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To Bring Stress Down, We Need to Lighten Up.
Work in the smiles, squeeze out the stress

Are you finding that today's pace is getting to you? If the answer is "yes" you're part of the majority who claim to be stressed out. Not only are we working harder, but we're also more involved in community work, and as members of the "Sandwich Generation" we find ourselves caring for elderly relatives and our children at the same time. Complaints of information overload are being routinely cited. Too many e-mails, faxes and phone calls are taking their toll, and business is being hard hit through absenteeism. A study by Ottawa's Carleton University shows that Canadian business squanders 2.7 billion dollars annually in wages paid to employees who are sidelined with stress-related problems.

So what's being done to alleviate our stress problems? Some forward-minded companies are working hard to improve the working environment in an all-out effort to improve productivity. Unfortunately these firms are in the minority, so the responsibility once again shifts to the individual. We know that exercise is beneficial and should be part of a regular routine, but it's even more important to change our thinking. We need to stop taking ourselves so seriously and put the fun back into the workplace. We have to put the laughter back in our lives and squeeze the stress out.

Stu Black is an award-winning public speaker who encourages his audiences to relearn the natural secret to a happier, healthier and more productive life. Says Black, "We have to think back to the voices we've heard over the years from our authority figures telling us:

- "You're not funny"
- "Wipe that silly grin off your face"
- "Grow up"
- "Act your age"
- "Be quiet"

Is it any wonder we've become so serious? We've been learning NOT to laugh, going completely against human nature.

In his presentations, Stu covers many practical approaches to lightening up:

- Injecting humour into the workplace
- Building your own humour library
- Learning to laugh without jokes
- Understanding the physiological connection between laughter and good health