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CAN'T SLOW

BUT WOMEN ARE INCREASINGLY WIRED ALL YEAR LONG—OVERACHIEVING, UNDER-RELAXED



BAKING RELAXES ME. OR DOES IT?

I recall a recent holiday season when I decided to spare myself the stress and time-suck of shopping—and truly get into the seasonal spirit—by baking presents. I figured I'd whip up a couple of cranberry breads, maybe a batch or two of biscotti. *Fa la la!* But when I finished the breads, I had a vexing two-thirds cup of cranberries remaining. Loose ends, things left hanging: They harsh my mellow. Clearly another recipe, one

calling for that exact amount, was required. But that next project left me with half a box of tapioca. By the time I picked up the quarter cup of powdered milk left over from making cardamom cookies and poured it into a bowl to make homemade dog biscuits—yes, homemade dog biscuits—I knew I had a problem. I couldn't relax, even when I was “relaxing.” I wasn't baking, I was accomplishing. (Tip: For fluffier batter—and less of it on your walls—do not text-message while beating in the eggs.)

BOOM! DECEMBER IS THE STRESS-IEST MONTH, AND HOOKED ON OUR OWN ANXIETY. READ ON AND LEARN HOW TO MAKE IT STOP ALREADY!



A textbook example: My friend Susan Camera, a lawyer and mom who, in a recent high-speed multitasking accident, fed her

➡ Go to glamour.com/health to take a quiz to rate your stress level.

own dinner to her dog. "I wish I could say that the dog incident was a wake-up call," she says. "But I continue to hurtle through my life, running on adrenaline and compulsive anxiety. I periodically remind myself that this is no way to live. But I don't want to give up anything I have or do or my image of what I can and should accomplish, just for the sake of a little serenity—which I reassure myself is either overrated or nonexistent, anyway."

THE REAL REASON WOMEN CAN'T SLOW DOWN

Stress is not new, nor are women who do too much. So what makes today's mass addiction different? Camera's sentiment says it all: Women, more so than men, appear to be increasingly driven by the notion of what they "should" accomplish, says stress management expert Debbie Mandel, author of *Turn On Your Inner Light: Fitness for Body, Mind and Soul*. While we have achieved some measure of equality—Hello, woman running for president! Hello, female secretary of state!—our newfound perch still feels precarious. For many, there's a sense that if we don't keep striving we'll somehow lose ground, whether it's to men, other women or even a former (younger, faster, fitter) version of ourselves. "Women are more competitive now because they can be, there are more opportunities. That's the upside," says Mandel. "But on the downside, we're especially competitive with ourselves."

To stay on top, we often feel we must succeed at everything we do, whether it's getting promoted at work, fitting into our skinny jeans or cooking the family's Sunday dinner. And of course there's a tool that can tell us how to do just about anything: the Internet, with its glut of websites, blogs, message boards, newsgroups, RSS feeds—delivered 24/7 on our cell phones/e-mailers/Web browsers. All together they make for one very toxic stress cocktail.

Our beeping, *bleeping* gadgets tap into another primal female need: "We want to connect and be connected. We want to feel like live nodes on the network," says trend consultant Linda Stone, a former executive for both Microsoft and Apple who studies technology's effect on people. And in our info-bloated culture, we want to be nodes who know—we're deathly afraid of being out of the loop. "I subscribe to nine magazines and two newspapers," says Michelle Goodman, 31, a paralegal in New York City. "Naturally, I can't keep up. But I worry that if I don't read them, I will not be on top of things. I need to know: Are chandelier earrings in or out?

Are Sweden and Denmark going to war? What if Starbucks comes out with a toffee-nut pumpkin-spice green tea and I'm not among the first to know about it?" She's only *kind of* kidding.

The truth is, underneath their bionic-woman bravado, many stress junkies are actually driven by insecurity. "They need to keep doing and performing to feel important and validated," says Mandel. "We wear our busyness like a badge of honor." Exhibit A: Emily Abedon, who has four kids, a job and volunteers for a nonprofit in Charleston, South Carolina. "I was recently in Italy and though I was mesmerized by the beauty, I couldn't help longing for the craziness of my e-mail inbox," she told me. "I missed the feeling that comes with it: 'Emily, you're important, we need you to know this or do this!' Sadly, knowing that the gelateria needed me wasn't quite enough." When she's not juggling her work and big family, she's got no one around calling her a superwoman. "I'm not proud of it, but it's hard for my ego to go two weeks without that," she says.

Another reason technology has become the ultimate enabler: It gives the type As among us a concrete way to measure just how important we are. Now, no matter how popular you were (or weren't) in high school, you can be affirmed by having a kajillion pals on Facebook or MySpace—that is, more "friends" than you can ever keep up with. Jenny from second grade is messaging me! I have to respond! It's very typical for women to not want to hurt people's feelings, even electronically (despite the fact that we're tired and, perhaps, can't really remember who the heck Jenny is). Meanwhile, the close friendships that matter—the ones

that fuel and sustain us—get squeezed out, relegated to e-mails begging to reschedule brunch.

THE TRUE COST OF ALL THIS CRAZINESS

Stress, in moderation, can be a good thing. It can make you feel powerful, motivated, alive. But when women crave stress to excess, there can be serious physical and psychological fallout. When you're racing, your adrenal gland pumps out the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Your heart pounds, your breathing revs up. In that split second when you need to slam on the brakes or leap out of the way, this "fight or flight" response can save your life. But we are not designed to stay in that mode. "We're hardwired to maintain that arousal for a short time—emphasis, *short*,"

STRESS
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MINUTE HOLIDAY STRESS BUSTERS

Here's what does the trick for these frazzled-as-you-are Glamour readers:

“Jumping jacks release nervous energy for me and then usually morph into a kind of shimmy or interpretive dance—so the silliness helps, too.”

—JULIET EASTLAND, 39

“A quick call to a funny friend works wonders.”

—TRACI MILHOLEN, 29

“I know I'm not supposed to eat out of stress, but sometimes a cookie or two makes everything better.”

—MELISSA BANDY, 23

“Sex. Which, OK, sometimes takes five minutes.”

—JEN BRAUN, 35



says Pamela Peeke, M.D., assistant professor of medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore and author of *Body for Life for Women*. "Walking around with that much cortisol and adrenaline in your system over time is not healthy. It affects your memory, concentration and performance, and can speed up aging." It can also cause insomnia, weaken your immune system and cause fat to accumulate in the abdomen—what Dr. Peeke calls "stress fat." And in extreme cases, if you don't give yourself a reprieve, you can go from stress junkie to stress burnout. "If you keep on pumping out those hormones at their maximum level, your adrenal gland can just run out of gas," says Esther Sternberg, M.D., a mind-body expert at the National Institute of Mental Health. What can result is extreme tiredness, nervousness and body aches that some practitioners call "adrenal fatigue."

Aside from its effects on your health and psyche, stress can also corrode your relationships. For one thing, when you're

strung out on stress, "you're no fun for the people closest to you," says Carole A. Rayburn, Ph.D., a clinical, consulting and research psychologist in Silver Spring, Maryland. Research by the Center for Work-Life Policy found that 45 percent of people in high-powered, stressful jobs are too tired to even speak to their partners when they come home; about half say their work comes between them and a satisfying sex life. And how's this for a buzz kill? Marotta says her stress-junkie patients are often less orgasmic than their calmer counterparts.

HOW ADDICTED ARE YOU?

Try this simple diagnostic Marotta recommends: Sit still and read a book for 30 minutes. (You could also try something like knitting or drawing.) Just do that *one* thing. If the very idea of it makes you crazy, you're a stress junkie. If you (continued on page 311)

"I like to make a **mosaic**. I'm calmer the moment I smash a nice plate."

—CINDY PERMAN, 35

“I rub the **pressure point** at the base of my thumb and forefinger for a minute. It lifts the stress a bit.”

—TIFFANY KAHNEN, 25

"I go to a **gossip site** to read about stars' problems."

—RANIA EID, 25

"I **hide in the bathroom** if I'm at a party and I need a break. Or hell, even when I'm at home."

—KAREN FOX, 37

“**Chanting**. It works.”

—SASHA SIEFMAN, 27

"I've been known to sit in a car with the windows rolled up **singing** 'You Oughta Know' by Alanis. Loudly."

—ALICE NEUMANN, 23

Identity Thief *continued from page 230*

are on their way." The woman stared at her, stunned. The cab driver lifted his hands off the wheel. "You're scaring me," the woman said as she jumped out of the cab. "Stop following me!"

"I'm really scared too!" Lodrick called after her. "Can you just wait for the police to come? I'll apologize if I'm wrong."

The woman took off again, tossing a black pouch into an empty grocery cart on her way. "She dropped something," Lodrick told the 911 operator, bending down to pick it up. "It's a Prada wallet!"

Wallet in hand, Lodrick kept running. Across Market Street, the woman hopped onto a parked streetcar. Lodrick rushed up to the driver and begged him not to start the vehicle—and the woman jumped off. "Just stop!" Lodrick begged. "I can't!" the woman said. "I'm on probation!" Then she ran back across Market.

When are the police going to get here? Lodrick thought. She followed the woman off Market, onto Franklin Street and around a corner—and saw no one.

"I lost her," Lodrick said to the 911 operator. She opened the wallet. Inside were several cards and various papers. Tears sprang to her eyes. "Everything has my name on it!" she told the operator. "Here's my bank statement! My debit card!"

A few minutes later a policeman arrived. "She's gone," Lodrick said, her chest still heaving from the chase through the hilly San Francisco streets. "I'll take a look around," the policeman said, walking into a nearby parking garage. "You wait here."

The cop checked the garage while Lodrick caught her breath. After a few minutes he found the thief, crouched behind a car and smoking a cigarette.

As the policeman handcuffed the woman, the reality of what she'd done—chased down a potentially dangerous criminal—hit Lodrick. I can't believe I did that! she thought. The policeman began to lead the suspect away, and Lodrick made eye contact with her for the first time. "You should have kept running," Lodrick said.

UNMASKING THE OTHER KAREN LODRICK

At the police station, Lodrick learned a few things about her doppelganger: Her real name was Maria Nelson. She was 31 and had a record of 75 prior felony arrests—for burglary, drugs and identity fraud—as well as a methamphetamine and heroin habit. "I thought, Wow. Not only have I been buying this woman clothes, but I've probably been buying her drugs, too," Lodrick says.

The district attorney told Lodrick that Nelson had specifically been targeting her, although he didn't say why, and knew many things about her, including where she lived. In fact, they were practically neighbors—the two women had apartments less than a mile apart. Lodrick believes that Nelson broke into her mailbox several times, to steal the ATM card she'd ordered and the letter that included the PIN number. She also guessed that over the course of several months, Nelson had stolen bank statements, a certificate of deposit receipt with Lodrick's social security number and a paycheck for \$8,000 (Lodrick hadn't missed it, because the check had arrived earlier than she'd anticipated).

Nelson was charged with fraudulently using another person's identity and jailed for 44 days before her arraignment. Her public defender arranged for her to plead guilty, and she was sentenced to only the 44 days already served, plus three years probation. Maria Nelson was released as soon as the hearing was over.

The minimal sentence rocked Lodrick to her bones. "I couldn't believe it," she says. "I worked so hard to get my identity back. Six months of my life was completely ruined. I'm *still* dealing with it. I went out and caught this woman myself—literally ran her down in the street—and they just slapped her wrist and sent her off to do it to someone else!"

Although Lodrick couldn't get what she felt was justice, she might still get compensation. "I lost money because I took time off to clear my credit," she says. "I'm going to get it back." California is a restitution state, which means that victims of certain crimes are allowed to seek monetary damages. Lodrick's restitution hearing was scheduled to be held on October 19, and at press time, she was planning to ask for the money Nelson took, plus money lost in wages and late fees, as well as money for pain and suffering. The total amount of the claim: \$72,000.

Lodrick has also started a website, fightingbacknow.com, to help other victims of identity theft. Despite her frustrations with the justice system, she's found her last year's experience to be a not altogether bad one. "Before this, if someone had walked up to me and said that I look like the kind of woman who would chase her own thief down a crowded San Francisco street, I never would have believed it," she says. "But you know what? It turns out that I am that kind of woman—which, when you think about it, is kind of awesome." ©

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Stress *continued from page 297*

could get through the 30 minutes, but weren't able to fully lose yourself in the activity, you still need a mini intervention. Here, four ways to get started:

- **Go on a low-info diet,** says Tim Ferriss, author of *The 4-Hour Workweek*. "Keeping up with absolutely everything is impossible," he says. "That's good news: You don't have to try." Check and answer e-mails in batches just a few times a day and slim down your daily reading. Believe it or not, people will continue to rely on you and you'll still have plenty to say at parties!

- **Stop panting, start breathing.** Defuse stress whenever you feel anxious by taking a deep breath to the count of four, holding it to five, then letting it out with force. "Deep breathing releases serotonin, which can quell the tsunami of cortisol, calming you down," says Dr. Peeke.

- **Quit automatically saying you're "so crazed"** when someone asks how you are. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy, says Mandel. (And underneath, it's a rather un-charming brag implying that you're important—perhaps more important than they are.)

- **Take a vacation from "yes."** Most stress junkies have an "earth mother—Santa Claus complex," an urge to nurture everyone and give out endless goodies, says Rayburn. But instead of saying yes to every project or invite, choose only those that truly interest you (allowing, of course, for one or two like-it-or-not work or family obligations). True satisfaction comes from choosing quality over quantity, she says.

You could also try what has worked for me: Apprentice yourself to a pro. My husband, bless his heart, actually cannot do more than one thing at a time—he needs complete silence to make a left turn. His ability to be focused (while annoying if I'm trying to tell him to turn right) is so strong it eventually rubs off when I'm with him. "Let's say you're walking fast, but the person you're with is walking slowly," says Rayburn. "At first you may resent the fact that they're not keeping up, but eventually—if you care about walking with that person—you've got to slow down." Works for me. If I want to talk to David, he's not going to follow me around the house while I make calls and inventory all my canned goods. I have to go to his home office: the couch. And—can you imagine?—just sit. Once I manage to tune out the e-mail pings in the distance and take a few breaths, it feels great. ©

Lynn Harris is the author of the comic novel Death By Chick Lit.