



Break or Be Broken:

Why Taking Time of Could Save Your Life

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ABOUT THIS NEW ARTICLE SERIES

My new article series focuses on what project management professionals can do to fill their life's dashboard with green arrows and milestones completed, NOT just the projects they manage.

WHY IS MANAGING PROJECTS STRESSFUL?

There are many reasons project management is stressful.

The Number 1 reason: Avoiding wasted project dollars and missed results, **regardless of everchanging organizational priorities, resources, competition, and government regulations.**

If you are a committed project manager or leader, you take your responsibilities seriously, taking work home with you in a briefcase, laptop, or your headspace.

Feeling these pressures can break you if you don't plan a break (Ex. Vacation, lunches, sabbaticals, mental health days, etc.)

According to Teamstage.io:

Nearly every 10 seconds, \$1 million is wasted by companies worldwide as a result of the ineffective implementation of business strategy. This results in approximately \$2 trillion a year.

Reference: <https://teamstage.io/project-management-statistics/>

PLAN YOUR BREAKS OR BE BROKEN

Listen, I've been a victim of thinking about breaks until I'm the last project manager on deck and everyone's absent – again and again.

I tell myself that I will plan a vacation or downtime tomorrow.

Here's the problem: Before you know it, it's 90 tomorrows later, and you haven't made a plan.

If I were my project manager for downtime, I would be fired by now.

The sad truth is you'll keep doing this until you're forced into a vacation, hospital bed, or casket because stress kills.

And, it is agnostic of age.

If you don't take breaks, stress is death by a thousand cuts.

YOU MUST BE PROACTIVE AND MAKE A PLAN

Be more concerned about your well-being than what people think about you taking time off.

If your time off is reasonable and doesn't disadvantage others terribly, you should vote for yourself, get a backup person/2nd Chair, and book those two tickets to Aruba.

Fun Facts: Most peers don't spend time thinking about you and what you do off the clock. They have enough problems of their own.

And, the small-minded few who do worry about you don't have anything else better to do.

So, go to Aruba and teach those small-minded few a self-care lesson they'll never forget.

However, if you can't get out of your way and get a vacation/break, it may be time to call in an expert.

I'm not talking about a travel expert, but a health professional.

A LITTLE HOMEWORK

Visit [Healthline's site](#) for the rundown on the impacts of stress and how to combat it daily.

I'm not going to sugarcoat this bitter pill, but you need the medicine nonetheless.

Mental health is no laughing matter.

And lose the stigma about mental health – it is the strong person who can admit and commit to finding help.

ACCORDING TO

- But, "over time, [it] can cause damage that leads to premature death" [Dr. Patricia] Celan says.
- This damage can be anything from cardiovascular issues to encouraging unhealthy habits, like smoking and alcohol misuse.
- "You could live longer if you had less stress in your life," Celan says. "That's why taking control over your stress is important."

Reference:
<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/can-stress-kill-you>

WHEN TO CONSIDER GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

According to [Healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com):

Stress and anxiety can produce a range of physical and psychological symptoms.

Stress symptoms include:

- dizziness
- muscle tension
- digestive issues, including nausea and [diarrhea](#)
- trouble sleeping
- anger or irritability
- [headaches](#)
- [increased sweating](#)
- feelings of overwhelm
- restlessness
- [changes in appetite](#)
- increased heart rate

I don't know about you, but I've had several of these symptoms land me in the ER because I was more focused on my job than my health.

You may not be able to control everything all the time, but that's a deeper dive for another time.

At any rate, the above symptoms, a little to a lot, tell you something needs fixing.

If it's your car, you call a mechanic.

If it's your body, you call a doctor or healer, especially if your prolonged exposure to work has become toxic and your health worsens.



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ACUTE STRESS AND TOO FEW LONG BREAKS ARE BAD MEDICINE

Waiting too long between work breaks can come at too high a price.

Don't let that price be your life.

Don't try to Google your symptoms and diagnose yourself.

Schedule a visit with your Family/General Practice doctor, who will become the quarterback for any additional care you require when they:

- Diagnose your symptoms
- Create a treatment plan
- Refer to a Specialist
- Provide medication
- Support a Leave of Absence
- Help improve your diet and exercise
- Direct you to learning content
- Help you get better so you can live better

If you can't find a doctor you like, contact your Health Plan, and try Yelp or Healthgrades.com. Just make sure you feel comfortable, and they offer telemedicine too.

Psychology Today

What Are Your Stress Triggers?



5 minutes

Take the Stress Test

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/tests/personality/what-are-your-stress-triggers>

FEELING EMBARRASSED, CONCERNED ABOUT MISSING WORK – GET OVER IT!

Yeah, we project management types sometimes feel guilty for taking time off because there's rarely a "GOOD" time to take time off:

- Kick Offs
- Steerco Meetings
- Too many PM's escaped at once
- Needy clients (Your peers want to avoid in your absence)
- Critical deliverables
- The project is going well (don't want to lose momentum)
- Project going bad (don't want to leave anyone else in a lurch)
- And, the self-flagellation continues.

Look, we are not prisoners but professionals who can come and go like any pro if you plan it.

GIVE US FREE!

The header here is from the movie Amistad – you are free to take care of yourself.

Hey, there is no reason you should show up to work if you have difficulty holding it together when weekends off don't do the trick.

Or, you've developed bad habits that delay or fill the time off with more work.

Life is more than making a living but being alive. Now, Put that in your decision log!

Being alive means living a balanced, healthy, happy, purposed, and spiritually grounded life.

Here's a secret: Work will get done if you are not there.

If work does not get done in your absence, it's the company's problem to solve, not yours.

IF YOU NEED HELP GET IT – YOU LOSE IF YOU DELAY

I don't know about you, but I'd rather spend downtime with six friends than six strangers as they carry me to a hearse, overworked and now underground.

The struggle is real.

But, you don't have to struggle – get help.

Here's some extra help you might consider after your doctor:

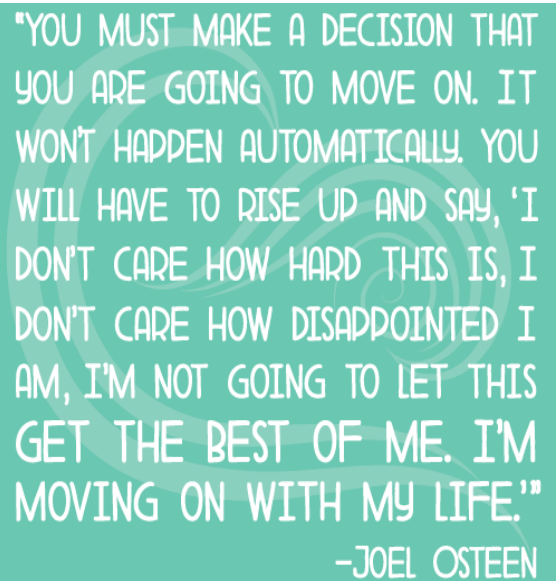
- Visit your employer's benefits summary and find out what it covers in this area
- Log into your employer's intranet and search for Employee Assistance Program – often offers immediate help, then triages you and helps with referrals to the right clinician.
- Contact your local hospital for free/low-cost support people and resources
- Consider traditional and non-traditional healthcare

Finally, take time away from work – plan, act, and do that!

Don't give your job more than you give yourself, or everyone loses.

Living your best life gives the company their best employee and everyone else the best version of you.

And you deserve your best, you too!



"YOU MUST MAKE A DECISION THAT YOU ARE GOING TO MOVE ON. IT WON'T HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY. YOU WILL HAVE TO RISE UP AND SAY, 'I DON'T CARE HOW HARD THIS IS, I DON'T CARE HOW DISAPPOINTED I AM, I'M NOT GOING TO LET THIS GET THE BEST OF ME. I'M MOVING ON WITH MY LIFE.'"

–JOEL OSTEEN

WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM

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Conclusion

Remember, project management isn't for everyone, no matter how well you do the work. The work must be fulfilling, tie into your big "Why," and help you thrive, not just survive!

After noodling your big "Why" and choosing a project management career desired state or path, begin leveraging the [Career "Triple Constraints" concept](#) to develop your unique journey and decidedly fulfilling career path.

Call to Action

The world needs PM Professionals – get equipped for a world of projects producing exponential value!

Finally, [Global demand for Agile/Scrum/Product Management expertise](#) remains hot for PMs with skills and experience who can thrive in today's projects' new remote, complex, and matrixed environment.

- **Are you ready?**
- **Do you want to be ready?**

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