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Adult Onset ADD - The New Silent Culprit Claiming Many Burnt Out Workers

Dr. Paul Lanthois

July 21, 2008

As most people were leaving for home, two people were hunched over in earnest conversation in a corner office. Therese had her head in her hands sobbing hysterically. Her work colleague helplessly draped her arm over her friend, occasionally rubbing her back in the hope that it would make a difference but Therese was at her wits end.

"I've had enough," confessed Therese as she sat up, wiped her eyes and blew her nose. "I can't handle this pressure and this pace anymore. I can't continue like this. I have no time for me to do what I want."

"Well what exactly do you want?" asked her friend.

"Oh, I don't know what I want, but I know that it's not this," Therese exclaimed.

This phrase, so eloquently captured in the title of Julie Jansen's best selling book also sums up a growing trend among workers that often culminates in burnout. A recent survey of 7600 American workers by www.CareerBuilders.com found that 78 % reported feeling burnt out.

Most people think that burnout is only a condition for the over

Dr. Paul Lanthois



- Director of the Work Life Balance Foundation (www.WorkLifeBalanceFoundation.com) offering articles, e-newsletters and forums on stress relief and more energy for burnt out workers and executives.
- Most importantly he has successfully overcome his own energy burnout while managing two companies and raising a family. He has developed a step-by-step proprietary process to recharge the weary and re-ignite the burned-out.
- 17 years experience as a chiropractor
- Speaker to businesses and community groups such as Optus Telecommunications, St. George Bank, and the Salisbury City Council.
- Two years as coordinator

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ambitious, type A personalities who go at such a tremendous pace that their body and mind just can't keep up. I also think that there is a different type of burnout that is quickly becoming a lot more common. Feeling burnout can also occur when you don't have any ambition. I call it Adult Onset ADD or Ambition Deficit Disorder.

According to Webster's dictionary, ambition means the desire for activity or exertion or to achieve a particular end. I define ambition as being able to answer these two questions: 1) What do you want?

2) Are you doing what you enjoy?

If your answer to question 1) is, "I don't know" and your answer to question 2) is, "No," then you are at risk of Ambition Deficit Disorder.

So many people with Ambition Deficit Disorder think that they are lethargic and depressed because they don't know what to do. I also think that the opposite is true: you don't know what to do because you are lethargic and depressed, or should I more accurately say: because you are doing lethargy and depression. The truth is that as long as we wait to know what to do we'll never know. For most people getting clarity about your life's purpose doesn't occur as a lightning bolt or a booming voice from the heavens. You need to go out and find clarity.

At one of my workshops, Barry my resident skeptic called out, "This is easy for you to say. You already know what you want to do in your life? How do you work out what you are meant to do if you don't know yet?"

I believe that this is one of the main reasons why so many of you do not have any ambition. You believe that you are on some sort of quest where you have to discover some predestined task that God has put aside for you. The problem is that you are deathly afraid of choosing the 'wrong' thing. You may fear some eternal damnation or something to that extent. So it is a lot safer and

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easier to explain if you can say that you haven't found what you are 'meant' to do (even when in reality, you aren't even looking).

"Firstly Barry. There is nothing that you are meant to do," I explained. "It simply comes down to choosing something that you like to do, something that you want."

"But what if when you do it, you find out that you don't like it?" he replied.

"If you don't like it then try something else that you think you like," I replied.



"But isn't it a waste of time?" interjected Barry.

"You have just narrowed down the field. You are closer to finding your ambition, so I wouldn't regard that as a waste of time."

Many of you may be caught in a rut. You may be in occupations or

positions that required years of study, training and hard work only to find that you don't enjoy your current position anymore. Like Barry, you may find that changing career paths too painful to contemplate, thinking that you have wasted all those years of study. You may have financial commitments and mortgages to honor so you understandably opt for the safety and security of your current occupation.

If you do make the choice to continue on your present path, you may experience a feeling of emptiness inside and a sense that something is missing. To avoid this pain it would be easy to suppress your emotions and go into some form of working auto-pilot where you are physically at work but not really there. But the problem is to avoid the pain would require you to not to ever think about what you want again. If you never spend time thinking about what you want it will be impossible to discover your ambition...a sure-fire journey towards a life with Ambition Deficit Disorder.

But What If You Don't Know What You Want In Your Life?

The most common reason why people don't have a particular ambition or purpose in life is that they haven't devoted enough time to thinking about it.

Spend some time each day to think about your ambition. Even if you think that you are clear on your life's purpose, a daily

reminder will give you added spark to your day. Try using your time when you are having a shower or getting ready for your day as time to focus on your ambition or purpose.

Consider answers to these questions:

What's most important to you in life?

What are you passionate about and why?

If you knew that you couldn't fail, what would you like to be, do or have? Think about your ideal career, family, relationship, state of health, wealth or a particular difference you would like to make in the world.

There are three important facts to consider when you are finding your ambition or purpose:

- 1) The answer "I don't know" is forbidden because it stops your brain from thinking. You can replace "I don't know" with, "If I did know then what would be my answer?"
- 2) Understand that there is no single predetermined ambition and purpose that you have to discover. Your ambition and purpose can be whatever you choose that brings you happiness.
- 3) Take notice of answers that bring up either the emotion of happiness or the emotion of guilt (guilt can often be present when we discover something that we really enjoy but we sometime feel that we don't deserve to experience so much happiness). These emotions indicate that you will experience happiness from these activities/ideas so this is the best indicator of an ideal ambition or purpose for you.

Get some paper and write out your dreams and aspirations and put in a place where you will see it daily. If you haven't thought of anything yet, put some time aside each day (when you're in the bathroom or when you clean your teeth) to think about your purpose or ambition. Keep thinking about it and an idea will come. Guaranteed.

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