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Mental Health Minute: Are You Addicted to Stress?

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Do you ever complain that life has gotten too stressful, but then when things slow down do you find yourself bored, bummed, even a little sad? Many of us, says one expert, may actually be "addicted" to stress. Instead of slowing down, we're constantly chasing the next big thing--whether it's fitness, work, or relationship-related--even when our bodies and minds are screaming "slow down." Does this describe you?

The title of Debbie Mandel's new book *Addicted to Stress: A Woman's 7-Step Program to Reclaim Joy and Spontaneity in Life*--out last month from Jossey-Bass--kind of reached out and slapped me in the face. It's not that leading challenging, busy, full lives is the issue. That's healthy! But I think many of us--me included--get on the hamster wheel and find ourselves spinning so fast that we forget that it's OK to step off now and then and take a breather.

Debbie describes stress addiction like this in a recent [article](#): "When you find yourself rushing from activity to activity and no personal time for yourself, it's not the external world that is landing on your doorstep; rather it's your need to constantly open the door! Most likely you are addicted to stress [and] the adrenalin rush. If life were calmer and filled with free time, you probably would not know what to do with yourself."

Can you relate to that? I can.

"The problem with any addiction is that the high is transitory and one always needs a bigger high to experience the rush," she continues. "Addiction gives a person a false sense of control. Deep down the addict has lost personal power. A stress-addict is looking to feel numb through distraction to avoid dealing with the source of unhappiness and loss of control. It is easier to be incredibly busy than to face the painful layers of grief accumulated during the course of a lifetime."

Read more from Debbie Mandel on stress addiction [here](#). **And how about you? Would any of you agree that you are, or ever have been, addicted to stress? Were you able to reorient your thinking to get to a healthier place? If so, how did you do it?**

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