

Dealing with Stress Clouds

The fast-paced world that we live and work in can create an incredible amount of stress on everything you do. It is essential that you have a healthy way of dealing with that stress.

BY MARK RICHARDSON

During my speaking engagements, a couple of the questions I often ask the audience include: Are you feeling stressed? Are you feeling a little overwhelmed? And, are you feeling your day is controlling you?

As you can imagine most speakers don't ask questions like these unless they know what the majority of the responses from the audience will be. (I would imagine your answer is the same as theirs — "Yes!")

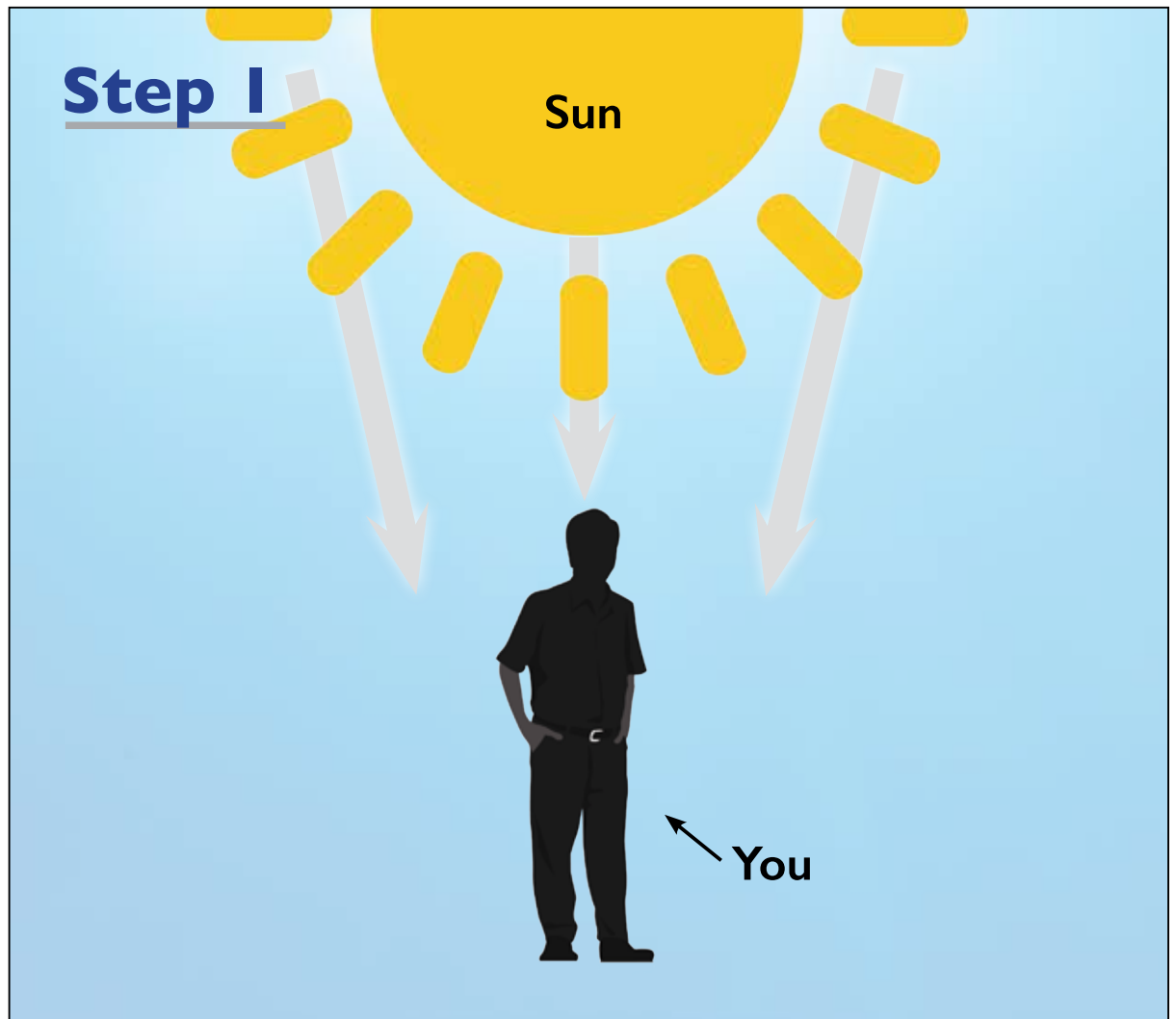
I generally not only get many hands raised but also can see in their faces the weight of the stress they are really experiencing.

Finding the Causes

Many years ago, I hosted a radio talk show on home remodeling. While I am not a therapist, I would have a psychologist come on the talk show to talk about the stress of living through different types of remodeling projects.

As a scientist, the psychologist would break apart the roots of the stress. This stress was primarily driven by being overwhelmed by the decisions and the fears of the unknown or unfamiliar. At that time, I began thinking more about the proliferation of product choices and the speed at which homeowners were expected to make decisions and began training on this topic.

I only share this story because you can better understand why you might be feeling the same weight and type of stress today. The speed at which business and life happen is faster than ever before. You are required to have more information and knowledge — and make more decisions faster. The number of balls you are juggling nowadays is greater. All of which leads to a high level of overwhelm that creates STRESS.



How Do You React?

So how do you deal with stress? The first option is to crawl into a cave and hope it all goes away or you can complain about it if someone is actually willing to listen. Another, and much better, alternative is to try to be proactive and deal with the stress.

As a visual thinker, I am always looking for ways to take subjects and make them more tangible and real so I can better understand them. A couple of years ago I was sitting outside on my deck on a sunny day thinking how great that sun made me feel. Then, a large

Continued on page 20

EDITORIAL

Editorial Director Tim Hodson
616.520.2161 • thodson@greatamericanpublish.com

Managing Editor Jasmina Dolce
616.520.2162 • jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com

Retail Editor Abby Kleckler
616.520.2163 • akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com

Assistant Editor Ana Olvera
616.520.2171 • aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com

Multimedia Designer Greg Ryan
616.520.2145 • gryan@greatamericanpublish.com

ADVERTISING

Vice President, Group Publisher Bob Bellew
616.520.2164 • bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com

Integrated Media Consultant - East Coast Amanda McAdam
708.560.4046 • amcadam@greatamericanpublish.com

Integrated Media Consultant - West Coast Kim Sammartino
630.901.4735 • ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com

Production Assistant Samantha Orsi
616.520.2148 • sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com

STAFF

Corporate Office 616.887.9008

Classified Advertising Manager Kim Meyers
616.520.2137 • kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com

Audience Development Becky Stovall
616.520.2138 • bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com

Business Manager Sally Ostman
616.520.2136 • sostman@greatamericanpublish.com

Creative Director Kristina Howell
616.520.2168 • khowell@greatamericanpublish.com

COO Kimberly Baker
616.520.2135 • kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com

CEO Matt McCallum
mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com

AD INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE
Benary	10-11
Berger Peat Moss LTD	23
BioWorks, Inc.	9
BLV Licht- und Vakuumtechnik GmbH	21
Drone World Expo	17
Fine Americas	15
Hurst Boiler	18
MasterTag	7
PanAmerican Seed	13
SBI Nursery Software	19

 www.facebook.com/BigGrower

GPN accepts no responsibility or liability for the validity of information supplied by contributors, vendors, advertisers or advertising agencies.

Continued from page 22

cloud began to cover the sun and my mood began to change. I was not as happy and excited about the day. Then another cloud arrived making the light almost non-existent and I felt even worse.

Later as I reflected on the mood changes, I found the experience very analogous to the overall day-to-day stresses we experience. I thought if I could begin to visualize the stresses as clouds then I might be able to find a way to vaporize them so the sun could shine more brightly.

Bring on the Sun

In my quest for “better weather,” I developed the following six-step exercise that you can do for yourself and hopefully you will find it can allow you to change how you are feeling and gain better control of this stress.

Step 1: Draw a picture of yourself

Step 2: Draw the clouds that represent the stress you are feeling. The bigger clouds are the greater stresses. The smaller ones are important too. Just a word or two for each will be fine. Some of these will be projects and some may be personal situations. Just ask yourself, “What is causing me stress?” Generally, I end up with five to seven clouds of varying sizes in my drawing.

Step 3: Write down one to three action steps for each that will help you to vaporize or shrink the stress cloud.

Step 4: Incorporate the action steps into your calendar that day or the next as To-Do items.

Step 5: Monitor the actions over the course of a few days and see how the stress cloud shrinks.

Step 6: Ask yourself, “Am I feeling better?”

Manage Your Clouds

There are several other things you always need to keep in mind as you do this exercise:

1. New clouds will come in so you need to monitor this on a weekly basis. Just like the metaphor, a couple of clouds on a beautiful day only enhance it but too many are not a happy day.
2. On really bad days, you may need help from others to address these clouds. Don't keep this a secret.
3. Every day is different so just draw the sketch from scratch rather than making a template.

There are many little techniques like this that you can develop or master to manage your stress. The most important theme, however, is you need to believe that your success or how you feel is primarily up to you, not others or the environment! ■

Mark Richardson is a business growth strategist, author and columnist. He authored the best-selling book, “How Fit is Your Business,” as well as his latest book, “Fit to Grow.” Both books are available at www.amazon.com.

