

# Mastering Stress

## Client Scenario & Report Content

### Stressor: An Important Choice about Job Change

This is an abbreviated report of a real case with appropriate disguise as agreed to with the employee who permitted this use. This summary covers four sessions, the second one reported here in detail. The contents in Session 2 parallel the copy and content of what actually comes out on the Client Report except for the layout. The purpose of all of these sessions linked together is to help the employee make a more intelligent decision by exercising deliberate, careful, high level conscious thinking. That is usually hard work. The program is designed to make that work both easier and more likely to succeed. The employee comes to his own insights based on the kind of honest self-appraisal that sometimes only can happen in these kinds of private step-by-step sessions. In the third session he gets some professional online guidance.

#### **Session 1**

This man took a mastering stress session on work pressure several weeks before he took this session. At that time he was largely venting his anger and frustration about the unfairness of what was happening at work, and his depression and exhaustion from months of 60-hour weeks as a project manager on a very large project.

#### **Session 2**

The program interviews the employee over the Internet in the secure privacy of his own home where he can take as long as he needs to sort out his thoughts. The responses below are a combination of menu choices by the employee and free form typed in answers by the employee.

**Program asks:** What's bothering you?

*I'm concerned about change or transitions because I'm changing jobs or career orientation.*

*This situation makes me feel weighted down, lost and afraid..*

**Program asks:** What are the aggravating factors?

*In this situation I feel I'm being forced to give up a familiar role, relationship or pattern and I'm being forced to make painful life changes and choices.*

*This problem is particularly stressful because I'm being forced to make painful life changes and choices.*

*I may be experiencing added stress because I am afraid to let go and move on and anticipating events that will probably not occur.*

**Program asks:** What important needs are being frustrated?

*This whole situation makes me aware that I'm not getting enough affirmation and guidance.*

*Given the circumstances I think that no, I cannot get this need met here.*

**Program asks:** What is the reality you have to accept in order to make a good decision?

*I have to learn to accept that there are attitudes of others that are almost impossible to change, that there are practices, policies and traditions that are difficult or impossible to change, and that my current job is not a good fit for me.*

*It's most difficult for me to accept that there are attitudes of others that are almost impossible to change.*

**Program asks:** Why is it so difficult for you to accept this particular reality?

*It's so difficult because my superiors like me and had valued my work, and right now they are saying that I'm not qualified for the job which they promoted me to do, and that I'm not firm and decisive enough to manage this project. But if I followed their recommendations and accepted a position with less authority and responsibility, I feel they will judge me as a wimp and a follower.*

**Program asks:** Even if it is difficult, what would you do differently if you did fully accept it?

*For one thing, I am probably just imagining that will judge me as a wimp. Also, even if they do, it shouldn't be important to me what others think. I should be more concerned with my own personal fulfillment and satisfaction.*

*I can tell my superiors that on further reflection, this new position is not a good match for me, and I will accept a lateral transfer in the company to a department which allows me to work more on my own with fewer subordinates who are looking to me for direction. In fact this is what they have asked me to do, anyway.*

**Program asks:** If you would do what you say is necessary, how would that benefit you?

*Once I accept that there are attitudes of others that are almost impossible to change, I will no longer be stressed out by it, no longer be expecting something I'll never get, and be able to put my energy toward something more productive.*

**Program asks:** Given the other realities you described, is there anything else you might do?

*I am going to get a lot of support from friends, family and realize that this is a positive decision for me.*

*I can accept what is happening. I really don't have strengths in the interpersonal skills required for the job I have now. Don't assume others are judging me the way I'm judging myself.*

**Program asks:** Is there any possibility you can get your need for affirmation and guidance met in this situation?

*Given the circumstances I think that no, I cannot get this need met here.*

**Program asks:** Is this a tradeoff situation? Are there other important needs being met that would justify staying in this situation?

*I'm getting paid well which gives me a feeling of prestige and security. However, I am not willing to put this ahead of appropriate affirmation and guidance. I can probably get paid pretty well in another position in the company, maybe not quite as much. But I would certainly feel more of a sense of belonging, and since I would be more qualified for the new position I would almost definitely receive more affirmation. My current boss is rude and abusive to others and me. He is not clear about what he wants and is constantly angry and critical. Some of his criticism is constructive and helpful, but some is pointless and seems designed just to tear people down.*

**Program asks:** Is it possible to get these important needs met outside the office so you would feel less frustrated in the office

*I think it's possible that I could some more affirmation and guidance from friends I look up to, but I still think it's important I make this important change at work.*

**Program asks:** Is it possible that you could get a more reasonable version of this need satisfied in this situation? What would satisfy you?

*It is possible that this is true - that I could stay in this situation and make it work. But I don't think my superiors have that faith in me, and it would be an uphill battle to prove to them and myself that I can handle it without anyone in my corner. I think it's time to accept that I don't have the leadership skills I need, and I should do something that uses my strengths. In my review, my boss pointed out a lot of strengths that I have, and in the other department these would be utilized to best effect.*

**Program asks:** What life skills will you need to apply more diligently in order to make all of this happen?

*I need to be better at letting go and moving on, being less dependent on others' opinions of me, accepting constructive criticism, setting realistic goals, and acting on what I know is the right thing for me to do.*

**Program asks:** What is the one life skill that you should focus on, and how do you need to improve that skill in this situation?

*The skill that will most effectively impact this situation is being less dependent on others' opinions of me.*

*I need to be more willing to take risks. It's a major risk for me to change positions and move into new territory with new tasks, new co-workers and new dynamics. It will probably be good for me to take this risk.*

*This skill will also help me to be more accepting of others and myself as well.*

**Program asks:** If you followed this action formula, what would you do that you are not already doing?

*I will communicate with the manager in the other department, and tell him that I've been recommended for the position there. I will also tell my current boss I've decided to follow the department's recommendations but in another department.*

**Program asks:** What kind of help can you get from others?

*It would help me if I asked someone for support for my position, expert advice, honest and constructive criticism of my position, tips on where to find information I need, and emotional support.*

**Program asks:** Who are you going to get this help from?

*I am in touch with friends and parents for confirmation, support, honest criticism, emotional support and a critically constructive assessment. I have an appointment scheduled with a career counselor for expert advice, constructive criticism, and helpful tips. I'm going to talk to a guy on my current team and see if he thinks my leadership style is as poor as my boss says it is. I can trust him to be honest. I will also ask the hiring manager of the job that's been recommended as one that could use my strengths for honest feedback (I've worked with him on a project before) and about whether he'd be interested in me for one of his positions and what the pay would be.*

**Program asks:** Exactly what am I going to ask for?

*As described above. It is a compliment to this site that when I have a problem now, I immediately think of who I should talk to, to get what I need.*

**Program asks:** When are you going to do this?

*I will begin this coming Monday. I've asked the hiring manager to meet with me Monday afternoon if possible.*

**Program asks:** How would this help you?

*All of this will help me to choose a position that best utilizes my strengths, instead of struggling any longer with a job that isn't right for me.*

### **Session 3**

Several weeks later, the user took another session on work stress in order to work out something else on his new job assignment. Here is what he wrote to the professional reviewer at the end of that session, and here is the reviewer's response.

**To Dr. G.:**

*I was able to take the transfer to the new position without losing any pay, since my pay was within the range of the other position. This helped a lot in reducing stress, but I'm not out of the woods yet. Today I tried to do the steps I wrote yesterday, and it was difficult. I'm still having some difficulty not relying too much on what I think others, particularly superiors, think of me. When I worry too much about this I try to do too much at once to overcompensate, and I end up doing everything inefficiently. This then only fuels my fears of being judged incompetent. I'm still on guard from the last year of constantly playing catch up and not being able to carry through everything that was asked of me. My new boss cuts me no slack for that, and expects me to be on top of everything from the get-go. But I am learning quickly and I think ultimately this position will be a better fit. Today actually went a lot better because of what I had written yesterday (everything up until this message). I feel that having a career counselor and working towards the goal of figuring out what the best job is for me gives me confidence that I am taking care of myself and not simply relying on my company to take care of me.*

**From Dr. G.:**

*James, you have done a remarkable amount of good work. I have been consistently reading and reviewing your sessions, and today's seems to be a real turning point for you in a very positive direction. Your insights are profound about what you have been doing and what you are now doing, and need to do. You have both acknowledged the anger at the past injustices, and accepted your part in them (getting away with things, waiting for a better manager, looking to be understood, not keeping the big picture in mind, etc), and have taken solid and real actions to correct them and get on with your life.*

*Now you are going to have to deal more with your personal life outside of work...friends, grief regarding your recent separation, developing hobbies etc. You need that balance to enjoy life, keep from being depressed, and also to lighten the burdens at work which has become too much of your life.*

**Session 4**

This person continued on a very healthy track while taking one more very enlightening session, and continuously expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to write this out, think it through by responding to the electronic interview and be understood by the reviewer. He repeatedly remarked about how he was able to feel deeply about the issues as he went through the program and thought about his life situation.