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Ergonomics of Computer Stress

Technology is great but it has led to an increased pace of change that we must learn to adapt to maintain productivity and enhance quality of life.

Written by L. John Mason, Author of the Bestselling book, [Guide To Stress Reduction](#).

Ergonomics: The study of the problems of people adjusting to their environment; esp. the science that seeks to adapt work or working conditions to suit the worker.

By its very nature, "High Tech" means constant transitions and change, and this means consistently high levels of stress from adapting to these changes. Our primitive mechanisms for adjusting to change are often over-whelmed by the High-Tech world of change that we need to live and work within. Virtually everyone agrees that negative transitions such as; job insecurity due to downsizing ("right-sizing," etc.), or financial insecurities (ie credit card debt, mortgages, college fees, stock market swings, etc), or health challenges (ie, sickness, chronic illness, injury, emotional symptoms of stress, etc.), or relationship insecurities (divorce, dating, family role changes, two income families), and international or regional political upheavals (as presented "up close and personal" in our homes by TV,) are viewed as stressful with potential downsides to your health and well-being. "Good" Change: Same Results.

Transitions and change are not always bad. However, even positive change can create responses within our primitive response mechanisms that can lead to negative symptoms of physical and emotional stress. Just in the past ten years, the high-tech advances have increased expectations of productivity and often time commitments to responding to the pressures from work. Do you remember life before: Fax machines, Voice Mail, E-Mail, Cellular Phones, Cellular Faxes, Instantaneous International Business Requests, and yes, even the Internet???? Sure you can turn them off, ignore them, control them(???) but the pressures of response and keeping up with the changes of hardware/software technologies are still there, even if you do bury your head in the sands of DENIAL....

To prove a point about how positive change/stress can be dramatically bad for your health, I want to tell one brief story. When I was growing up, I read a newspaper account of a man who suffered from good fortune! The story read that a man had won the Irish Sweepstakes. He had won a fortune.... \$100,000, which back in those days was a lot of money! He was so overjoyed with his good luck that he celebrated in an unfortunate way... he died of a heart attack! How many people do you know who get a new job or relationship, and wind up paying the price of this positive stress?

In the past ten years, people are developing new symptoms of this technology. Eye strain, back strain, wrist/hand strain, neck problems, even weight and substance abuse increases can be loosely linked to



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long hours in the world of computers and technology. There are even new industries cropping up to take advantage of the needs for the health and safety of the daily computer user and high tech workers.

Who reading this article can say that our primitive response to stress from millions of years of adaptation and survival has been able to keep up with these past few decades of change? Have you evolved a new midbrain response to the old Flight/Fight Response? If we can not change the world around us, or the people with whom we do business, or the people we have to live with, or the global changes that affect us, then we can at least become aware of this dilemma and avoid becoming a VICTIM to these changes! We do have CONTROL over the way WE RESPOND to these changes.

Awareness is half the battle! Know how YOU respond to stress and what in your life is causing this transitional stress.... THEN, you must develop daily habits of wellness to keep you backed away from the "edge" of falling into the negative physical and emotional responses to stress. You can GET BACK in CONTROL! You can prevent, or at least minimize, symptoms of stress such as: headaches, backaches, neck aches, high blood pressure, panic, anxiety, many stomach problems, sexual dysfunctions, possibly reduce auto-immune problems like allergies or some forms of arthritis, sleeping problems, bruxism, TMJ, etc.... The emotional symptoms such as: loss of concentration, withdrawal (depression), anxiety, being accident prone, memory loss, poor motivation, poor communication, poor performance, some learning disabilities, etc can be linked to stress and reduced, if not eliminated, by awareness/lifestyle changes. Key employees can be given executive/personal coaching and this can prevent them from becoming liabilities due to inefficiency, poor productivity, or worse re-training replacements for these key people. This is as true for families as it is obviously true for companies.

The remedies are as wide as the variables that have created the problems. However, most people perform their functions better when they involve themselves in regular (daily) self-care that often includes: Relaxation (stress management (tapes, exercises, individual counseling)), Physical exercise (5x/wk for 30 minutes+), and proper nutrition (that includes supplementation of minerals and anti-oxidants that are NOT easily found in useable forms in the high-tech processed or mass produced foods that we eat.