



How to get out of the Self-Optimisation trap

The majority of all stress factors that we encounter in our day-to-day working lives are not caused by the environment or framework conditions. In fact, we ourselves are responsible for the biggest stress factors. Because we still believe that stress is a sign of performance. So what can we do about it? Well, first of all we need to give ourselves an honest telling off.

Interestingly, almost all employees consider themselves to be indispensable, even though there might be ten others with exactly the same job description. Our position in a company gives us a sense of self-confidence and professional gain - and we are aware that we weren't appointed to the position for nothing.

All this is justified, but it results in the assumption that nothing would work without our contribution. And we don't mean to be arrogant, we are simply drawing the wrong conclusion from the old gearing concept: If I, as a cog in the machine, stop working, the entire engine will overheat. So I must always work. Whether I am able to or not. The joke of it is, however, that there are ten other colleagues who can fill in for us for a short time. Because networked working, by definition, means being able to use several links.

CHALLENGE INSTEAD OF OBSTACLES

Some people get stressed just by looking at the scope of an upcoming project. So much responsibility! So many stumbling blocks! So much that I could mess up! People are programmed to always think the worst, to keep escape strategies and avoidance strategies ready for emergencies. And we still don't look on mistakes as the learning opportunities that they actually are.

Anyone who does manage to steer their sights away from the big picture to individual sub-steps will significantly reduce their stress factors. Big tasks also always provide the opportunity to discover new talents or learn something new. Anyone who takes this approach will handle challenging tasks with curiosity and joy. And, last but not least, employees are not lone fighters. Help is usually just one office door away. Asking for help reduces stress. And if you ask for support, you are also showing interest, commitment and team spirit.

RECHARGE AND REFUEL

Stress is to the psyche what food is to the body: There can be too little and there can be too much - and what goes in, must come out again. However, whereas our body tells us when the time for disposal has come, there is no similar regular warning system with stress. So we have to act before the pressure becomes too great and psychological consequences begin to indicate an overload.

There are two simple solutions. Sport is perfect for stress management, because it allows us to concentrate fully on our body and stop thinking about the things that are causing us stress. Our minds can go into idle mode and any pent-up negative stress can be converted into positive energy for fitness training.

The second solution is stress management through distraction - whether with your family or with friends, or even through a hobby. If our stressed out brain is bombarded with positive impulses, a kind of energy compensation takes place. The result is simple: The happier you are, the less stressed you become.

CALMLY HOLDING YOUR OWN

The best way to handle stress is to stay calm in every respect. Especially when the pressure suddenly gets too great and your sights shift to the next steps. And there's no harder thing to learn. Some people draw this ability from meditation and relaxation exercises, which they are able to perform quickly even in extremely stressful situations in the office: Breathing techniques that slow down the heart rate are perfect for clearing your head again.

Others simply go outside for a short time and stare at a tree. Some count from one to ten in their heads before giving an answer. Different methods help different people: Anyone who manages to withdraw at just the right moment and restore their own sense of equilibrium again will avoid a total mental breakdown due to stress.

HEALTHY EGOISM

Just as we consider ourselves to be indispensable, so too do we believe we have to constantly prove ourselves as part of the community. And the worst of it is that every colleague (and boss) is happy to exploit this. If you say yes to every request, then it can be no surprise to find yourself snowed under with work. If you only allow yourself a single breath between two projects, it can be no surprise if your results suffer and you make mistakes. If you are always first to arrive and last to leave - you certainly don't stand to gain anything.

Healthy egoism, including an awareness of your own capacity, sufficient sleep and self-prescribed relaxation phases are there to ensure that stress doesn't become a problem in the first place. If you look at yourself instead of always only at others and their social status, you will find it easier to tell when everything is getting too much. And the following realisation applies here too: Saying no offends your counterpart much less than we always imagine.