

Top 10 Reasons for Leadership Stress

Having served in various kinds of leadership capacities for the past four decades, I have observed common stress points for both workplace and church place leaders. Not dealing with several of these can result in burnout, as well as personal and vocational failure.

I have collapsed my observations down to a top 10 list for the sake of brevity. Obviously, many more points could have been added to this list, but my hope is that this list will awaken concern, attention, and positive action in the leaders who read this article:

The top 10 reasons for leadership stress:

1. Lack of clear boundaries for family and self

When a leader does not know how to compartmentalize and emotionally disconnect from work when at home, they will eventually burnout. When a leader doesn't create a safe place for their family to focus relationally on one another without outside interference, there will be relational deterioration.

When a leader doesn't practice "soul care" by taking regular time alone with God for prayer and reflection, by enjoying a hobby or doing things that they enjoy and bring them life, this lack of self-renewal can eventually lead their brain to overheat and suffer burnout.

2. Ambiguity in mission and purpose

When a leader doesn't have a clear sense of purpose that serves as a compass to direct their time and focus, this ambiguity will lead to meaningless activities and a lack of productivity. This lack of productivity can lead to depression and a further sense of purposeless and aimlessness.

The solution of course is to know and understand your calling and purpose and to focus most of your energy on that instead of mere activity.

3. Lack of time management skills

Many leaders over commit themselves, resulting in never having enough time to complete their primary tasks. Whenever we say “yes” to something we say “no” to something else that may be more important.

To be effective, each leader needs to learn how to gauge how much time they need to allot to accomplish their primary tasks before they make a commitment to spend time doing other things. When you keep First Things First, then what you put second will never be hurt.

4. Poor health management

Many leaders neglect their physical and emotional health in the name of accomplishing their primary goals. However, our long-term goals and primary calling will never withstand the test of time if we fail to take care of our emotional and physical health. Thus, no matter how busy a leader is, they have to prioritize their own well-being in spirit, soul, and body if they desire to be good stewards of their life and mission.

5. Poor stress management

Every effective leader has a lot of responsibility and with every responsibility comes a unique set of stress points. Consequently, to be effective, a leader has to learn how to manage and function during periods of high stress.

We manage stress by thinking positively, taking an adequate amount of time off for rest, taking time for the proper amount of exercise, getting good counsel, planning properly, managing time well, prioritizing primary goals and keeping a detailed to-do list so that things don't fall through the cracks.

All of the above will help mitigate against the daily deluge of stress that cannot be avoided when one has responsibility.

6. Sedentary lifestyle

When a leader is sitting down all day in front of a computer and is constantly eating out and snacking between meals (as well as eating late at night) their capacity to function and think in the midst of stress greatly diminishes.

A leader who sits down for long periods of time should get up frequently to take a walk, think, reflect and relax their mind by focusing on another activity every once in a while, throughout the day. They should also avoid excessive snacking and living on fast foods which will not only hurt them physically but also negatively impact their energy level and their ability to process thoughts clearly.

7. Social feeding

Leaders who spend a lot of time on social media will find less time and ability to interface with the significant people and co-workers in their life. Not only that, many leaders have become addicted to social media, which causes them to procrastinate, which then adds more stress to their life because they have less quality time for the important things in their life.

8. Betrayal and disloyalty

Every key leader I know has suffered various kinds of betrayal. With each instance of betrayal comes a huge amount of stress, as well as a possible psychological battle with depression that adds even more stress, which causes them to consider quitting their job or ministry.

There is no solution for betrayal, except having a strong community of friends and mentors that will encourage and help you walk through the pain with forgiveness and love, as well as point you to God who alone can heal the broken-hearted and

bind up your wounds.

9. Too many demands for their attention

Even as I am writing this article, I am getting barraged with phone calls and numerous requests for my time via text, as well as challenges brought to my attention that need immediate problem solving.

Consequently, I have learned to respond to texts, emails, and calls in a way that utilizes my time wisely and doesn't compromise my primary purpose. Those that expect me to "like" every post on Facebook or respond to every question and comment regarding my articles will be disappointed and probably "unfriend" me.

10. Lack of financial resources

I have observed that many leaders lack provisions for their vision. It may be because their vision did not originate with God or due to a lack of good administration and planning. That being said, a lack of sufficient financial and human resources is another stress factor that greatly weighs on leaders.

Every leader needs to seek the Lord to make sure that their vision is from God and not emanating out of selfish ambition. They also need to have a good team around them to give them advice regarding the best way forward to fund the vision.