



# Are you being PRESSURE COOKED?

By Greg Kinnaird

Do you ever feel that you are living in a pressure cooker? Why is it that some people struggle to get ahead in their work life whilst for others, it appears as simple as cutting butter with a hot knife?

**W**hen you think about it, most of us dedicate at least 10 to 12 hours to our work life each day. It is time to start asking yourself ‘am I doing what I want to do or what I have to do?’ Think about it! You probably set your alarm clock for 6:30am this morning, worked a full day, then arrived home tired in the evening wondering where the day went. No wonder we are stressed. Ask yourself this simple question ‘am I in control of life or is life in control of me?’

If life is in control of you, you will simply get caught up in the game of life - you wake up, go to work, go home, wake-up, go to work, go home and so it repeats. Now is the time to break free to empower yourself to achieve all that you want to be.

It all comes down to doing those activities that are going to improve your workday and to enhance your work and life, to become a more effective worker through balance.

**There are seven critical principles that will empower you to take back control of life:**

- **Predisposition**
- **Physical fitness**
- **Nutrition and diet**

- **Personal well-being**
- **Emotional balance**
- **Emotional habits and control**
- **Work life**

Understanding these themes that may contribute to feelings of stress, or have a negative impact on your health is vital in maintaining work life balance.

Today, more than ever workplace members want to balance their work and life. Stress and well-being is currently recognised as a key concern, not only in the context of the workplace. Remember, the quality of your thinking will determine the quality of your future. Keep an open and optimistic mind as we look at each of these principles in a bit more detail.

## **Predisposition**

Your character predisposition or your internal drive and pace of living. This principle asks the question ‘how much pressure do you feel or put on yourself?’

You may already have discovered that you operate with the so-called “Type A” behaviour. This means that you are likely to be under constant pressure and you may view life in general as competitive, and that you need to be hard driving on yourself and others.

If you are a “Type A” person, you are

inclined to get things done in a fast and action orientated manner. You may naturally be disposed to bite off a lot to chew, cramming a lot into your day to impress others with your capacity to manage time with great pace and energy. However, you are often obsessive about cramming and sometimes fail to design in enough contemplative time or to relax or quietly reflect on where you might be going.

## **Physical Fitness**

This looks at your overall levels of physical health and the extent to which your regime maintains your desired health and fitness.

Dedication to your job may have led to the direct decline in your physical fitness, especially if you are desk bound from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Like many “Pressure Cooked workers” it is likely that you have been neglectful of good exercise, or only exercising lightly or infrequently at best.

Those workers who are most at risk of being pressure cooked avoid exercise and often drive or be driven almost everywhere. To have effective work life balance, think about becoming more serious about your on-going fitness and health, and make sure that you do at least

the minimum to ensure that you remain strong and resilient. Develop some kind of fitness regime to include exercise into your life every week.

**Nutrition and Diet**

What do you eat and how healthy is it? Are you maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet? The “Pressure Cooked worker” is likely to be the ingredients in their own stew.

Most people are unaware of general or particular diet needs and more prone to consume enjoyable foods regardless of their effect on your body – good and bad. Effective work life balance means becoming aware of the need to maintain balance in your overall diet. Plan and organise what you eat in order to avoid what is not good for you and include what is good for you.

Start by reading a good diet and nutrition booklet or guide or go and see a professional. Design a varied but healthy regime that you can stick to until it becomes a normal part of your daily habits.

**Personal Well-being**

Do you consciously act to look after your body and avoid substances or practices that are likely to cause you short or long term harm? As a “Pressure Cooked worker” you may neglect your body and not think about the regular “wear and tear” that can occur until it becomes a more significant problem.

In the worst case scenario, you are likely to give low priority to your personal well-being and to looking after your weight, diet, physical health, and relaxation. This is typical of a “reactive” type of person, and the low value they place on their own well-being.

To have effective work life balance, think about becoming proactive in looking after your body with prevention and protection in mind. To improve your wellbeing start by picking one or two areas in which you can specifically change your habits to help get you started.

This might be to give up smoking (if applicable) or drinking less tea, coffee or alcohol.

**Emotional Balance**

This refers to the extent to which you consciously act to look after your mental and emotional well being. This principle asks the general question “Do I feel emotionally comfortable most of the time.”

Have you ever found yourself being insular and concerned with your “patch” and prone to see each day as “a challenge to be overcome?” If so, it is likely that you give low priority to your mental and emotional well being, and relating to others in a balanced and reasonable way. This can lead to high levels of introspection and withdrawal.

To have effective work life balance, think about becoming more easy-going being happy with your life, and see each day as a “new experience” to be savoured. You may be a relatively open type of person that is quite comfortable in relating to other people in all kinds of positions, environments and situations. Make “Taking things as they come” your daily motto.

Understand that it is difficult to stop worrying and to become more self-aware. With self awareness it is often the first step in a long journey towards thinking more positively. You may find that being more accepting of what comes along in life will be easier by having someone that guides and supports you or do it yourself with focus, determination and self discipline.

**Emotional Habits and Control**

Listen to your internal feelings or thoughts, then control your life and your environment as much as necessary to achieve your desired level of control. As a “Pressure Cooked worker” you may often worry about what others think and be concerned about acting in the “right” way.

If this external influence continues it is likely that you will become relatively “volatile” emotionally. This may mean

swinging from quietly worrying about an action to openly showing irritation (or even anger); even if you think you are keeping it to yourself.

Think about becoming more self reliant to increase self control in your life. By doing this you will become entirely comfortable in your own company and accept your imperfections without much personal angst. This will help you become comfortable to ask for help when you need it.

Consider one or two areas to improve upon. This might be to treat yourself to something when you think you have done well. It could also involve identifying an issue on which you think you might have been “wrong” or “unfair” and admitting this to the person(s) involved.

**Work Life**

This looks at how you feel about your work and how you think about managing and controlling it rather than it managing and controlling you.

Believe it or not, some people see work as “a necessary evil”, a place to “tolerate” as best they can and are often glad to get away from it. You may find that over time you have developed general worry, stress, fatigue or even a long term illness by letting your work frustrations consume you without a non-work stress relief outlet.

See work as a challenging and interesting part of your life in which you get out what you want; without letting it become dominant on your home life.

You have a choice. Either find your work enjoyable or change it so that it becomes more satisfying or fulfilling. Make a list of what you currently enjoy about your work. Test if it is possible to change what you do to adjust this balance to become more positive.

If this isn’t possible, or only makes a marginal difference, think about what steps you would have to take to change roles altogether. ■



**Greg Kinnaird**

**Innovating the World**

*“Do what you want to do, not what you have to do”.*

This is innovative business man and managing director of AustralAsian

Management Centre Greg Kinnaird’s philosophy on life.

Coming from an administration accounting background, Greg was in the wrong job for 13 years. “I realised for the 13 years I was doing what I had to do, but now it’s all about what I want to do.” In 1992 he started to plan a way of breaking into HR.

Landing himself a job at Bankwest is what Greg describes as his introduction into HR via his computer experience. The bank sponsored him to do a degree in training and development, where he found the

stimulation he’d been looking for.

He was then offered a position at the Australian Institute of Management where he stayed for 5 years and was sponsored to complete his master’s degree at university. “What I learned was the whole reinforcement that if you know what your values are and align it in the corporate world, then everything happens really easily, there’s a nice flow,” Greg notes.

In his final year at university Greg designed his current business; a business to go into the future. His plan was to create a business that wasn’t stuck in past traditions of protocols and procedures. “I just had this drive, my life calling, this innate drive to help people develop.” Greg is now ‘developing’ clients throughout Australia and Singapore and sharing his knowledge and energy.

The Perth based businessman has discovered that many people are very much dissatisfied with their working lives and doubt who they are, which leaves them

stuck with a whole lot of question marks. Mr Kinnaird believes he has a gift to be able to identify the issue and not get bogged down in the problem. “I help people understand that different is different, not different is wrong.”

According to Greg, innovative companies walk the talk. Greg has proven that he is definitely in this category; he set up an email counselling service for his clients just 2 hours after he received news of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. After viewing the reports of the tsunami Greg began thinking of his corporate friends and clients in Asia. He sent out an email to 3000 people offering his support and lending his ear to listen to those affected. He was widely acknowledged for his act of kindness and describes it as a humbling experience.

Greg Kinnaird will be writing a regular column for Conscious Living. In each issue he will share his wisdom and values with readers as part of his mission to help people ‘develop’.