

# STRESS, RISK AND ALCOHOLISM

BY W. MERRY

## ALCOHOLISM

**A**LCOHOLISM IS an illness. Fortunately it is treatable. For an alcoholic to admit to the problem and seek help requires great personal courage and deserves the encouragement and support of everyone. Organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous provide a support system for the alcoholic who wants to be cured. As a professional association we must support and encourage the treatment of this disease.

The cost of alcoholism in personal, professional and financial terms is too high. Reduced productivity, increased risk of errors and omissions, poor public image, personal and financial problems are all inevitable results of problem drinking. Many conditions both personal and external may provoke or stimulate the problem. Stress has long been related to alcoholism and coping with stress is a major weapon in dealing with the alcoholic.

## STRESS AND RISK

Evidence is mounting that we pay the price for our stressful experiences. Stress situations exert a wear and tear influence on the body, mind and spirit. Eventually stress can cause our resistances to drop, making individuals vulnerable to illness or chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, depression, apathy and alcoholism.

In the busy world of the professional surveyor we often pay little or no attention to the results of stress as we focus on short term objectives such as "getting the survey out that was due yesterday". The eventual result of too much stress too often is "burn out" and a lowering of productivity and physical well being.

Recognition of the problem of stress and the capacity to deal with it in ourselves and our employees will lead to improved working relationships, productivity and profit.

Stress is unavoidable and life is full of problems large and small, subject to many factors beyond our control. When examining stress we must look closely at human behaviour. Studies indicate that people fall into two type categories characterized by certain traits.

**Type A** people are high achievers, competitive, aggressive, fast workers and pressure performers.

**Type B** people are relaxed, steady working, not preoccupied with achievement and even tempered.

Type A people tend to be the most successful businessmen, but statistics indicate that they are two to three times as likely to experience a heart attack as those who are characterized by Type B traits. Type A behaviour is now considered by doctors to be one of the major risk factors in coronary disease and strokes.

Whether a surveyor in private practice is a Type A or B person, he or she is often forced by the nature of the business to follow a Type A pattern, i.e. fast work, deadline oriented, competitive, high achiever, etc.

With the recent economic prosperity and its effect on the volume of survey work available, the private practitioner is often forced to rush to keep even with the demands. Finding and training new staff, expanding the business etc., all have their "headaches".

The nature of surveying being a boom or bust and feast or famine type of business also impacts on the level of stress the surveyor must bear. By coming to terms with these and other stresses, the better we will be able to develop basic stress management techniques.

The cost of stress may manifest itself in several ways. As well as heart disease and high blood pressure, other chronic conditions such as depression,

high cholesterol, ulcers, poor humour, insomnia, alcoholism or lower immunity often result. Frequently these warning signs of stress are ignored or dismissed rather than associated with stress and dealt with accordingly.

Studies show that 10% of our population has high blood pressure and 10% have alcohol related problems. Both of these now are considered to be stress related.

Research has shown that when we are put under stress the entire body is affected. The cardiovascular and respiratory systems speed up, the gastrointestinal system slows down, the muscles get stronger and the immune system prepares for a possible infection. Triggering the natural stress reaction too often over a period of time has a weakening effect aiding physical and mental breakdown.

## Identifying Stress

Stress can be grouped into categories to aid in isolating the source:

### Short Term Job Related Pressures

1. Major changes in procedures.
2. Working more hours per week than normal.
3. Increased pace of work.
4. Rapid growth of business.
5. Etc. . .

### Short Term Away from Job Related Pressures

1. Restriction of social life.
2. Marriage.
3. Death of family member.
4. Serious illness.
5. Etc. . .

### Long Term Job Related Pressures

1. Too much work, too little time.
2. Feedback only when performance is unsatisfactory.
3. Conflicts between employees.
4. Unclear standards and responsibilities.
5. Etc. . .

## Long Term Away from Work Related Pressures

1. Pollution.
2. Noise.
3. Concern over the economy.
4. Anxiety about children's activities.
5. Etc. . .

Many of the stresses we are exposed to are unavoidable and we can become accustomed to them over time.

## Strategies for Coping with Stress

1. Work smarter - use time management techniques.
2. Build a healthy lifestyle, stay rested and don't overdo it.
3. Separate work life from home life (don't bring your office troubles home with you).
4. Engage in regular exercise.
5. Have good communication with your employees and clients.
6. Take vacations when required.

Studies indicate that if you follow the above strategies for coping with stress you can reduce the effects of stress related illnesses.

Our instincts may lead us into a "nose to the grindstone" strategy for dealing with stress. This may involve attempts to overwhelm the stressors with higher energy outputs but research indicates that improved lifestyle habits, good nutrition, exercise, good relationships and relaxation help reduce risks due to stress much more effectively.

## Coping with Stress in Others

It is important for the businessman to understand the stress on employees in order to help control its impact. How do we recognize when another person may be experiencing too much stress - sometimes referred to as "burn out"?

## Signals of Stress

1. Disregarding low or high priority tasks.
2. Giving reduced attention to each task.
3. Avoiding responsibilities.
4. Blocking out new information.
5. Being superficially involved - appearing to give up.
6. Being negative or cynical.
7. Appearing depersonalized or detached.
8. "Going by the book."
9. Stealing.
10. Obviously wasting time.
11. Being late or absent frequently.
12. Heavy drinking or drug abuse.

When any of these signals appear as new behaviours, they are probably signs of excessive levels of stress. Learning to identify these symptoms is the first step towards helping employees manage their stress effectively. Developing two way communication with employees is an important step. Next, encouraging your employees and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Finally, we must try to head off stressful situations by providing a secure and stable permanent work environment for our employees.

**After all, an office full of burn outs, problem drinkers and basket cases doesn't help the balance sheet, the public image of surveying or the respect a client should have for our profession.**

# GUIDE TO GPS POSITIONING

BY CANADIAN GPS ASSOCIATES

The Guide to GPS Positioning is a self-contained introduction to the Global Positioning System, designed to be used in any of the following three ways:

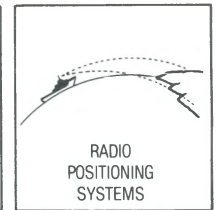
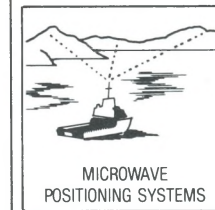
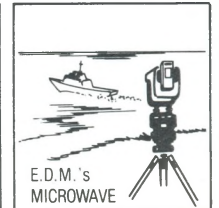
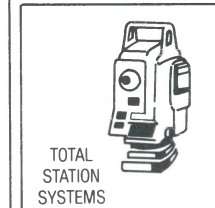
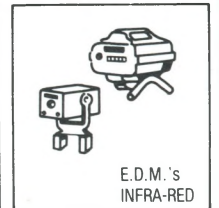
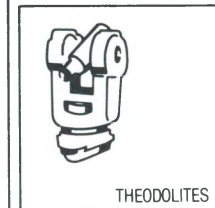
- as a self-study guide,
- as lecture notes for formal post-secondary education courses, or
- as hand-out material to support short-course and seminar presentations on GPS.

The intended audience includes practicing surveyors, hydrographers, engineers, geophysicists, geologists, geographers, oceanographers, space scientists, and professionals in information management, transportation, forestry and agriculture. In short, anyone interested in the potential of GPS to provide accurate, inexpensive, consistent positioning.

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