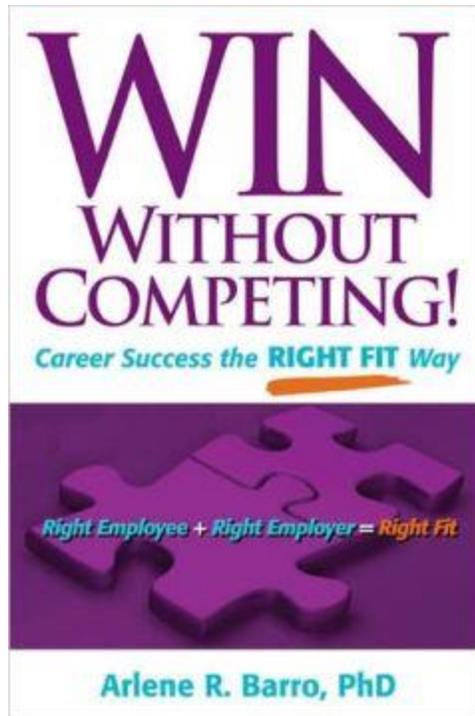


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene—Distractions Cause Stress



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By Dr. Arlene Barro

How can distractions both cause stress and relieve stress? Here is how it works. If you use distractions to prevent yourself from doing what you need to do, you will ignite stress. On the other hand, if you decide to take a break from your daily activities to do what you enjoy, that type of distraction can reduce stress.

Laser Beam Focus: Wrong Results

Certain professions require a laser beam focus. Would you want a surgeon to operate on you who becomes easily distracted? Of course, not. We can use our power to focus or flounder. Cultivating your concentration skills will enhance your ability to thrive. However, if you focus on doing the wrong things and continue, you can cause significant stress and stop success.

Here is Darja's story. The Geffen Playhouse presented an excellent example of "doing the wrong things" in its current play *Ironbound*. The playwright, Martyna Majok, tells the story of her mother, Darja, a Polish immigrant who lives in New Jersey. She spends her entire life searching for stability and protecting her child. Darja finds men to provide that stability and even endures physical abuse from her second husband.

Darja never realizes that she has to achieve her dreams herself. She makes no effort to change her behavior. Darja's rigid focus on men to take care of her, could have destroyed her. I believe that her daughter Martyna, who pursued and achieved success as a playwright, saved her. Unfortunately, Martyna presented Darja's child in the play as a troubled boy, rather than portraying her daughter. When I read the interview of Martyna, in the playbill, after the show, I learned that she was telling her mother's story.

Darja is one of millions of people who go through life committed to taking the Wrong Fit Road, resulting in enormous stress. Some of my clients start working with me not knowing why they are indecisive and unhappy. Gradually, they become aware that they are distracting themselves. Then, they start to shed the cloak of rigidity and change their behavior. One father commented recently that his adult son is a "new man" after working with me. Yes, he is and proud of it. He is no longer consumed by distractions. It is very important to recognize when you are not achieving the results you want, you must use different strategies. Never too late to change your behavior.

Laser Beam Focus: Right Results

Determine the top three situations that need to be changed in your life. Prioritize them. Start with the first situation. For example, if you are unhappy at work, determine if the fit can be fixed and repair, if possible. If you cannot fix the fit, start looking for another position. This will give you an opportunity to think about your career and perhaps do something new that you find exciting. Do not compare and contrast choices. This could increase the probability of making wrong decisions. Instead, create a Blueprint of the Right Fit and match to that Blueprint, which is your compass. Using the Blueprint will increase the probability of making the right decisions.

Depending on the complexity of your three priorities, determine approximately how long it will take you to accomplish each one. Be sure to create a written plan for each priority, before embarking on the journey. Achieving the right results can be rewarding: more success and less stress. Be sure to use the Conquering Stress Strategies that I have discussed here and in previous columns.

Laser Beam Focus: No Distractions

Think of yourself as an Olympic athlete. Focus on the task at hand. Screen out the distractors. Can you? If noise disturbs your concentration, work in a quiet place. Research shows that open work space decreases productivity due to noise. My secret is to eliminate the pesky things I do not want to do, to maximize my concentration. They are the so called "loose ends." Figure out what your distractions are and manage them. Do not allow them to manage you. You will be amazed how stress fades away as some distractions decline and others disappear. Control your distractions now to reap the benefits of the Laser Beam Focus.

Questions? Email drbarro@barroglobal.com. Responses could appear in her next column. Dr. Arlene Barro, the creator of the Right Fit Method, is a UCLA-trained behavioral educational psychologist and professional speaker. She is the author of WIN Without Competing!, a business, career, and personal strategist and founder/CEO of barro global search, inc. in Westwood. Episodes of her radio show are available at www.winwithoutcompeting.com.