to do things – especially if they are somewhat resistant or confused?
4. Do I believe more in a person’s potential and future than their current situation and ability, and am I prepared to push the boundaries to help them grow?

Your answers to these questions will tell you how effective you will be at “Rescuing” other people in a way that prevents the Dark Lega-

cy and instead builds a Positive Legacy of helping them become more resilient and responsible when facing the Challenging Waves of Life!

Ride the Waves of Life

A GIFT

HEROES

FALLEN HEROES & FINDING INSPIRATION



“ONLY A MAN IN A SILLY red sheet, looking for kryptonite on a one way street...” The lyrics from the song *Superman* by Five For Fighting say so much about the humanness that lies beneath our heroes. Even heroes still have to contend with the Big Waves of Life like we do. Wipeouts hurt just the same—but are often so much more public and humiliating.

In recent times, some of our biggest sporting heroes have not been shining so brightly. The cyclist Lance Armstrong, after winning the prestigious Tour De France race seven times, subsequently confessed to years of cheating in sport, and many people were devastated. In Australia, we have had several scandals about alleged match fixing and drug use in football, leaving many of us wondering if there are any genuine sporting heroes left for us to admire.

The fall from grace of other heroes—political leaders, philanthropists, entertainers—is always in the news. When it comes to heroes and their mistakes, our Mindsets can often become both Demanding and Blaming. We Demand ever more from our heroes and then resort to Blame and Hostility when they fail.

Is this cycle of Demanding and then Blaming our heroes ever going to help us take Responsibility for our own lives and enable us to live our Endless Summer?

DO WE EVEN NEED HEROES?

Heroes are important in our society – for both adults and children alike. We need people to look up to, causes to believe in, reasons to go to work or stay fit and healthy, lifestyles and adventures to aspire to, goals to set and plans to make. Without heroes, the fire of Purpose that drives us would be diminished and our efforts would be less than our best.

While we need to be inspired by our Heroes we also need to give them room to be human, not micromanage them mercilessly in the Social Media Spotlight. Who among us has been able not only to be exceptional in one area our life but also blameless and perfect in all others? Where someone is truly inspiring in one aspect do they have to be shot down and diminished because of other imperfections?

Winston Churchill was a courageous leader and a man of his times. If he were alive today I bet social media criticism of his depression and drinking would diminish his image of remarkable courage and persistence in leading Britain through its darkest hours of World War 2!

HEROIC TALENTS VS ALL-ROUND HEROES

What if we took a new approach to heroes?

FIRSTLY TO THE LARGER-THAN- LIFE FIGURES OF SPORT, BUSINESS, ENTERTAINMENT AND POLITICS...

What if we simply admired their skills and abilities and left all the other analysis and criticism behind? What if we were simply happy to aspire to their greater talents, skills and achievements and use this to drive incremental improvements in our own abilities each day?

What if we stopped deifying them as great all rounders of life, and accepted their humanness in other areas? What if we gave them space and left them alone?

Most importantly what if we taught our children not to “be like them” in totality, but to aspire to be as good (or better) than them within their specific area of talent?

SECONDLY, TO THE INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE WE LIVE AND WORK WITH...

What if we took a closer look at these amazing people and the smiles and warmth in their greetings, the speed of their minds in solving problems, the unending patience towards their children, their resilience in the face of so many daily hassles, their optimism when things go wrong?

My grandfather remains an inspiration of love for family many years beyond his death. My office receptionist is one of the most polite and cheerful people I know. And my close friends are heroes of endurance, patience, fitness and focus, always inspiring me to a better attitude and approach to life.

THE “COMPOSITE HERO”

What if we built for ourselves a Composite Hero...

- » The looks and interpersonal skills of George Clooney
- » The strength and courage of Winston Churchill
- » The sporting talent of Greg Norman
- » The strength of Batman
- » The love of family of my grandfather
- » The bubbly smile and politeness of my office receptionist?

How amazing would this Hero be? How perfect in so many ways? They would survive the microscope of social media and the criticisms of the public and still be shiny and perfect in every way.

However there is one problem! My Composite Hero is not real—nor can they ever be—as it is given to human beings to make mistakes and to fail from time to time.

But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. My Composite Hero can still inspire me to greater talents and acts of kindness and bring out so many good things in me.

My Composite Hero is made up of people I respect for aspects of their talents, not their total person. I do not build them up and cut them down tall-poppy-style, nor feel the need to copy their bad habits.

So take some time to build your own Composite Hero.

Banish the Mindsets of Demanding ever more from people, and Blaming them when they fall from grace. Learn to Accept their humanness and imperfections, and maybe become more at peace with yourself.

But whatever you do, don't lose the fire of Purpose and inspiration that Heroes can bring!

Ride the Waves of Life!

ALSO FROM THE STRESS SURFER



BETTER MAN: 5 LIFE LESSONS

Dr Pete shares his journey through mid-life, in particular 5 important Life Lessons he learned the hard way. Contains a “First Aid Kit” of 15 helpful insights to help manage the turmoil of mid-life and find greater clarity, direction and happiness on the next stage of your journey.



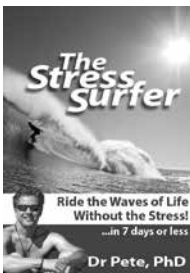
THE 7 TSUNAMIS OF MID-LIFE

Did you know the most dangerous period of mid-life is between the ages of 43–53, during which 7 of the 10 biggest Waves of Life can strike? Dr Pete provides a quick and easy-to-understand summary of essential survival skills that we can use immediately for each of The 7 Mid-Life Tsunamis.



LIVING THE ENDLESS SUMMER! LIFE STRATEGY WITH DR PETE, PHD

What does your ideal life look like? The “Endless Summer” describes living your “ideal” life – whatever that may be! Living the Endless Summer is possible for anyone. Dr Pete shares his journey toward living an ideal life and describes the important steps on the journey.



RIDE THE WAVES OF LIFE WITHOUT THE STRESS!

The Book that started it all! Do you feel like every time a Wave of Life hits, you get crushed in a huge Wipeout of stress? Dr Pete shows you how to ride the Waves of Life, avoid the stress Wipeouts, balance the 4 Elements of your Inner Wellbeing & live the Endless Summer!



OUR MISSION:

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so you can Successfully Ride the Waves of Mid-Life!”***

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