

## “Under Pressure: Are You Being Yourself Too Much?”

by Markku Kauppinen

Lately almost everyone I talk to tells me they are busier now than ever before. The changes in the world economy are forcing everyone to find ways to be more productive and efficient. The improved communication technology is making almost everyone instantly and constantly accessible. The line between work and personal time is very blurred and usually we are also to blame. We are addicted to our mobile devices incessantly checking emails and messages never taking a break from the demands of work.

Pressure and stress are obvious outcomes and we all experience them at various degrees every day. Sometimes the pressure comes and goes very quickly. It may be triggered by small events like someone simply cutting us off in traffic. Other times stress is a more constant companion. Perhaps, your work is always fast-paced and the aggressive deadlines are constantly present. In either case, our natural style – our hard-wired behavioral style – plays a significant role in how we react and respond to it. Our style also has an important impact on what types of situations tend to trigger us to experience pressure and feeling of stress. In other words, what is a stressful situation for one style can be very easy for another style to handle.

For example, losing the ability to make independent decisions can cause stress for a decisive “D-style” while asking a more hesitant “S-style” to make a quick, independent decision can create a pressure situation. The situation can be the same; the reaction is very different depending on the person’s style.

Think about a recent situation when you were feeling stressed and overwhelmed. What were your reactions to what was taking place in your environment? The chances are extremely high you reverted to your natural behavioral style and began to exhibit those behaviors more. If you are a competitive “D-style”, you became even more impatient and direct. If you happen to be an outgoing “I-style”, you started to talk more and seek more attention from others. In case you are a steady “S-style”, you withdrew instead and

began to rather stubbornly resist what was happening around you. Finally, if you are an analytical “C-style”, you started to question everything and analyze the reasons, causes and consequences of the situation.

Actually, reverting to our natural behavioral style makes a lot of sense. It is the behavioral “territory” or “turf” we master. We are at our strongest on that turf and feel the most comfortable and secure when we stand on that ground. There is nothing wrong with facing the challenging situations from our positions of strength. However, what usually also happens when we are under pressure is that we lose some of our ability to modify our behaviors. And, as the pressure increases, we also tend to begin to use and exhibit the *negative* aspects of our natural behavioral style.

In practice this means if you are, for example, a D-style, instead of being assertive, you may become overly aggressive and blunt. However, in stressful situations it becomes even more serious and pronounced because our ability to modify behaviors is compromised. This in turn often escalates tensions with others and the situation gets even worse and more stressful. It is a downward spiral and we all get caught in it from time to time.

In movies the heroes face incredibly dangerous situations with calm and ease. Bullets are flying everywhere and explosions light up the silver screen. Yet, the hero stays calm and collected and even cracks witty one-liners. He remains the same person throughout the movie. He does not overreact or “lose it”. Usually the most significant reaction the audience will see is when he takes care of the last, and the worst, villain. Even then, he is in control.

Being self-aware is fundamental in being in control of our reactions to our environment. When you “lose it”, you lose control of your behaviors. When you are aware of what types of situations and factors cause you stress, how you respond to stress, and how you can alleviate it, you are much better equipped to productively

deal with stress and pressure. When you are aware of what is happening to you, you can be more focused on your behaviors better maintaining your ability to modify them. The end result is you handle the stressful situation well, stay on course to achieve your goals and do not cause damage to relationships with others.

In theory this is a very simple process. First, become aware of what types of situations tend to cause you stress so you can anticipate and be prepared for them. Second, be aware of your typical and natural reactions to stress so you can consciously control and modify your behavior. Finally, learn what factors tend to alleviate your stress to help you cope and recover faster.

In reality, this is much harder to do. Modifying our behaviors takes effort and energy; it takes even *more* energy when we feel the pressure. However, once you become cognizant of what is transpiring under the demanding circumstances, it gets easier. You will realize your natural reaction is often making the situation worse and it makes a lot more sense to decide to change how you react. In fact, it almost always is the *only* thing you can change. You will achieve a better outcome, you feel better and others around you will feel better. Everyone wins.

All this being said, I know sometimes we all want to throw a temper tantrum. Go ahead, throw one from time to time. But now you will know it is your decision to do so and you are the one who will pay the price. I predict you will do it less often. In our September Newsletter, I will give you one very important reason to do it even less often.

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## MOJO

Take responsibility  
Run the extra mile  
Care about doing a great job  
Love doing it  
Appreciate the opportunities  
Make the best of it  
Inspirational  
Great attitude  
Determined  
Zest for life

## NOJO

Victim  
March in place  
Just want to get by  
Have to do it  
Tolerate the requirements  
Endure it  
Painful to be around  
Lethargic  
Lazy  
Zombie like – living dead

## “Are you Full of Mojo or Nojo?”

by Marshall Goldsmith

My mentor and friend Dr. Paul Hersey is a pioneer in the field of leadership development as well as a wonderful teacher. Many years ago, he taught me the value of using operational definitions. For example, when Dr. Hersey taught classes he would explain what he meant when he used the words "leadership" or "management." He made no claims that his definitions were better than anyone else's; he merely noted that, for the purposes of his class, his definitions captured what he meant when he used these words.

### DEFINING MOJO

Because "mojo" is a word that can have many different meanings, I'd like to follow Dr. Hersey's example and give you my operational definition. (And like Dr. Hersey, I make no claim that mine is a better definition than anyone else's.) My operational definition of mojo: that positive spirit toward what we are doing now that starts on the inside and radiates to the outside. As I ponder this definition, I realize that Dr. Hersey is a professor who demonstrates incredible mojo every time he teaches!

When I think about the truly successful human beings that I have met in my journey through life—the people who are succeeding at both what they do and how they feel about themselves—I realize they all have mojo. We see people with mojo in every occupation and at every level of an organization. I was recently working at Centegra, a health-care organization in Illinois. I watched as their CEO, Mike Eesley, gave awards to employees who best

demonstrated their organization's values. I was amazed at the great attitude—the mojo—shown by award-winners in such diverse occupations as cafeteria workers, technicians, nurses, and administrators. These people were all demonstrating mojo.

While I enjoyed observing these exuberant and motivated people get their awards, I thought about the thousands of people in similar jobs around the world who don't demonstrate mojo, the people who had a negative spirit toward what they were doing. That, too, starts on the inside and is apparent on the outside.

### WHEN THERE'S NO MOJO

In defining a term, it is often useful to think about its opposite. Mark Reiter (my agent, fellow writer, and friend) and I struggled to come up with a word that describes the opposite of mojo. We finally found the word that we were searching for: Nojo! I love it! Even the sound of it communicates the meaning.

When you get the chance, observe two different employees doing exactly the same job at the same time. One could be the embodiment of mojo while the other is the poster child for nojo. Case in point: flight attendants. For 32 years, my work has taken me around the world. On American Airlines alone, I just passed the dubious milestone of more than 10 million frequent flyer miles! All this flying has given me the chance to interact with thousands of flight attendants.

Most are dedicated, professional, and service-oriented. They demonstrate mojo. A few are grumpy and act like they would rather be anywhere else than on the plane. They demonstrate nojo. I've seen two groups of attendants doing exactly the same activity, at the same time, for the same company, probably at around the same salary, yet the messages that each is sending to the world about their experience is completely different.

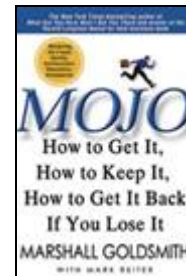
### HOW'S YOUR MOJO?

How can we recognize mojo or nojo in ourselves and in others? Start by evaluating yourself and the people you meet on their mojo or nojo qualities, using the table at the top of the story. What are you learning? How can you either change yourself or your activities to empty the nojo in your life and fill it up with mojo?

Terri Funk Graham, a chief marketing officer and fellow San Diegan, pointed out to me that consumer brands can either increase our mojo or fill us with mojo! Think of some of the brands that you know. Which are making us feel more mojo? Which, without intending to, are increasing our quotient of nojo?

***Dr. Marshall Goldsmith** recently been named by the American Management Association as one of 50 great thinkers and business leaders who have impacted the field of management. His 18 books include the Business Week best-seller, *The Leader of the Future* and *Global Leadership: The Next Generation*. Marshall is a world authority in helping successful leaders achieve positive change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams.*

Marshall's latest best-seller, **MOJO**, is now available.



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