



Pressure at work is a part of life. How you choose to manage it is really the challenge. **By BARTON Goldsmith**

Mark Twain rightly said, “We have two ears and one mouth because it’s twice as hard to listen.”

Listening may be the most important part of your job, right now. It may also be the most difficult. You can easily fall into the trap of someone that hears, but doesn’t listen.

The skill that needs to be developed can be called, “Listening with the third ear.” This is where you listen for what is not being said; you listen for the feelings behind the words. This is where attitude and intention, both good and bad, become obvious.

Most CEO’s and team leaders have complained in the past that we have had to be a therapist to our team members. Right now, the ability to listen and give understanding will help you and your people deal with the crisis at hand and in the times ahead.

Understanding pressure

Pressure is a part of life. How we choose to react to it is really the challenge. Step one is to see it, step two is to acknowledge it, and step three is to do more than just talk about it. Doing this releases the steam from the pressure cooker, and prevents

an explosion, which usually causes a mess. Integrating this, and other tools, into your behaviours will keep you and your people emotionally healthy during difficult days.

Pressure can be positive. It helps people feel alive and productive, and it makes life interesting. In fact, many of us thrive on pressure. On the other hand, it’s stress that needs to be avoided, and stress happens when there is either too much or too little pressure in our lives. When you’re in a situation like this, too much pressure can bring you to your knees. It can affect your health, your family, and your company.



LEADERSHIP Dealing with Pressure

Your internal pressure regulator

Sometimes it's difficult to recognise the pressure and stress of a situation, and the desire to do the right thing becomes overwhelming. It's the strongest of us that drive ourselves to distraction. Watch yourself, and listen to those closest to you. If you are advised that your tolerance level or work performance is suffering, take a serious look at your internal pressure regulator. You may be overdue for a break when you are short-tempered, depressed, or tired. We all have internal regulators that go off in different ways, but if you are behaving in a manner that is not your norm, or if you stop caring, it'd be a warning signal from your internal pressure regulator.

Leadership and pressure

We are always dealing with some pressure. In good times, we seem to anticipate problems. In difficult times, we may not be able to conceive the crisis at hand. During the crisis, you will wear many hats — general, soldier, and therapist. Learning to let your people vent and training yourself and your family to respond, and not react, are important skills to master.

Good leaders explain the challenge, and at the same time, they share their vision for the future. They also look for the upside, while continually demonstrating their resolve. Since some crises can make or break an individual — or, a company — it's important to find ways to release some of the pressure and maintain your role.

Release your stress

Talk to someone about feelings and fears; you may also consider re-arranging your priorities. Leave work early for a family dinner, or do something to avoid isolation. As long as you let some steam off on a regular basis, pressure isn't a killer. Don't gloss over this point, as much as 80 per cent of all terminal diseases can be related to stress. Play golf,

do yoga, run, or scream in your car. Whatever it takes to release stress, do it. Don't keep frustration bottled up; give your stress a voice.

One of the most successful stress reduction techniques is the "One-Minute Vacation." It combines relaxation and visualisation to create a psychological pressure release valve. To take this "mini-vacation," simply visualise yourself in a beautiful and peaceful place. Next time, the pressure builds, try this technique of picturing yourself in your peaceful place for 60 seconds. It can release mounds of stress.

Rely on others

Nobody has all the answers. That's why it's important to get coaching and support from peers and friends. If you don't have the answers within, you need to seek them out. By seeking out the answers, you strengthen your own abilities. There are many seasoned counsellors and groups that can offer support. You might even consider bringing a therapist into your company for a day. It could be of great help to your people, and if nothing else it is a powerful way of showing you care. Sometimes, this is all it takes — just showing in some way that you care.

Remain cool

Behaviour is an extremely important tool. Do you lose it in a crisis, or do you, as Thomas Jefferson suggested, "Remain cool and unruffled

Learn to Communicate

Communication is the most important element in a crisis. 90 per cent of serious controversies result from misunderstanding. When situations become problematic, choose your words and messages carefully. They can help mitigate the challenges that arise. If perception dictates reality, the person-in-charge must be perceived as in control and as having the ability to help everyone recover from the crisis. Some quick but effective communication tips include banning bad attitudes, conducting team building activities, and remaining available to the staff. Some think that communication is a soft issue, but, right now, communication may be the most important part of your world. The more information we have, the better we will survive.

in all circumstances"? Your family and your company personnel will reflect your behaviour. Executives, who are distant, or anxious, create that same demeanour in their staff. It's tough leading under pressure. That's why it's advantageous for you and your people to have someone to lean on.

Express passion

Most crises are not nearly as bad as a national crisis. To survive, your passion has to be strong. Family and team members will look to their leader to guide them through the challenges ahead. If you momentarily lose your passion, you need to take some time to reach down to the depths of their soul, and pull it up. It is your reason for your being, responsibility, and gift. If you are unable to find it, you need to seek consultation. If you still can't find it, you need to find someone who has it, and put them in charge.

These tools are lifesavers in a crisis. While some crises are vastly more significant than most we have faced, people who practice these skills usually get through the challenges more quickly and easily than those who don't. There are very few problems that others haven't experienced. Learn from them, be prepared, and persist.

Stay Well

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