

WE'RE TRAPPED BY TIME, WHETHER IT'S FAMILY OBLIGATIONS, WORK OVERLOAD OR SIMPLE FATIGUE

# ALL STRESSED OUT AND NOWHERE TO TURN

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Writer

Life revolves around the clock so much, there's no time to live.

As we embark on a new century, most of us are under a great deal of stress, including Ida Laszlo.

A teller at a Stouffville bank, Laszlo has juggled work and family for years. A single mom, her day begins at 6:30 a.m. and ends about midnight.

"Do more with less" is the battle cry of business, including financial institutions. The staff at the bank swap stress stories.

Talking helps and Laszlo's colleagues lend a sympathetic ear.

Stress has a grip on this hurry-up society and Laszlo has certainly not escaped its grasp.

Today, life really has her on the run, and, in fact, has thrown her a special curve.

A month ago, Laszlo's rented house was sold out from under her. She was given two weeks' notice to vacate. Laszlo has neither the time, the energy nor the funds to fight her landlord.

Furniture in storage, Laszlo and her daughter are staying with a friend; her son is with his dad and the cat is fending for itself.

So, in addition to a job and the kids, Laszlo is house hunting, Christmas shopping and then there's the cat.

"When the stress gets too much, I drive," said Laszlo.

"Sometimes I'll drive for miles. Or I walk. I'll walk until I feel the stress let up."



IDA LASZLO

*When the stress gets too much, I drive. Sometimes I'll drive for miles.*

is quick to point out that a pattern of workaholic behaviour can lead to poor diet, lack of sleep, flu symptoms, high blood pressure and heart trouble.

It's life's way of reminding us that the human machine is one of the most delicate machines we have.

The majority of Canadians struggle to maintain their standard of living by working more or taking on higher debt. It's a fact that concerns Audrey Dowling of Richmond Hill.

If we don't take time to smell the roses, we'll be sorry, she suggests.

Dowling is worried about stress and its effect on her health and her family's health.

She wonders, do we need to live in monster homes? Do we need to drive two expensive cars? Do we need to be obsessed with investments and retirement when we're only 35 and we can't give our kids enough love?



MIKE LEEMING

*Taking time out for fun and friends a way to cope with stress.*

*With the right amount of stress, you can achieve peak performances due to added energy, stimulation and motivation. However, too much stress can lead to burnout and chronic diseases such as heart disease, ulcers, headaches, chronic fatigue and depression.*

What's the real price for it all? Dowling gets up at the crack of dawn, feeds husband, the kids and the fish. She takes five minutes to call her recently widowed father just to say good morning.

While Dowling helps her daughter put the finishing touches on a school project, she sets up the ironing board to press a blouse. A rule in the Dowling house is, don't forget the kids and don't go to work wrinkled.

The ironing should have been done last night. But, her daughter had a volleyball game and her two sons had to be driven to Scouts.

She doesn't begrudge the children. It was the first night in four that she wasn't detained at the office.

"It's never-ending. Yes, it is stressful. It seems to be getting worse. I'd love to have another baby, but I don't think it's a realistic move," said Dowling.

About once a week, usually on the weekend, Dowling pampers herself with some comfort food, lights a few candles and takes a long bath.

"Then I watch a real sappy movie. I get the box of tissue, curl up in my favourite chair and lose myself in the movie. It doesn't take much to make me cry. It helps the tension. It makes tomorrow look better."

Tony DePaola of Markham knows what it takes to run your own show. Yet, being self-employed translates into special stress. There's a constant worry that "there's not enough money" to keep the family going.

"It can get you down," said DePaola. But it's not for a lack of trying. DePaola owns a catering

truck. His day begins at 4 a.m. The hours are long, he's forced to throw food away if sales are down and vacations are for other people.

"Then, when I do get home after dark, there's the stress of the kids."

DePaola and his wife Jane are raising two active sons.

"I can't relax until the kids are out of the way at night," said Jane.

"Once the house is quiet, my husband and I try to not let the stress get to us any longer."

Darlene Gardner of Newmarket struggles with not being able to leave job problems at the workplace. "I bring it home with me," said Gardner.

"I can't let go of it."

A project manager at a bank, Gardner has a lot of responsibility.

Taking care of business in today's hectic climate takes its toll, Gardner said.

And, taking care of the family is another stress story. The mother of two copes by walking and trying to maintain sensible eating habits.

"Healthy eating is one of the positive ways to cope with stress," said York Region public health nurse Theresa Ko-Cheung.

"Healthy eating is having a well-balanced diet by choosing a variety of foods in moderation from the four food groups outlined in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, with emphasis on fibre, less fat,

less salt, caffeine and alcohol and regular physical activity instead of dieting to maintain healthy weight.

John Leverdingen of Newmarket knows when life's got the better of him.

"I dream about work. That's when I know it's got me," said Leverdingen.

"I have to learn to let it go. I'm trying to find ways to relax."

A foreman in the maintenance department for a Toronto school board, the 36-year-old knows how to handle stress but he's in a catch-22 situation.

"I love working on cars. It takes the stress right away. Except, I can't find the time to do it," said Leverdingen.

About 99 per cent of Leverdingen's spare time is spent with his family.

"My wife and I have three little ones. They're two, five and seven. They're a handful. Yes, there's lots of stress with the kids."

Stress does not discriminate. It plagues parents and non-parents alike.

Mike Leeming is a single white-collar worker at a Stouffville business.

"At times, work can be really stressful," he said. "When I get hit with it, I escape," he said.

"I get away from it all. I spend time with my friends and I have fun."

Stress is a necessary and normal part of life.

"With the right amount of stress, you can achieve peak performances due to added energy, stimulation and motivation," said Ko-Cheung.

"However, too much stress can lead to burnout and chronic diseases such as heart disease, ulcers, headaches, chronic fatigue and depression."



JANE DEPAOLA

*It's not until the kids are to bed that she finds time to relax with her husband.*



TONY DEPAOLA

*Constantly worries there's not enough money to keep the family going.*



DARLENE GARDNER

*Taking care of business puts stress on her homelife.*



JOHN LEVERDINGEN

*I dream about work. That's when I know it's got to me.*

Half of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 44 are working so many hours they are not able to spend enough time with family and friends, according to a recent Statistics Canada survey.

In fact, some three million Canadian men and women consider themselves workaholics.

While they may feel proud of their commitment to work and while their bosses may gloat about having workaholics on the team, in the long run it's not a good thing for anyone.

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