How to Stress Less and Smile More

Plus

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Preventing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
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Welcome to the May issue of PA Enterprise. We are now in a period of transition as Tony Blair finally tenders his resignation and, though he’s been the chancellor for ten years, everyone begins to ask what Gordon Brown is really like. Whatever your politics, perhaps you’ll agree that Blair could have learnt from our article The Unselfish Leader: How to Act Responsibly When in a Position of Authority. And with Brown’s – possibly unfair – characterization as a “controlling”, it might help him to read the article too.

Some leaders – from managers of small departments to CEOs – have a phobia of promoting and encouraging those around them. Perhaps they believe that they themselves will be shown up as deficient. Or perhaps they have been in the department for a long time and have a sense of ownership. Either position can come from personal insecurity, but is actually hugely counter productive, both personally and for business. As a manager, surrounding yourself with happy, competent, lateral thinking colleagues will only do you good. In a recent talk, the CEO of Cobra beer, Lord Bilimoria, informed the audience that the secret of his success was to have systematically surrounded himself by people who were better than him. By employing the best marketing people, administrative people and financial people he’d gone from success to success.

Looking after your health is also great for business, as well as for yourself. Our articles How to Stress Less and Smile More: 6 Fundamental Steps to Improved Health and You Don’t Need to Feel Guilty When You Take a Break tell you how to put things in perspective, whilst Preventing the Devastating Effects of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome offers advice on how to make sure that the office doesn’t leave its mark on you.

We also have Communication Showdown: Video and Live Meetings Square Up, Networking Skills: 10 Steps To Networking Heaven! and A Day in the Life of…, all of which have some fantastic insights. Then, for some light refreshment, we bring you Sudoku and, for a main meal, our Sunny Sunday Lunch menu.

We’d like to wish you a fantastic May and that you manage to make the most of the upcoming bank holiday.

Basma Hadid
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The Unselfish Leader: How to Act Responsibly When in a Position of Authority

By John Schonegevel

Being an unselfish leader can reap great rewards not only for others, but for yourself too

It is all too easy when in a position of authority – as a supervisor, manager, leader, parent, or politician – to feel that one has earned the right to behave selfishly. After all, that is the way very many people, including many of our role models, actually do behave. Certainly, the temptations are ever present: each and every little step one takes can be justified and can then be followed by a commitment not to repeat it. Soon you find yourself taking another step and then another. Eventually you stop worrying about the need for self-justification. You’ve surely earned the right to behave as you please and in the manner that most others with power behave.

Termite Ridden Solution
In this scenario, the only strategy for personal success is seemingly based on driving all other people into the ground. When seemingly everybody is following the same strategy, it becomes difficult to see any real alternatives. Especially as this strategy does appear to lead to success. But it’s a hollow success. It’s like a building that has been eaten away by termites. On the outside, all looks fine, but as soon as you touch it, it starts to fall apart. All strength, vitality and goodness has been removed from the inside. It takes very little for the façade itself to crumble into dust.

This is the risk that many people take with their careers by following a selfish strategy. If and when things go wrong they have no strength or support left: it’s all been eaten away by their selfish actions in the past. There is another way to achieve success. It’s not easy. It takes hard work, commitment and effort. But it leads to a better, stronger, longer-lasting and more solid success – one that can take the knocks and setbacks and help you deal with them.

The Unselfish Approach
That’s the value of the unselfish approach to leadership. Unselfish leadership is defined in the pioneering research undertaken by Dalton and Thompson that lead to the “Four Stages of Contribution” model. Effective leaders consistently demonstrate Stage three and four behaviours. Unselfish leaders should take the time to develop and act on the following:
Consistently “let go” of detailed work.
The Unselfish leader knows that her job is to understand the bigger picture – to help interpret what’s happening out there for the benefit of those within. You can’t do this if your time is spent doing too much of the detailed work. This is what the unselfish leader delegates to others.

Focus more on results achieved than the exact methods of completion.
Don’t assume that you have a monopoly on how best to get the work done. Different people work in different ways. Value and encourage this diversity, even if it leads to some uncomfortable times for you. Encourage your people to learn to understand more about their most and least effective ways of working – and to do the same for their staff.

Make the time to learn more about the organisation and the market.
You cannot be effective if you only see the world through your narrow specific functional area. Learn to appreciate the context in which your organisation operates, to understand more about what other functions contribute to the organisation’s overall purpose and success.

Participate in activities outside your functional area of expertise.
This is an extension of the point above. Get involved in additional tasks and projects that expose you to different areas of the business. Learn, learn and learn some more. Meet people; get to know them. Build strong mutually supportive relationships. These relationships are the foundation of your future success. Treat them as they wish to be treated and you will earn their respect.

Delegate the best or choice assignments as much as the routine.
It’s so easy to reserve the best, most exciting projects and tasks to yourself: so easy and so selfish. Don’t! Let your people take them on. Let them learn from them. Demonstrate that you have their best interests at heart. It will help ensure they develop their skills, increase their engagement and their motivation. That means they are more likely to approach the essential, but mundane, day-to-day tasks with equal enthusiasm and commitment.

Make time to help others.
Be generous with your time and share your skills, experience and ideas with others.

Let others learn through their mistakes.
If you want people to learn, you need to let them have some rope and occasionally hang themselves. It’s far more effective than telling them what will happen. Of course you may find that they surprise you. What you expected to fail may actually turn out to be a success.

Either way, offering people space to sometimes fail without getting shot is another powerful way to build their confidence, skills and motivation. As an unselfish leader your role is to give them that space. You do that having measured and understood the risks. That remains your responsibility.

Enable others to come up with their own answers to problems.
Too much telling turns people off. If you persist in giving people the answers to their problems they soon stop trying to learn for themselves. They rapidly become dependent on you. You’ll find that they can’t take the initiative. Prevent this by becoming a great coach. Coach people to help them discover answers for themselves. Step by step you’ll be developing stronger, more effective people, who will see you for the great unselfish person you are. Someone who has helped others succeed.

Allow others to be the “expert”.
When you were on the way up, you were expected to be the expert. That’s what your reputation was built on. Now you’re at the top, you must stop trying to be the expert. Let others do that. It’s one of the hardest aspects of being an unselfish leader, because every fibre of your being wants you to...
stay in your comfort zone. You’ve been there, done it and received the T-shirt. So what – you cannot be a functional expert and be good at leading. What you, your staff and the business need is for you to increase the breadth of your knowledge.

- **Share the credit when others succeed.**
  Be delighted when others do great work. Ensure their successes are communicated. Promote them rather than yourself. Let them become your ambassadors. Others will see this and decide that they want to work for you. You’ll have access to the best talent in your organisation.

- **Share your internal and external networks with others.**
  Unselfish leaders know that their primary role is to ensure their organisation’s success. Connections and networks hold the power to achieving this, so they happily share their networks and make the necessary connections.

- **Successfully sell or advocate the ideas and work of others.**
  If someone has a great idea, be open to it. Actively support and promote it. Avoid the “not invented here” syndrome. You don’t have time for negative or insular thinking. Only insecure selfish managers take this approach.

- **Allow others to do their work without micro-managing them.**
  Micro-management is the hallmark of the selfish manager. For the unselfish leader it is something to be avoided at all costs. Letting go, through effective delegation, builds your staff’s confidence and increases their trust in you. It does the same thing for you. As your people increase in capability, so your trust and confidence in them increases and you let go even further. In time you build a team of people who can do more, more quickly than you could possibly achieve on your own.

- **Successfully co-ordinate and integrate the work of others to create business solutions.**
  This is the overarching role played by unselfish leaders. They craft better futures based on the work of others. They achieve by harnessing people’s talents and passions so delivering far more than any one person could do on their own.

If you can approach the rest of your life as an unselfish leader by showing a true and unqualified “generosity of spirit” to all those you work, live and play with then sooner or later you’ll reap the considerable benefits.

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John Schongevel is a director of New Frontiers, behavioural change specialists, and Novations Consulting Partners. You can share and swap ideas with him through his website www.new-frontiers.co.uk.
More than two-thirds of visits to doctors’ surgeries are for stress-related illnesses. Stress has been linked to headaches, backaches, insomnia, anger, cramps, elevated blood pressure, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and lowered resistance to infection.

For women, stress is a key factor in hormonal imbalances resulting in menstrual irregularities, PMS, fibroids, endometriosis and fertility problems. Stress can also be a factor in the development of almost all disease states, including cancer and heart disease.

**Life Out of Balance**

In most cases stress is a result of letting life get out of balance. This happens when we put all our energy into just one or two areas of our life (usually work) and ignore the rest. We take on too much, over-promise, don’t delegate and push our own wants and needs into the background by always looking after others’ needs first. We overload ourselves to the point where we are forced to stop attending to what is important to us, such as time for our interests and time to spend with our families.

If stress is a major issue for you there are steps you can take to restore balance to your life – so you can stress less and smile more.
Step 1: Develop Extreme Self-Care
Most people suffering stress have become good at practising extreme self-neglect! They don’t eat well, rarely exercise or take time out and probably can’t remember the last time they had a holiday. If you are one of these people you need to take your self-care to new heights, above and beyond your normal limit. When you take care of your own needs first you are building a reserve of energy and resources that will enable you to sustain extreme self-care with enough left over to care for others.

Creating ten delightful daily habits that give you enjoyment is a great place to start. Here are some suggestions:

- Stretch for two minutes;
- Laugh for five minutes;
- Floss your teeth;
- Read to a child;
- Hug a loved one;
- Go for a ten-minute walk in the park;
- Listen to your favourite song;
- Write in a journal;
- Eat three fruit and five vegetables;
- Read a chapter of a good book;
- Drink two litres of water; and
- Go to bed early.

The key to gaining the accumulated benefits from your daily habits and practising extreme self-care is to do them each day. Start with one habit and commit to practising it for seven days, then add another, practising both for another seven days. Continue adding your habits until you are practising all ten items on your list daily.

Step 2: Eliminate Tolerations
Tolerations are situations and conditions you put up with that drain you physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. They include crossed boundaries, unfinished business or projects, others’ bad behaviour, frustrations, unwanted commitments, clutter, messy surroundings, broken items, being over weight, weeds in the garden and debt.

List five tolerations that drive you nuts about your job, life, and health and home and then devise a plan to get rid of the first “intolerable” toleration on your list this week. Notice how this makes you feel, how it lifts a weight off your shoulders. Now think about how much better you will feel when you get rid of the other four tolerations on your list! When you’ve completed the elimination of the first five tolerations you’ve listed, start a new one and keep working until you have zero tolerations in your life.
Step 3: Having Your Needs Met
Unmet needs cause us to become upset, angry, stressed and depressed. The key to satisfying our personal needs is to identify them. Identify needs that feel authentic, not ones that may look good to others or are superficial. Be aware that what you consider to be a need (such as to be loved) may be hiding a real need (self-esteem). Ideas of personal needs are:

- Calmness;
- Freedom;
- Being listened to;
- Independence;
- Feeling valued;
- Stability;
- Respect;
- A life purpose;
- Satisfying work;
- Honesty;
- Loyalty;
- Being busy;
- Security;
- Being loved;
- Balance;
- Responsibility;
- A career;
- Children.

It may be necessary for you to tell others what your needs are and learn to ask for support.

Step 4: Smile Often and Laugh More
Scientists have found that laughter stimulates the release of beneficial brain neurotransmitters and hormones, which can reduce stress, improve our immune system and give us a general sense of wellbeing. Some doctors are using laughter therapy to replace antidepressants and to reduce the use of painkillers. According to researchers, faking laughter will also produce the same health and wellbeing results as real laughter.

Do you need to improve your ability to laugh more? Bronwen Williams from Laughter Works Australia recommends that upon waking we should sit upright in bed or in a chair and smile vigorously and ridiculously. This muscular action induces the release of endorphins and within minutes we actually feel happy!

Bronwen writes that, “Positive self-talk can be very empowering, so let’s begin our days with loud statements such as I love laughing! People love hearing me laugh! Laughing makes me happy and healthy! I have a beautiful smile! Let’s express not suppress, let’s laugh and live longer!”

Step 5: Set Goals
Without goals we have no direction in life. We are lost! When we are lost we become stressed and overwhelmed. Goals help us navigate our lives with greater ease and reaching goals fulfils us, making us happier.

One way to find out what your real goals are is to write a list of 100 things you’d like to accomplish in your life and then start working on your list today!

When you set a goal it tells your subconscious mind what is important to you and to be on the lookout for things, people, opportunities or situations that will enable you to move towards your goal. Establishing goals is a tool we can use to have what we want and need in our personal and professional lives.

Step 6: Create a Supportive Environment
Our surroundings can be supportive and give us energy or drag us down and leave us stressed and tired. An inspiring, enjoyable environment filled with positive things and people energises us and we feel happier. We all need good support structures to help our lives flow with less effort and to remain balanced. Five important life support structures are:

- People: family, friends, life coach, accountant, doctor.
- Places: your office, desk, car, home.
- Things: your phone, computer, home décor.
- Processes: filing system, record keeping, time management programmes.
- Inner environment: your outlook on life, self-esteem level, thought processes.

Examine these five categories and look at who or what you use to support you in each area. Are you truly being supported? What do you need to change to feel more supported in all areas of your life?

Start making the easiest changes first. Just as it can take time to end up stressed, overwhelmed and out of balance, it also takes time to make positive changes in your life. Sometimes trying to implement change (even for the better) can itself cause stress and prevent a person remaining motivated.

For this reason it is important to work on each of the steps one at a time, mastering each before moving on to the next. If you discover you can’t make the changes on your own, get support from a counsellor, doctor, naturopath, friend, peer or life coach who specialises in stress issues. Above all, keep in mind the benefits you will enjoy when you’ve mastered the steps to stress less and smile more!

Lisa Branigan specialises in coaching women who are stressed, tired and overwhelmed with their busy lives. For further go to www.quantumcoaching.com.au or email lisa@quantumcoaching.com.au.
We live in an era in which many forms of traditional communication are heading online, and in which demand for video communication and video conferencing is on the rise. We spend much of our working lives opposite a screen. I’m a freelance copywriter, a communications professional, so I’ve decided it’s time to ask, is the value of face-to-face meetings diminishing? Do they face redundancy in the future?

The Case for Video

Video is being used increasingly for team meetings, conferences and even for meetings between clients and suppliers. Statements attempting to explain why include: the rapid adoption of broadband; the need for increased staff productivity and decreased capital expenditure; issues relating to travel because of the need to reduce everyone's carbon footprint. All of these are touted as the reason that companies see video conferencing as a viable alternative to regular meetings and conferences.

But we’ve been here before haven't we? Video was much tipped to kill the “Radio Star” in the early 80s, yet has so far not managed to kill anyone. And I think it is unlikely to be any more successful with the professional event and meeting organiser, as, despite the best efforts of video and its techie cohorts, face-to-face meetings are on the rise. In the UK, meetings and conferences contributed £12 billion to the economy last year.

What is it about video anyway: why does it aspire to cause so much destruction? Is it really so aggressive? Perhaps we’ve all got the wrong idea about video.
TV, the One-Eyed God

It's true that video communication has well and truly penetrated our lives; we're used to seeing everything on a screen. The television has been the one-eyed god of our living rooms for decades and video-conferencing technology builds its success on the continued development of this visual form of worship. It is perhaps not surprising then that when management hear the words “video conferencing” they charge as if approaching the divine conferencing solution.

But the reason video fails to completely consume us is all too apparent: it lacks the ability to radiate the most essential elements of human communication. You can't build a relationship with a screen and you can't interact with someone fully on an emotional level unless you're sharing the same environment. A video conference can lack character and influence. There are subtle, “human” benefits to a “real” face-to-face meeting.

The Case for Live Meetings

What about the inspiration and determination gleaned by the individual from being in a room full of hundreds of enthusiastic and energetic peers? Or that invaluable feeling of empowerment developed after spending a day or two in the company of fellow employees, sharing drinks, expressing ideas and rubbing shoulders with the big wigs? You can't discount the value of the sales commitment offered by third-party dealers after attending a series of rousing speeches and inebriating beverages. Video-conferencing simply can't provide the riches delivered by genuine human interaction and it's a mistake to overlook the human aspect of anything, especially business.

There's another issue with anything on a screen. It's simply less effective than meeting face-to-face.

Make the Message Stick

A meeting that involves real people creates far more intense emotions; you can't help but feel involved and live meetings offer the opportunity to get your message across on so many different levels, meaning the message sticks in the memory that bit longer. Ask yourself this question: What did I watch on TV a few weeks ago? If you can remember, can you remember how you felt whilst watching, the emotions it stirred in you? Most people can't remember the plot line from their favourite soap a few months back. Do the same exercise on the last event or meeting you attended. I’m willing to gamble it's a lot easier to pinpoint how you felt there. What it comes down to is that sitting in front of a screen is a less effective form of communication than actually meeting. The other people can't see you, so you don't have to concentrate; you don't have to conform.

Establishing the Right Tone

When you see something on screen it's emotionless, it doesn't appeal to all five senses and therefore has less impact. In many cases, the person talking isn't even aware if you're watching or listening, and certainly has no feeling for the mood.
you're in and therefore what the appropriate tone of voice is. And as a freelance copywriter, I know how important it is to get the tone right. Communication in any form simply misses the target when the tone is wrong.

**Horses for Courses**

Video technology can be used to great effect as part of a conference or seminar and there are situations where the “human aspect” of meetings is less important; at these times video conferencing can save time and money. Being able to download a conference or seminar you missed to watch at your convenience is a massive bonus and adds to the success of the live event.

Clearly, there's a place for video conferencing in the business world, as there is with much new technology; everything has its place and its role should always be to enhance and hone the delivery method. Video and live meetings can get on well; many of them work in harmony, creating great effects together, so let's stop putting them at loggerheads. Surely video doesn't really want to kill anyone, it's just been misunderstood.

Use all communication in any way that is appropriate for the format. Use your imagination, but don't use video conferencing as a replacement for real meetings and conferences as you are unlikely to achieve the powerful results these face-to-face activities deliver. ■

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You Don’t Need to Feel Guilty When You Take a Break

By Andy Smith

Breaks are essential for keeping stress at bay and staying productive.
We all know that we work better and feel less stressed if we take regular breaks during the working day. However, the stressed individual may feel uncomfortable and guilty about taking breaks, even when they admit that their usual driven work patterns are causing them stress (“but the work just won’t get done”). Research is beginning to establish a scientific basis for common-sense advice.

Our bodies have a “Basic Rest” and “Activity Cycle”, consisting of 90–120 minutes of activity followed by 20 minutes of rest. This cycle can easily be stretched or distorted, as when the individual works through the morning without taking a break, skips lunch, or works late. However, it has been found that people whose rest-activity cycle remains irregular for extended periods develop stress-related symptoms.

The rest-activity cycle involves alternate shifts in dominance from one side of the brain to another. When we move from activity to rest, the left side of the brain (associated with logic, sequence, details, analysis, calculation and language – “work mode”) gives up dominance to the right side (associated with patterns, intuition, and emotion – “relaxation mode”). While we can force ourselves to remain in work mode for long periods, the right side of the brain eventually reasserts itself, leading to a loss of concentration and increased tiredness and error rates.

**Go Back to School**

It’s no accident that workplaces and schools traditionally built mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks into their schedule; employers and school authorities found that people work better and think more clearly with regular breaks.

Sometimes a client will say to me, “This won’t work. I’ll just have to add the time on to the end of the day so I’m working even longer hours!” Actually, no, you won’t. Just because you’re at your desk, it doesn’t mean you’re doing productive work at a constant rate. If you’re anything like me, you get far more done when you’re feeling good, and far less done (with more mistakes) when you’re tired.

By taking breaks in the middle of the morning and the middle of the afternoon, getting out of the workplace altogether at lunchtime, and leaving work at a reasonable time in the evening, you can improve the quality of your work and get more done in less time. So even if you aren’t prepared to do it for the sake of your own health and sanity, you can take breaks with a clear conscience - because your employer (or clients, or customers) will benefit as well!

**Breaking the Vicious Circle**

What happens if you don’t take account of the needs of your mind-body system? Typically, if the “arousal response” to stressful situations is prolonged over weeks or months (“chronic stress”), excess amounts of stress hormones are produced and flood the system. It seems that the cells of the body begin to shut down and destroy their receptor sites for these hormones. When the receptors are below their normal levels the person will experience withdrawal – they miss the adrenaline high and the levels of arousal and performance that go with it. They will be tempted to over-work, or use stimulants (sugar, caffeine, nicotine or other drugs) to try to regain the high.

Overachievers can become locked into a vicious circle of ever-increasing levels of activity and stress hormones – until the mind-body system “crashes” and develops physical symptoms. You can avoid this, and sustain health and high performance indefinitely, by being aware of the needs of your mind-body system to take regular breaks.

Andy Smith is an emotional intelligence coach and NLP trainer based in Manchester. For a wealth of additional practical tips, visit his website at www.practicaleq.com or his “Practical EQ” blog at www.practicaleq.typepad.com. Andy also speaks at the NW Business NLP and Emotional Intelligence Group’s monthly meetings in Central Manchester (www.manchesternlp.co.uk).
Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is a devastating disorder that is one of many listed under the general term, “Repetitive strain injury” (RSI).

Of all repetitive strain injuries, carpal tunnel syndrome is the most recognized and prevalent among the general populace. And due to this recognition many people are concerned about being afflicted with carpal tunnel and its debilitating symptoms. It is a concern that should be on the mind of anyone involved in work or recreational activities that require extensive use of the hands, especially in static motions such as gripping and/or repetitive motions like typing, clicking a computer mouse or assembly.

Below is a list of the symptoms associated with CTS and a list of steps that can be taken to help prevent it.

**CTS Symptoms**

- Tightness, discomfort, stiffness or pain on the front side of the hands/wrists.
- Tingling, numbness and/or paresthesia (pins & needles) affecting the thumb, index, middle and one-half of the ring finger. The thumb and fingers do not have to be affected simultaneously as symptoms will often vary and move around. (For example, the thumb and index finger may be numb one day and the thumb and middle finger the next.)
- Loss of grip strength in the fingers/hands.
- Pain, aching, swelling, and diminished coordination and dexterity.
- A need to stretch and/or massage hands, wrists and arms.
- Assuming a defensive posture in order to protect sensitive hands/wrists.

With the huge array of handheld electronic devices we now use, it is important to take the necessary steps in order to prevent carpal tunnel from developing in the first place. By implementing them, you can greatly reduce your risk of getting CTS as well as stave off many other repetitive strain injuries.

**CTS Prevention Protocol**

- **Task variation:** It is wise to vary tasks throughout the day in order to keep the force and duration of the specific motion to a minimum. If a typical workday involves five types of activities, instead of doing task one for one and a half hours and then moving on to task two for one and a half hours, and so on, it is best if task one can be performed for thirty minutes and then task two for thirty minutes, and so on, repeating tasks one to five every thirty minutes until they are completed. If this is not possible for the type of work that is required, ask your employer’s health director to implement a task rotation schedule where workers perform a different type of task every one to two hours throughout the day, making sure that each task is different enough that it does not tax the same muscle groups in the same manner as the previous task or the next task. It is still important that in these one to two hour shifts that small two to three minute breaks are taken every thirty minutes. Implementing task variation is a very successful tool in keeping productivity high and repetitive strain injuries like CTS to a minimum.

- **Task requirement limitation:** The “task requirement limitation” protocol sets a limit on the duration and force of a given job or task, making sure that...
workers are only required to perform a certain number of repetitive movements or a certain amount of force over a specified period of time before a break is required. Implementing a mini break for every thirty minutes of work activity is very important in order to prevent muscle hypertonicity and fatigue from setting in, the main causes of CTS.

- **Ergonomic systems**: Ergonomic systems and tools are important in helping to reduce the amount of stress and strain that is inflicted upon the body, but ergonomic systems and tools by themselves cannot prevent or “cure” injuries like CTS.

- **Mini-breaks**: It is very important to implement short breaks every thirty minutes of work activity in order to reduce stress and strain on the fingers, hands, wrists and forearms. These breaks only have to last two to three minutes, but are key in allowing the muscles to relax, which helps to prevent a muscle imbalance from occurring and developing into CTS. Even more important in CTS prevention is the implementing of the following activities into these mini-breaks.
  
  - Stretch the muscles on the front of the forearm that flexes the fingers, hand and wrist in order to lengthen them. This reduces pressure on the underlying muscles, blood vessels and nerves.
  
  - Strengthen the weak, underdeveloped muscles on the back of the forearm that extend the fingers, hand and wrist in order to help shorten/tighten them. Performing strengthening exercises to the muscle groups opposite to those that are short and tight allows the muscles on both sides of the joint to return to a more natural, balanced position. The strong, short muscles are lengthened and the weak, long muscles are shortened, creating equality and stability around the entire joint.

Of all the ideas listed, mini-breaks, stretches and exercises are the ones most important in preventing and eliminating repetitive strain injuries like CTS.

By simply being aware of, and implementing, a few simple techniques at work, individuals can prevent repetitive strain injuries and experience many years of good health without ever being affected.

**Jeff Anliker** is a therapist and inventor of therapeutic exercise products that are utilized by corporations, consumers and medical facilities around the world for the prevention and rehabilitation of repetitive strain injuries. See www.repetitive-strain.com.
Sunny Sunday Lunch

For that perfect Sunday meal outside in the garden, go for this menu. The chilli dip really gets you in the mood for the sumptuous homemade burgers, whilst the iced strawberry and almond trifle finishes the meal off perfectly, cooling you down just in time for a relaxed afternoon lying on the grass watching the world spinning round.

Mexican Dip with Chips

Serves 4

Ingredients:
For the dip
- 30ml/2 tbsp sunflower oil
- ½ small onion, finely chopped
- ½ green pepper, finely chopped
- 3 tomatoes, skinned, seeded and finely diced
- ½ red chilli, seeded and finely chopped
- juice of ½ lime
- salt and ground black pepper

For the chips
- 150g bag tortilla chips
- 2 tbsp finely grated mature Cheddar cheese
- 1.5ml/¼ tsp chilli powder
- 1 tomato, sliced for garnish

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat; add the onion and green pepper until both are tender. Reduce the heat and add in the remaining ingredients and leave to simmer for 7-8 minutes until the sauce thickens slightly and all the flavours blend. Allow to cool down, refrigerate for an hour and serve with the tortilla chips.

2. Preheat the grill; scatter the tortilla chips over a baking sheet. Mix the grated cheese with the chilli powder, sprinkle over the chips and grill for about 1-2 minutes, until the cheese has melted.

3. Remove the dip from the fridge, serve in a separate bowl. Serve the tortilla chips on a plate garnished with sliced tomatoes.

Tip: Leave out the fresh chilli and chilli powder if you prefer to have a milder flavour
Beef and Mushroom Burgers

Serves 4

Ingredients:
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 150g/2 cups small cup mushrooms
- 450g lean minced beef
- 50g/1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
- 15ml/1 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tsp dried mixed herbs
- flour for shaping
- salt and black pepper

1. Process the onion and mushrooms until both are finely chopped. Add in the beef, breadcrumbs, tomato purée, herbs and seasoning. Process until the mixture binds but still has some texture. Divide into 8-10 pieces and press into burger shapes using the flour to shape them.

2. Cook the burgers in a non-stick frying pan, or under a hot grill, for about 15 minutes, turning once until evenly cooked. Serve with cheese, onions, relish and salad in burger buns.

Tip: It's worth making your own homemade burgers to cut down on fat – the meat in these burgers is mixed with mushrooms for extra fibre.
Iced Strawberry & Almond Trifle

Serves 8-10

Ingredients:
- 115g/1½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- 115g/½ cup light muscovado (brown) sugar
- 75g/2½ cup self-raising (self-rising) flour
- 2 eggs
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 115g/1 cup ground almonds
- 5ml/1 tsp almond essence
- 15ml/1 tbsp milk

To finish
- 300g/2 cups strawberries, halved
- 25g/¼ cup flaked (sliced) almonds, toasted
- 90ml/6 tbsp fresh orange juice
- 500g/2½ cups mascarpone cheese
- 150g/2 cup Greek yoghurt
- 30ml/2 tbsp icing sugar
- 500ml/2 cups vanilla ice cream
- Whipped cream (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas 4. Grease and line a 20cm round cake tin. Place the butter, sugar, flour, eggs, baking powder, almonds and almond essence in a large bowl and beat with an electric whisk for 2-3 minutes until smooth and creamy. Stir in the milk.

2. Spoon the mixture into the greased tin, level the surface and bake for about 30 minutes or until just firm in the centre. Transfer to a wire rack and leave to cool.

3. Cut the sponge into chunky pieces and place in the base of the glass serving dishes. Scatter with the strawberries and almonds. Spoon the orange juice over the sponge pieces.

4. Beat the mascarpone in a bowl with the yoghurt and icing sugar. Put the trifle dish and the mascarpone in the fridge until the trifle is ready to be assembled.

5. To serve, scoop the ice cream into the trifle dish. Reserve a few of the remaining strawberries for decoration, then scatter the rest over the ice cream. Spoon over the mascarpone mixture and scatter with the reserved strawberries. Chill the trifle for an hour before serving. Serve with whipped cream.

Tip: The trifle will set better if all the ingredients are thoroughly chilled in the fridge before assembling. Chill again before serving.
Since August 2007, Matt Griffin has worked as the administrative assistant to the Head of the School of Care at the Newport Campus of Coleg Gwent. Leaving school with few formal qualifications Matt was determined to forge a good career for himself and so he undertook a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship as well as a work-placement in which he learnt and performed various administrative tasks. Straight after that he was appointed as the personal assistant to the directors of In-Practice Training Services (IPTS), the body that had provided him with the initial training, before achieving his current post.

Q Where did you start and how did you get to where you are now?

A In the summer of 2004 I was given my first appointment as personal assistant to the directors of In-Practice Training Services (IPTS), a management consultancy and government-funded training provider working exclusively with NHS Wales.

A few months prior to this I had responded to an advertisement from IPTS in the recruitment section of a local newspaper. The advert was aimed at people who were unemployed with few formal qualifications and looking to get on the first rung of the career ladder.

IPTS was able to offer me a comprehensive training package in the form of a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship, in addition to a work-placement undertaking various administrative tasks. In the considerably short time that I spent with IPTS, I was able to achieve the OCR NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration, Customer Service and IT as well as many other transferable skills. Since August 2005 I have been working as administrative assistant to the Head of the School of Care at the City of Newport Campus of Coleg Gwent. Coleg Gwent is the largest further education corporation in Wales and one of the largest in the UK.

My remit involves having primary responsibility for the provision of administrative support within the Faculty. I am accountable to the Head of School and the Campus Deputy Director. I assist and support the key administrative functions associated with quality assurance; learning and teaching; and academic regulatory activities.

I also provide clerical and secretarial support to the team of further/higher education lecturers within the Faculty with regards to quality, development and planning; human resources and organisation/staff development; finance; and management information services.

Q What are the three most important skills you use at work?

A These are:

- Time management and organisational skills: The ability to plan and prioritise multiple workloads is an essential part of my current role;
- IT skills: Due to the nature of my work it is important that I am proficient in the use of word-processing, spreadsheet, database, presentation and e-mail software;
- Customer service skills: As point of contact for the Faculty it is important that I can uphold a professional and courteous approach when dealing with internal and external contacts.
What does a typical day look like for you?

School administrators, unlike academic staff, work behind the scenes all year round and are fairly busy for most of that time. On a typical day I will arrive at work at 8.30 am and collect post from the mailroom on my way through reception. The first task at my desk is to read all received e-mails, prioritise them into urgent, for action or for information only. This is a task that is ongoing throughout the day.

I distribute the mail and proceed to meet with my line manager in her office. Janet is the head of the school and her office is located one block over from my own. We discuss any outstanding work and impending deadlines.

The work that I undertake varies throughout the academic year. I am responsible for inputting payroll data and processing absence returns for the Payroll and Human Resources Departments respectively.

Four times per academic year I am responsible for the distribution and data-entry of Student Perception Questionnaires; one per student within the Faculty. The Quality, Development and Planning Department use these datasets to shape student life within the College.

Other tasks that I undertake on a day-to-day basis include:

- Administration of management information software to ensure accurate and appropriate records;
- Word-processing, creating and updating spreadsheets and presentations;
- Arranging and taking minutes of Faculty meetings; and
- Organising presentation evenings and award ceremonies.

I also act as point of contact for the Faculty, including communication with students, parents and employers, dealing with general correspondence, telephone and email. I am responsible for generating and updating publicity and marketing materials; supporting college open and taster days and am an active member of the Campus Public Relations and Communications Committee.

How have you got to where you are today?

In the UK alone, there are literally thousands of administrators, but what makes a good administrator? Early in my career I recognised the increasing need for administrators to be practised and well trained: two things that I was not. To resolve this, I worked hard, was conscientious and believed in my ability to succeed.

When you are trying to organise others as part of your daily routine, it is important that others appreciate that you are organised, able to recall details with accuracy, and are totally composed.
Q What are your career plans for the future?

A My career plans are somewhat vague at the moment. I am happy in my current position and will most likely spend the next few years developing myself within the role. I have thoroughly enjoyed working within a training and development environment and would like to expand my knowledge of human resources management from a training and development perspective. I am also looking forward to the possibility of undertaking work as a Work-Based Assessor, helping others achieve their qualifications in the workplace.

Q What are you doing to make this happen?

A I have recently completed the OCR NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration and am presently working towards an HND in Business Management that I hope to complete by the end of 2007. Following this, I would like to embark on a “top-up” course to be awarded a BA (Hons) in Business Management. From there I will most likely choose a qualification specialising in HR. I’m not sure what new skills I will achieve, but I appreciate that there are always fresh challenges and learning experiences to be embraced.

Q What one key piece of advice would you have for PAs who want to get into this sector?

A A school administrator must have a great deal of patience to deal with the enormous bureaucracy associated with academic corporations. My advice to PAs wanting to get into this sector would be to:

- Undertake professional accredited qualifications such as OCR (formerly RSA), C&G or BTEC;
- Join a professional body/networking organisation such as IQPS, EUMA or IAAP;
- Welcome opportunities for continuous professional development and demonstrate a willingness to accept change and fresh challenges;
- Appreciate the need for discretion and understand data privacy legislation; and
- Uphold a healthy work-life balance!
The Hub

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own the ages, a vital component of commerce has been to make the best relationships with the best people – to make partnerships for mutual benefit.

Trust is often the acid test of how well progress is made, especially in the early stages. Although you may be recommended by others – which is usually a good sign – it is only upon meeting a new person that you can truly make a name for yourself.

Ten Tips
Imagine it’s the first conversation you’re having with someone you would like to have on your side. These small steps in how you talk to, and listen to, them will make a huge difference:

1. **Listen well and pay full attention.**
   By paying attention to them they immediately feel valued and important. This is critical in them believing that you are worth the time and effort. It’s also a matter of courtesy. When someone else is speaking listening patiently and being interested is the right thing to do.

2. **Be interested in others.**
   In the big picture, seeing this as a way of looking after your own interests is far wiser than selfish short-term actions.

3. **Keep promises and do what you say you will.**
   By always being upfront with what you say you will do – and then delivering – you will be much more attractive to most people. “Dependable”, “reliable” and “committed”, will be words to describe how others see you and the way you are.

4. **Be a great friend when others are in need.**
   Whilst this needs some care (or you spend your life sorting out everyone else’s problems), being there for others is a great asset to have. People often need someone to talk to. If you are good at this, and help them find solutions to their own problems (not you finding solutions for them all the time), they will thank you and value you.
5. Share resources and put people you know in touch with each other.

Where you can be a resource for each other, the network builds into a shared support and resource group. I can’t think of the number of times I have been able to help someone with something that I know and can share. And I know I can now call on others to help me too!

6. Be objective, not judgemental, when dealing with others.

It’s way easier to help others if you stick to fact, rather than supposition, assumptions, judgement and opinion. Hey, there’s nothing wrong with any of these – in fact we all use them all the time to live our lives. It’s just that when you apply it to someone else directly you can find they resent it and the relationship falters.

7. Talk less than you listen.

This is an old and very wise concept. You have two ears and one mouth; when you want the best from a relationship for you, then use them in that proportion. You will struggle to build a business or career relationship (or any other for that matter), when you keep yourself centre stage. People want to be heard and they are prepared to give a lot to have someone hear them. That’s your role!

8. Make time for others when you say you will.

There isn’t anything worse than people who say they will be there and then they aren’t – or cancel last minute. If you say you are going to do something, meet someone, reply to something, then do it. As you get better at recognising those times when you miss out, you’ll see the steps you need to take to avoid a recurrence. That learning will shape how well you deliver.

9. Say “yes” when you can and “no” when you can’t.

Sometimes when we are trying to make relationships work we agree to things that make us uncomfortable, or we know we are going to struggle with, or we regret. In these cases it might have been better to decline in the first place. Saying “no” is sometimes much better than “yes”. Conversely, when someone offers to help out, or do something for you, be prepared to say “yes” to them sometimes. It really builds the relationship, even though you might not have needed their help!

10. Be encouraging, enthusiastic, supportive and challenging with those you know.

Being a good friend or colleague used to be enough. In the fast-paced changing world we work in it’s time to raise the stakes. Friends are sometimes too generous, kind even. This means they won’t call the shots when they need to. Really good friends need to make sure they are that and the trusting relationship they have with others is strong enough for them to be honest and true. You need to be able to encourage, enthuse, support and challenge.

Using these ten skills when networking and even just conversing with anyone will make them like you and that makes your job of building your network that much easier. ■

Martin Haworth is the writer of How To Land Your Dream Job. More information can be found on his website www.howtolandyourdreamjob.com.
At the first explanation it sounds so easy: there is just one rule of sudoku – to make sure that each row, column and three-by-three box contains the numbers 1 to 9 just once. But as soon as you enter the deceptive world of the puzzle it just gets a whole lot harder. Find out how easy you find this sudoku, and if you can rise to the challenge.

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