

Leadership Barometer 191 Too Much Pressure **Robert T. Whipple, MBA CPTD**



We all face times in our lives when we are under too much pressure. There are various ways we deal with this situation. Sometimes we don't even realize how much pressure we are enduring. This article shares a method I have used for years to identify when I am under too much pressure.

What is too much pressure?

The definition of how much pressure is too much varies with each of us. Recognize that the pressure we feel is the sum of various small pressures acting on us at once. At some point, one very minor addition to the load can cause us to break down.

A personal example

In my late career, I had a situation where things got out of hand. I was dealing with some family health problems in another city. The workload at my job was at a peak situation calling for maximum attention. My car needed repair, but I had no time to get it fixed. I was way behind on my yard work. I had just found out that I needed to travel across the country for several days.

None of these issues by themselves would cause a serious problem. The sum of them did. I was sitting at the breakfast table one morning at 5 am eating some cereal. I stood up and immediately blacked out and fell to the floor. I had no physical warning, but there I was on the floor.

I needed a "Check Engine" light for my stress

Later that day I was near a self-service blood pressure station and decided to have a look. WOW! As expected, my pressure was high, but I nearly fainted again at the magnitude of the pressure. I just had not seen the pressure building up over time until my body forced me to shut down. Fortune prevented me from having a heart attack or stroke that morning.

Create an ongoing signal to monitor your pressure

For me, it was easy to purchase a home blood pressure monitor and use it every morning. I get a reading each day, so I know if things are building up to the breaking point. Actually, I take my pressure ten times every morning while watching the news. After discarding the highest value and the lowest value I average the other eight points. That average becomes the point on a graph for me that day.

I have been using that system for the past twenty years, and it has served me well. That chart becomes the signal when something is wrong before I even feel it. Often the problem has to do with diet. For example, if I have a meal that is particularly high in salt, I can see that on my chart.

Summary: Create your own ‘Check Engine’ light

Find some way to monitor your stress level that fits into your lifestyle. For example, your spouse might serve to tell you when things are reaching the control limit. Having that signal can prevent you from accepting too much pressure at any point in time.

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