

## Five-Minute Stress Relief.com

### Brain Overload

#### Advertising is Everywhere

Years ago, marketers tried to reach people at home, when they were watching TV or reading newspapers or magazines. However nowadays, consumers are so hard to track down that advertisers are now seeking to place ads everywhere – trays used in airport security lines, Chinese food cartons, subway turnstiles, even motion sickness bags on airplanes. J. Walter Thompson, the advertising giant, once estimated that the average American is bombarded with 10, 000 ads (TV, newspapers, magazines, internet, public transportation, etc.) each week.

In 2006 study, published in the journal issue of *Pediatrics*, the Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, doctors found the average child or teenager in the US sees more than 3,000 advertisements per day!

#### The Avalanche of Information

Information overload is an insidious source of chronic stress. When two professors at the UC Berkeley School of Information Management and Systems analyzed all new data produced worldwide way back in 1999 – on the Internet, in scholarly journals, even in junk mail – they had to use the term "terabyte." One terabyte is million megabytes, the text content of a million books! And when they analyzed the Internet alone, they discovered that (and this is back in 1999) it was growing at a rate of 7.3 million pages per day!

#### Being Always Plugged In

Today Americans work longer hours, take less vacation time and experience more job stress than ever. A faster computer, rapid printers, faxes, multi-purpose copy machines, emails and instant messaging are useful innovations, however, they force us to speed up and keep pace with their electronic speed.

BlackBerries may free us from our desks, but the result is BlackBerrys tie us to work 24/7. Now there is no such thing as downtime. New technology, increased competition and corporate downsizing have workers running to keep up and too fearful to complain. Globalization has meant many workers (especially in finance, the media and law) work across time zones, scrambling to make deadlines with the overseas offices.

We gradually become more and more tired, denying ourselves recovery time as the exhaustion creeps in deeper. And the end result is that people are motivated by fear, not reward, which compounds our stress levels and builds up an internal rage that increases the damage to our health. (See the *Damaging Effects of Mental and Emotional Stress*.)

#### Shrinking-Vacation Syndrome

A 2006 survey of American workers, who take fewer vacations than people in nearly all industrialized nations, found that people have cut back their leisure time even more. One research group, called the Conference Board, found that at the beginning of the summer 40% of consumers had not scheduled any vacation plans for the next 6 months, which was the lowest amount recorded by the organization in 28 years. And a Gallup survey in the same year, based on over 1,000 adults telephone interviews, revealed 43% polled had not planned any summer vacation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 25% of American workers in the private sector do not receive any paid vacation and another 33% take just a 7-day vacation. The two-week vacation has become a thing of the past.

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**The Rise of Shrinking-Vacation Syndrome**  
([www.nytimes.com/2006/08/20/us/20vacation.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/20/us/20vacation.html))