



Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

☐ The Price of a Hurried Life

The best way to spot if someone you're concerned about is an adrenaline addict is to understand what they are like when they are not running their life at a fast pace. When adrenaline addicts slow down they are not happy people. It's as if they try not to slow down! But if they do relax, say on weekends, in the evening before bed, or on vacation, they experience withdrawal symptoms like these:

- A compulsion to get busy, be more productive, or be stimulated with noise or activity
- Emptiness, boredom, and depressed mood
- Feelings of guilt about being idle
- Irritability or loss of temper
- Worrying about work that needs to be done
- Fidgetiness or restlessness (e.g., pacing, finger or foot tapping, fast gum chewing)
- Utter exhaustion. Living under the pressure of time-urgency or being keyed up is a costly venture.

Adrenaline addicts who experience burnout are like those who try to race a marathon - full speed, nonstop. Can anyone race 26 miles full speed, nonstop? Of course not. Even Olympic marathon runners must pace themselves. If not, the body parts will break down. And with burnout, over time, the mental apparatus also wears out. People who live with an adrenaline-driven lifestyle may cause their bodies to regularly suffer from things like anxiety, rapid heartbeats, headaches, backaches, gastric distress, and sleep problems. And, they dramatically increase their risk of stress-related illnesses ranging from viruses

and ulcers to heart disease and cancer. Perhaps one of the most serious consequences of an adrenaline-driven lifestyle is that it crowds out God and His blessings. That is, the individual becomes a "human-doing" instead of a human being. Life is lacking in the things that are most enjoyable and meaningful: loving relationships, pleasant experiences, creative expression, passionate pursuits, and spirituality. In Luke 10:38-42, Luke wrote about a dinner party held in a home in Bethany. Here's the scene: A hot day at the end of the rainy season as summer was beginning. A white-washed village on a hillside just 2 miles east of Jerusalem. The home of Martha who was possibly a well-to-do widow had taken in her younger sister Mary and younger brother Lazarus. She welcomes Jesus and His followers to her home in Bethany. She hurries to arrange a comfortable seat for Jesus and then to bring a cool drink to each of her guests. She nods to Mary who fills the basin near the door with water, then takes a towel and begins to wash each guest's feet. Jesus' followers seat themselves around the large room, chatting quietly about events of recent days. Villagers begin to crowd the doorway, anxious to come in and listen to the great Rabbi, Jesus. I don't know how long Martha sat there listening to Jesus. But I have a feeling that if she was anything like me, she sat there that day with a divided mind. After all, here were 13 men who would be hungry and needed to be fed. What was on hand to feed them? What would it take to get everything ready? Would she need to slip out and run to a few shops for grain or fruit? I identify with Martha. I know exactly what she was doing as

she sat there. First, she made a mental inventory of everything in the pantry. After that, she planned the menu, making sure she didn't overlook anything. Then she made a list in her head of all the tasks that would have to be done. When she had thought everything through, she glanced around the room surreptitiously to see the best route through the crowd to get from where she was sitting into the kitchen. When she had plotted her exit, she could sit there no longer. She had to get busy! After all, she was the hostess. It was her responsibility to meet the needs of her guests. No one would think less of Lazarus or Mary if the meal were not adequate. The blame would land squarely on her. No time to sit and listen to Jesus now—perhaps after all the work was done. Can you see Martha, now in the familiar territory of her kitchen, turning into a whirlwind of activity? First, start the beans and lentils cooking with onions and garlic. Then dress the lamb for roasting. Grind the grain and mix the bread for baking. Then prepare the figs and pomegranates. Get water to mix with the wine. Set the table. Stir the beans and lentils. Turn the lamb on the spit. Start baking the bread. She may have felt what I feel when I've been carried along on the crest of my adrenaline-driven lifestyle, only to realize I'm running out of time and I can't finish everything I planned to do. When that happens, I get frustrated—frustrated with myself and with anyone else who might have made a difference in accomplishing my plans. Then frustration turns into exaggeration that inevitably results in victimization (v. 40-“Lord, do **you** not care that my sister has **left me** to do **all** the serving **alone**?”). I suspect that

is what happened to Martha. Suddenly the plans and the work that had started out as pure joy turned into emotional and physical burnout. The harder she worked, the more worked up she became. We all know that feeling, don't we? It's bad enough having everything to do. It's even worse when someone we think should be helping us pull the load lets us down. Our frustration-exaggeration-victimization about the unfairness of it all builds to the bursting point. The problem did not lie in the work Martha was doing. It was that she put too much stress on things that didn't matter. Martha's problem was one of balance, of holding life in the proper tension so that it doesn't result in emotional and physical *burnout*. We all have responsibilities we carry out every day of our lives. We go to the office. We cook. We grade papers. We clean the house. We do the laundry. We do these things, and we want to do them well. But we must be sure that the necessary doesn't get out of proportion and distort our lives. We can easily confuse means and ends. Without thinking, we can turn what is a means of living for God into an end in itself. And when that happens burnout is soon nipping in the recesses of our minds.

Progressive Signs of Burn Out

One sign of being caught up in the erosive spiral of an adrenaline-driven lifestyle is physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Maybe someone you know is still holding it together at work (or school). But, as soon as they get home, they head for the fridge, get out the Haagen-Dazs turn on the TV, collapse on the sofa, and become comatose for the rest of the evening. Another response is cynicism and callousness. In response to that prolonged

feeling of insecurity or vulnerability, some folks feel there's only one thing left to do: put on the heavy armor. They develop an attitude: "Look out for #1." "No one's getting to me." And, in the short run, the strategy often works. If they become sufficiently abrasive or obnoxious, people start avoiding them. But this hard exterior can eventually become a burdensome, self-defeating strategy. Someone once said, "Burnout is less a sign of failure and more that you gave yourself away." And there's another reason for paying attention to this process. Burnout doesn't just facilitate a hardening of the psyche. When stress starts to smolder into frustration then exaggeration and finally into victimization-where suspicion and mistrust reside- the person begins to hide within embattled armor or a crusty shell. This becomes a formula for hardening the arteries as well as cardiovascular complications, high blood pressure, and, even premature heart attacks. In fact, the next stage is failure, helplessness and crisis. It is that feeling of being caught in a familiar "Catch-22." This stage is so disorienting because a person's psychological defenses have worn down. Their coping structure seems to be coming unglued. Cracks start appearing in the defensive armor. Painful memories from new or recent hurts normally contained by their emotional defenses are beginning to leak through the cracks. A slight or an emotional bump can set off an overly sensitive and personal reaction.

Double-Edged

Especially in times of overload, uncertainty, and major personal, social, economic, and financial change, driven and rigid responsibility to one's goals can quickly transform a performance benefit into a personal and professional liability. Please note that people in each of these erosive spirals are responsible and often quite

responsive to others. People lean on them for support. Perhaps they are buying into the "superperson" role or hiding behind a heroic mask. Maybe they have always had to help mom with (or sometimes raise) the other kids. Or, they are the emotional sponge in the office, frequently absorbing their colleagues' complaints. But eventually they will begin to hear that screeching, scratching sound. That's the stress knot twisting and turning tighter and tighter about their neck. No wonder people start jumping out of jobs or school, or out of relationships. Normally, they pride themselves on doing a thorough job, a high quality performance. Now they begin looking for shortcuts, if not cutting corners. And this gnaws at their self-esteem. There may even be pangs of guilt. A case of the "brain strain" is developing, accompanied by an energy shortage and feelings of exhaustion. If stress levels continue unabated, they may experience shame and doubt. In addition to not feeling confident about the future as well as the present they may even start discounting their past accomplishments. Beware...this is not a logical process; it's a psychological one. They wonder if colleagues, friends or family members will detect that something is wrong. While projecting a competent image has been the norm, now this voice inside is relentlessly shouting, "Impostor!" When experiencing a deep sense of loss and change life is perceived as uncontrollable. To the point where cynicism and callousness take over. Recent statistics show more Americans are choosing to ignore the "don't lose sleep over it" advice and allowing stress to keep them awake at night. According to a new survey of approximately 2,000 people conducted by the Better Sleep Council (BSC), 51 percent of Americans say stress disturbs their sleep. Work related issues, followed by family and children-related issues top the list of what keeps

America up at night. "We can't control every factor that contributes to stress, but we can control making time to get the sleep we need so that we feel less cranky and more productive the following day," says Helen Sullivan of the Better Sleep Council. "Getting an adequate amount of sleep each night gives us energy, clear thinking and strength to deal with life's daily stresses." Americans who bring stress into the bedroom aren't the only ones finding it hard to fall asleep at night -- it affects their partners as well. According to the Better Sleep Council survey, 45 percent of Americans say they toss and turn throughout the night because of their partner's sleeplessness over stress. The survey also said that 36 percent of Americans lose sleep because of stress more than once a week. "When dealing with stress, prioritize the things that you can control," says Sullivan. "For instance, you can control your sleep environment. Be sure you are sleeping in a cool, quiet, dark room on a comfortable and supportive mattress. Improving the quality of your sleep gives you more energy and keeps you focused to tackle the demands we face every day." In actuality, we can't live without some adrenaline. It's appropriate and good to draw on adrenaline in times of true emergency or in order to tackle a very important challenge. The critical issue is that we come down from times of stimulation and intensity. We all need a recovery period so that we can rest and recuperate our bodies and mind. This means times of relaxation during the day. In the book, *Rest: Experiencing God's Peace in a Restless World*, by Siang-Yang Tan, Ph.D. the author applies some helpful advice on getting rid of the adrenaline lifestyle that spirals out of control:

- Allow 8 hours a night of sleep
- Avoid adrenaline stimulating activities in the evening (e.g.,

pressure, busyness, excitement, noise)

- Turn off the TV earlier
- Turn down the lights in the evening to trigger production of melatonin, a hormone for sleep
- Stay away from caffeine, spicy foods, and sweets in the evening
- Take some time in the evening to relax
- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day (Give yourself "permission" to go to bed. As hard as it may be to put away your "to do" list, make sleep a priority.)
- Unclutter your mind before going to bed by verbalizing your thoughts and feelings to a friend, to God in prayer, or in journaling)
- Use relaxation techniques like slow, deep breathing and meditation on Scripture
- Exercise (Regular exercise can help relieve daily tension and stress -- but don't exercise too close to bedtime or you may have trouble falling asleep).
- If you awake in the night try to stay in bed and relax
- Avoid long-term use of sleeping pills or stimulants. Consuming stimulants, such as caffeine, in the evening can make it more difficult to fall asleep.

As much as we need to "work" at caring for our souls by practicing healthy lifestyle habits like remembering the Sabbath, getting enough sleep, exercising, relaxing in the evenings, enjoying restful meals with family and friends, and limiting the barrage of information the intrudes in our space each day -- all things that were more naturally a part of life even just 100 years ago -- there's something that's even more important to our well-being. I believe it's found in Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Re-lying on God's mercy and grace to us through Jesus is opposite of the adrenaline-driven life. We learn to stop trying to control our lives and make things work out. We work at not letting other people or things control our lives too. Instead, we go to God (and His ambassadors in the Body of Christ). He gives us love

and blessings and we receive. He gives us dreams and directions and we follow. As Paul wrote, "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). To have our being in God is a matter of growing our faith by putting our trust in God and practicing spiritual disciplines to get ourselves in the position to rest in God and respond to Him. Dr. John Ortberg, in his article "Taking Care of Busyness" (Leadership Magazine, Fall 1998) wrote that he asked a mentor of his, "What do I need to do to be spiritually healthy?" There was a long pause and then the wise, old man replied, "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurriedness from your life." John then asked, "What else should I do?" (Perhaps he didn't like the first answer!) After another long pause the mentor answered, "There is nothing else." "What would your life look like if you lived life without being in a hurry? If you slow down could you persevere through the depressing symptoms of adrenaline withdrawal to find out what's on the other side? Could you develop a more soul-full life? You'd accomplish less. You'd feel less important. You might miss the buzz adrenaline gives. But you'd have opportunities to invest more in your relationships with God, others, and yourself. You could focus on becoming the person God has created you to be, enjoying His blessings, and sharing His love with others. We live in this world. This means we concern ourselves with food and clothes and homes and family and jobs and studies. But we also live in the world of the spirit. We concern ourselves with our relationship to God. That was Martha's real problem. She was sewing with no thread in the bobbin. To get our service right, we get our priorities right. We let Jesus minister to us before we go out to minister for Him. That is God's order: we first love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then we are prepared to go out and love our neighbor as ourselves. When we turn that upside down, we may end up feeling overworked and unappreciated. When we keep our priorities in line with God's priorities, we will find that God enables us to do what needs to be done with joy and satisfaction.

Are You Dependent on Adrenaline?

by:William Gaultiere, Ph.D.

Do you rely on adrenaline to feel alive, important, and productive? Are you putting your body at risk of stress-related illness? Take this self-test to help you identify if you might be over-adrenalized.

1. Are you often in a hurry, rushing from one thing to the next?
2. During a typical day do you work with intensity on something that seems urgent?
3. Do you tend to do two or three things at once to be more efficient?
4. Are you productive, busy, or active almost all the time?
5. Do you regularly rely on caffeine to feel energetic and focused?
6. If you're not working on something do you rely on stimulation from activity, entertainment, or noise?
7. When you're resting do you feel fidgety, pace, drum your fingers, tap your feet, or chew fast?
8. If you're idle do you feel guilty or restless?
9. When you're waiting are you usually uncomfortably impatient (e.g., looking at your watch, getting upset, or counting items in the short order line)?
10. When you go to bed at night do you typically think about all the things that you didn't get done and need to get done?
11. When you go on vacation do you feel empty, bored, or depressed?
12. Do you often have physical stress symptoms like gastric distress, rapid heartbeat, headaches, muscle pain, teeth grinding at night, and sleep problems?

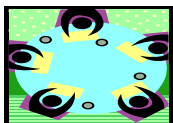
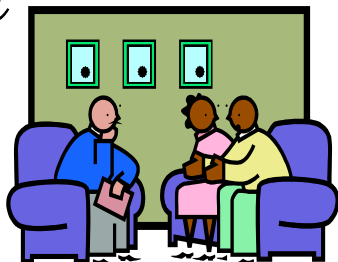
Scoring: Yes answers to four or more items indicate that you may be depending on adrenaline and related hormones like cortisol to manage daily stresses. For diagnoses and treatment consult in person with a doctor or psychotherapist.



Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

From the desk of....

Bob Good



*Sexual Addiction Group Meeting
Tuesday Nights at 7:00 pm (SCA Office)*

Burn Out or Bust Out

Archibald Hart, author of *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline and Stress*, believes that "adrenaline dependence" has become the greatest addiction problem in America today. People actually become "hooked" on the energy, pleasure, and confidence that come when the body's stress hormones – primarily adrenaline and cortisol – are released in emergencies.

God has designed our bodies wonderfully and it is a great gift that we have this instinctive "fight or flight" response to danger that infuses us with vitality and well-being. This alerts us to grab our child's hand at the curb when a car races by. It energizes us when we face a challenge like giving a big presentation or working through a stressful conflict. It cushions us when we get bad news. We need adrenaline to handle real life emergencies like these.

But it's a problem for us when we live our lives in a continual state of urgency, viewing daily stresses as emergencies. Hurrying from one thing to the next, each more "imperative" than the last. Doing two or three things at once to save time. Jumpstarting ourselves with caffeine (an adrenaline stimulant) to get going in the morning, to stay alert in the afternoon, or to get psyched up before a meeting. Passing cars on the freeway. Counting people's items in the "short order" grocery line. Thinking about what we else have to do when someone is talking to us. Working hard even into the late evening hours. Then grinding our teeth at night as we worry about all that we didn't get done!

Why Depend on Adrenaline?

For help managing life. That's the short answer. Many business people rely on adrenaline to get through their 50-hour workweek. Even parents may depend on it to deal with their children and get them from one activity to the next. Students who go to classes and work all day and then study late into the night use it to stay alert while depriving themselves of sleep. It seems like we have so much we have to do and our society is changing so fast - we feel we must get keyed up to keep up!

Besides, everyone else is doing it, aren't they? Doesn't everyone tank up on coffee and other caffeinated drinks to stay in top form? Isn't it normal to live in a hurry going from one pressure to the next? Indeed, it seems that way. The fast-paced, super-productive, determined life of an adrenaline addict is not only socially acceptable, it's admired and rewarded in our society. Certainly, this reinforcement of others in our culture is another reason why we depend on adrenaline. This month's article is for those of us who have stepped onto the treadmill of a hurried life rather than onto the path of a soul-full life. So if I'm hitting a nerve for you, keep reading because the first step is to admit to the problem of running life at fast pace and then to understand the price and the prescription of doing away with a hurried lifestyle.

Years ago, a magical moment whirled me in a mystical web. I was consumed by the path of "academic flashdancing." I succumbed to the "burnout tango." Now let me not just walk the talk, but deromance the dance: "Burnout is the gradual process by which a person, in response to prolonged stress and physical, mental, and emotional strain, detaches from work and other meaningful relationships. The result is lowered productivity, cynicism, confusion...a feeling of being drained, having nothing more to give." Whether at work or school (or even in a marriage), to prevent it you must get it. To provide a framework both for understanding and, hopefully, inoculating against future burnout, let's begin with "The Stress Doc's Vital Lesson of the Four 'R's':

If no matter what you say or what you do, Results, Rewards, Recognition, and Relief are not forthcoming, and you can't mean "no" or won't let go...trouble awaits. The groundwork is being laid for apathy, callousness and despair.

This list of symptoms suggests that procrastination, which at first sounds like a simple behavior, is, in fact, quite complex. It involves emotions, skills, thoughts or attitudes, and factors we are unaware of. Furthermore, the causes and dynamics of putting off an important but unpleasant task vary from person to person and from task to task for the same person. For instance, someone may delay completing a work assignment but immediately

fill out the necessary paperwork for their supervisor. Hopefully, understanding how and why someone procrastinates will be of help with their struggle.

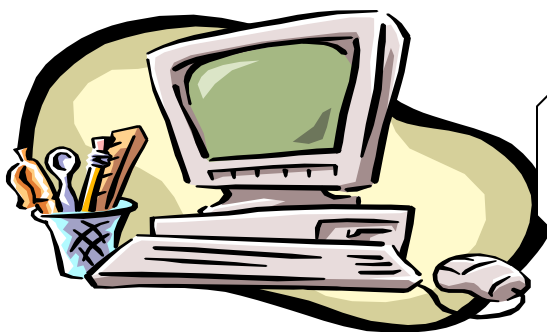
Procrastination is only a habit and habits can be changed. The first thing to ask is whether procrastination is a sign that needs to change something fundamental in life (i.e. job, environment, relationships) or if it's masking fear, lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, etc. There are a number of ways to tackle procrastination and the following article will guide you to help people use different strategies for different situations.

Sincerely,

Bob



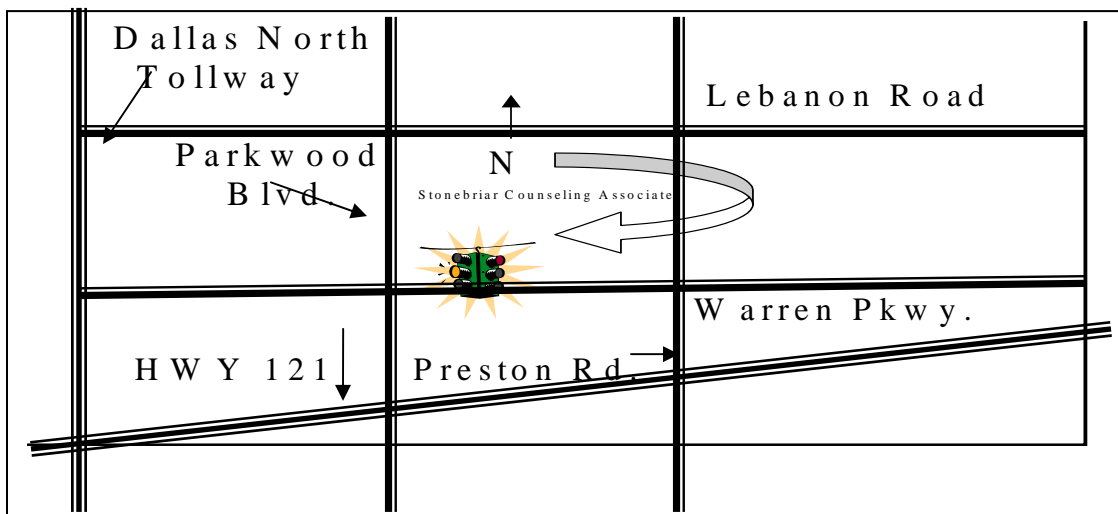
Happy New Year!!



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Come Visit Our Location!!





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