

MENTOR MINUTE: QUICK CAREER ADVICE FROM EXPERT EILEEN CHADNICK

It may be holiday time, but it's no vacation from stress

EILEEN CHADNICK

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THE SCENARIO

It's that time of year: finishing off work assignments for 2007, making plans for 2008, attending work-related parties, finding time to jostle with shoppers to buy gifts, getting the home ready for the season. How to manage all this year-end stress?

THE ADVICE

Ah yes, 'tis the season to be busy. It can be stressful juggling so many extra demands of work and life this busy time of year. Here are tips to help navigate the seasonal angst.

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Learn to triage

When demands are so amplified, we need to ramp up our skills at prioritizing. Like folks who work in emergency situations, it's time to be diligent in discerning what truly needs your attention now. Do you really need to meet in December for an event in April if planning can wait until later in January? Diligence to the principle of triaging will help you get through all those tasks that really need to get done now.

Write it down

Trying to remember everything you need to do can create a constant sense of feeling overwhelmed and distracted. You can miss the joyful moments and opportunities that come with the season. Save some brain cells by writing out a list of what needs to be done.

Learn to say no

Are you addicted to yes? With so many demands and requests this time of year, can you really say yes to it all? Say yes when you truly must or want to - but make an effort to avoid overcommitting yourself. This is another way to practice your triage strategy.

Procrastinate positively

Rather than try to squeeze in the celebrations and get-togethers in December, save some of the fun and celebration for January or February. It's one way to avoid party burnout - and it's also nice to have something to look forward to and beat the January/February blahs.

Take care of yourself

With all the running around and extra stress, who needs to get sick? This is the time to make sure you nurture yourself, and do all you can to prevent getting run down. Eat well, sleep well, and dress warmly.

Mind the attitude

Pay attention to what you are paying attention to. To quote Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become." Ask yourself: Who are you being in all your doing? Are you "Grinching" yourself (and others) out of a joyous season with all your worry?

Find ways to reconnect to the purpose within all this seasonal activity. Squeeze in a moment or two of reflection along the way because a little personal white space might be one of the best gifts you can give yourself this season.

Eileen Chadnick is a coach and principal of Big Cheese Coaching in Toronto.