

# When the pressures of daily living threaten your well-being, it's time to follow these basic rules

by Harry Johnson, M. D., President, Life Extension Foundation

Pressure is the normal, everyday stimulant for getting things done. Call it what you will—stress or strain—we all need some sort of pressure to enjoy a full, purposeful life, to feel a sense of accomplishment.

Many of us break under pressure simply because we refuse to recognize a fundamental fact of life: *A job is not tense, you are!* Personal relationships are not tense, you are. The world is not tense, you are. In short, when you are tense, it is because that is your personal reaction to your job, your problems, and the world about you.

This is fortunate, for it means we can do something about tension.

The main problem is to recognize the warning signs, the signals that cry out: "You are close to your breaking point. Do something about it!"

**Physical signs.** A fairly sure sign that we have reached the breaking

point may be found in one or more functional ailments, of which the most common are sleeplessness, constant fatigue, dizziness (particularly when changing position, such as getting out of bed), constipation, frequent headaches, stomach pains, backaches, and indigestion.

**Emotional signs.** Perhaps far more common are the emotional distress signals we get when tension strikes. These may range from a feeling of despair and loneliness to a sense of persecution, irritability, and impatience.

Any time you feel you are not equal to your pressures and are confronted by one or more of the symptoms of tension, here is the advice I have found most successful for men and women in all walks of life:

## 1. Do not neglect your physical health.

Be sure to get adequate sleep and

recreation. Avoid excess in diet, drinking, and smoking. If you are bothered by functional distress, see your doctor.

## 2. Change your perspective.

You must adopt the correct philosophical attitude. A man can do so much and no more. Do what is most important, do it in order of importance, and do your best. Let the rest take care of itself.

Confront your problems rationally. Don't panic. Any time you feel your job is more than you can handle and you have reason to believe it is affecting your health, you must decide: What is more important, my job or my health? What most needs me in good health, my family or my job?

## 3. Build up your self-confidence.

Whenever you get that "Milquetoast" feeling, remember that you are running your own race and must maintain a pace that is best for you. Don't fret about your shortcomings. After doing your best, anticipate only the best results, not the worst.

## 4. Be moderate in your habits and attitudes.

It is all right to get impatient and angry and irritable and to pour on the heat once in awhile. But don't let it happen too often. If you feel yourself growing impatient or impetuous or feel as if petty incidents are causing you distress, pause, analyze the situation. Ask yourself: Is it worth it? Will I

gain anything? What will it mean if I get there an hour or two sooner, a day or a week sooner, a year or two sooner? Will the extra push be worth the gain?

## 5. Seek release in a change of your routine.

Suppose, for instance, you know that you are going to have to work a minimum of 12 hours a day for a week or longer. It is going to be hard. Why not get up earlier one day and go to bed earlier; next day work late and sleep late? Or how about walking instead of riding to the station? How about a little more time for breakfast or lunch?

A change of routine is a far better release from pressure than a fit of anger. When you let off steam, all you do is succeed in calling attention to yourself and your weaknesses.

Although you may be working under great pressure, if you feel no ill effects, functional or emotional, don't worry about it. Chances are you can handle yourself nicely, and tensions will not interfere with your sense of well-being.

It is a good idea for all of us to remember the observation made by the unpretentious fictional character, David Harum, "A reasonable number of fleas is good for a dog, keeps him from broodin' over bein' a dog."

Your pressures may keep you from brooding over being a part of the human comedy.

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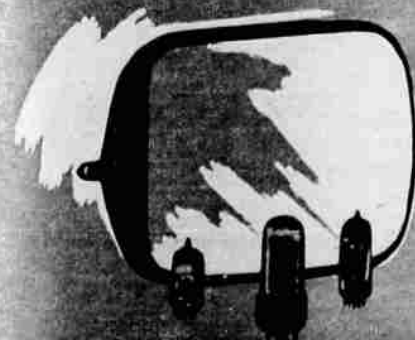
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