



The Seven Cs of Stress: A Burkean Approach

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Stress is like a balloon. When one inflates the balloon enough to stretch its membrane to the point at which it resembles a sphere, oval, or whatever shape it is designed to have, it loses that limpness which it originally possessed. This is stress. The same amount of pressure that it takes to inflate a paper bag would still demonstrate the existence of observable stress. The level of stress that is observed in an inflated paper bag or in an equally inflated balloon is actually a "good" type of stress. In the balloon example, even though the balloon is inflated, the rubber membrane has so much "give" or "flexibility" that you can actually squeeze it firmly without the balloon bursting. This level of stress is actually more desirable than the absence of stress. Interpersonal Communication specialists call this desirable stress "eustress." In everyday life, we notice times when we are in need of eustress. Although some stress is enjoyable, too much stress can be experienced negatively. Consider the balloon discussed earlier. when it is inflated further, it is less accommodating to poking and prodding. Even with this medium-inflation, however, it would take strong prodding to cause it to burst. This is called "managing stress." When humans, in a similar state, feel less willing to "give" in to pokes and become more "rigid" in their attitudes, they are frequently experiencing heightened stress in their lives. Taking the process of inflation to the limit, we envision a balloon that has become so stretched to contain the air pressure that it can be stretched no further. This is called "distress." At this stage, even the lightest finger poke will produce an explosion. In human terms, we have all witnessed occasions when an unsuspecting-but-benign individual "teases" a friend in a gentle way. Suddenly, the "teased" one explodes in a vituperative fury! Clearly, having zero stress is not an option for humans. We crave some level of stress. On the other hand, having too much stress is not acceptable either. The secret to human happiness as it regards stress is to constantly maintain some medium level of inflation in the balloon. If there are times in which more stress is desirable, it is useful to know how to add stress--how to inflate the balloon by finding stressors. If there are times in which less stress is desirable, we need to be aware of the available "relief valves"--the ways in which the balloon may be deflated. It is expedient for all to be aware of the seven basic stressors and their corresponding relief valves. As a mnemonic device, Lindsay uses alliteration. Each stressor begins with the letter "C." If you are a good navigator and chart your course using the information that this book provides, you can successfully "sail the Seven C's of Stress!" Lindsay metaphorically takes the reader through seven Cs of stress much as a captain successfully navigates a voyage at sea. He groups the stressors into seven categories of stress: Corporal (stress of the body), Community (stress experienced when dealing with other people), Cash (stress concerning how to handle money wisely), Chrono (stress dealing with managing time), Competence (stress dealing with questions about one's ability to perform a task), Confusion (stress pertaining to decision-making and other situations in which one feels lost), and Conscientious (stress concerning morality). An easy way to remember these seven Cs is the mnemonic: "Common Corp: Time is Money!" Notice that the word "common" starts with "com," but has 2 M's. Use this to remember that 2 of the 7 Cs begin with "com" (Community and Competence). Then, notice that the 2nd part of "common" is the syllable "on." Use this to remember that 2 of the 7 Cs begin with "con" (Confusion and Conscientious). The second word in the mnemonic is "Corp." This easily reminds you of the 5th of the 7 Cs (Corporal). The phrase "Time is Money" reminds you of the final two of the 7 Cs (Chrono and Cash).

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