

# MODERN OFFICE PROCEDURES

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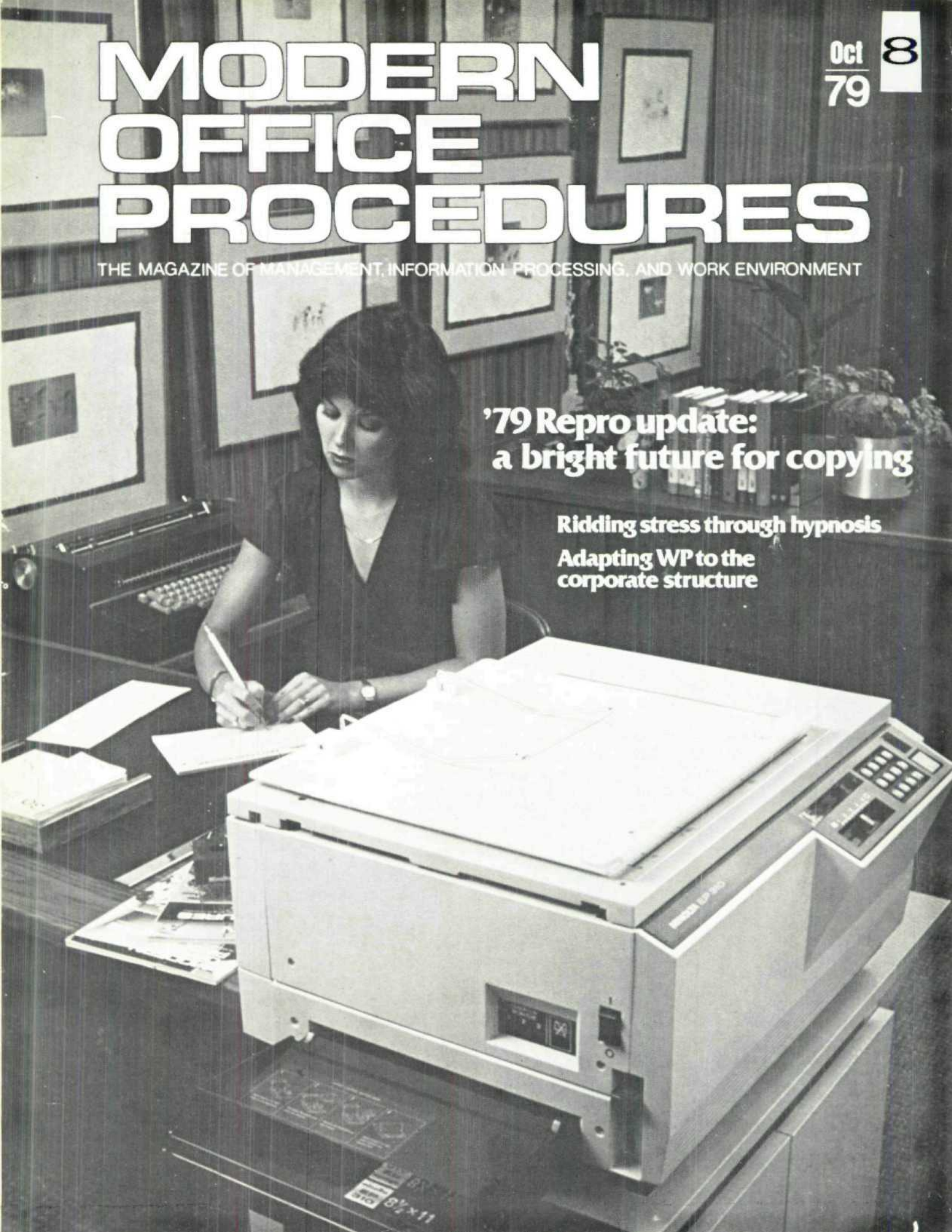
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THE MAGAZINE OF MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION PROCESSING, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

**'79 Repro update:  
a bright future for copying**

**Ridding stress through hypnosis**

**Adapting WP to the  
corporate structure**



# Coping with stress through hypnosis

Through history, hypnosis has been used for various purposes, from relieving the pain of tooth extraction to treating psychosomatic illnesses. Today, hypnosis is being used in business to alleviate stress and the toll stress can take on the health and performance of employees.

Stuart Froum, D.D.S., a periodontist on staff at the New York University College of Dentistry and currently a research associate at the Institute for Research of Hypnosis in New York City, says, "Today, hypnosis is a proven technique to enable executives to relieve and control their inner stresses and tensions, and in turn to increase their personal efficiency and productivity."

While Dr. Froum carries the primary professional credentials of a dentist, his experiences with apprehensive and anxious patients led him to use and develop hypnotic techniques. He went on to teach other dentists and their staffs how to relieve their own stress. His success in developing skillful techniques quickly earned him a reputation outside dentistry, particularly in the management community. He customized self-hypnosis techniques to fit the white-collar executive and now teaches these methods across the country and abroad. He belongs to the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis and the International Society of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis. He has lectured across the country and has given post graduate courses on hypnosis.

According to Dr. Froum, "Self-hypnosis may be used as a relaxation or meditative technique to almost instantaneously rest the mind and body. This is done without resorting to sleep, alcohol, drugs, food, or cigarettes. The state of self-hypnosis allows an individual to retreat into himself and regain an inner sense of balance and control. It is a way of retreating from the pressures and problems of the world, and allowing the mind to rest and recharge."

Not all stress is harmful, however, and Dr. Froum explains the difference between the stress we need to relieve and the stress which is necessary in our everyday lives. "I think a good working definition of stress or the stress response is those bodily changes both physiological and psychological that take place in an individual in response to stressful stimuli or stressors. Many people think of stress in only negative terms; however, stress is necessary for the daily adaptability of man to his changing environment. Some stressors, exercise for example, may actually improve the health of the body. Only if the body's responses are unfavorable and disease producing do we say that the stress state is harmful or that one is in distress."

Stressors which cause distress are not always unfavorable circumstances. Sports activities, dating, parties, marriage, vacations, and the birth of a child, to name a few, may be pleasant activities but nonetheless stressful. These alone or in combination with occupational stressors can cause distress. "The amount of stress an individual can handle before distress occurs depends on the strength, duration, number of stressors, and the makeup of the individual," Dr. Froum says. "Whether or not a person is in distress depends as much on his reaction to stress as on the stressor itself."

## Decisions and responsibility

There are many causes for stress but the two most demanding stresses in life fall upon the white-collar executive's shoulders. Dr. Froum says, "The main causes of stress among white-collar executives today are related to the nature of the position combined with the individual makeup of the executive. The white-collar executive is constantly asked to do two of the most stressful things in life: making decisions and taking responsibility. He or she assumes

the responsibility of planning, executing and making changes when necessary. Each of these is a tremendous stressor. Moreover, the executive is responsible for achieving goals in a limited time frame. The executive is constantly faced with a high stress situation of increasing productivity while decreasing the time it takes to produce. This goal requires the coordination of many individuals which creates additional stress in the form of interpersonal relations with employees. Furthermore, in reaching these goals the white-collar executive must contend with many factors that are outside his direct control; for example, the stock market, changing government regulations, inflation, recession, unions, and natural disaster. With all of these variables he is still ultimately held responsible for achieving a goal regardless of external conditions."

Individual pressures on the white-collar executive include competitiveness in the field. Each year there are more and more qualified managers who could take the executive's place. "The executive is constantly looking over his shoulder," Dr. Froum says. "He is in competition with himself as much as with others. Each year he is required to exceed the goals reached the previous year."

On a personal level, the executive needs to maintain a certain standard of living which again requires constantly increasing his productivity. Dr. Froum says, "Employees have many outlets for their problems such as company and union counselors. White-collar executives, on the other hand, do not usually have these outlets and by the nature of their leadership role would be reluctant to seek them even if they did exist. The executive sees problems within his domain and feels it's part of his position as an executive to handle them. Thus the executive often feels alone with his stress."

## Minority stress

Additional stress is placed on white-collar women and minorities because of their need to constantly prove themselves to their fellow employees. According to Dr. Froum, "I think we're recently seeing a new cause of stress among white-collar executives and employees. With more women and minorities in white-collar positions, many of these people are under added stress beyond the traditional requirements of the executive. They complain that they are not being taken seriously by fellow executives and employees. Many times they over-compensate for this which causes an uptightness in their involvement with others. They are under pressures to constantly prove themselves, and this causes distress."

## How to spot stress

Ironically, the personality trait which distinguishes one as a good executive, in most instances, causes that individual to be most susceptible to stress-related problems. According to Dr. Froum, distress-prone people show the following behavioral characteristics: 1. A tremendous drive to accomplish a goal in the least possible time. The person is annoyed at any delay. He runs a very tight schedule and works at a pace faster than most. He often compares others with himself and gets frustrated when others appear to perform slower than he. He finds himself taking on their jobs which increases his workload. 2. The individual always handles several projects at the same time. Each of these projects brings added responsibility and deadlines. 3. This individual is highly competitive. He is competing with others and with himself as well. Often this competitive attitude carries over in his attempts at relaxation. Tennis, golf, card playing, exercising, and the like represent extensions of this competitive drive. Consequently he finds it difficult to relax. 4. The stress-prone individual has an obsessive, compulsive personal-

ity. He is a perfectionist. He finds it difficult to leave a project uncompleted and he will work extra hours to finish a job. Each delay or frustration will only serve to increase his determination to complete the work. Thus, he has a compulsion to overwork. He's a classic workaholic. He will neglect family, friends, and even sacrifice his health for the sake of his job or goals. 5. The stress-prone individual feels that he thrives on stress. He enjoys deadlines and tends to create stress in the situation even when it is not needed.

"All of the above mentioned personality traits are typical of the successful white-collar executive; however these characteristics indicate a stress-prone personality," Dr. Froum says, "and, according to cardiologists, stress-prone individuals are more likely to suffer heart attacks than other executives."

## Type A and B

Two cardiologists, Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman, authors of the "Type A Behavior and Your Heart," classify an individual not prone to coronary disease as a Type B personality. A Type B individual is seen as passive, neither overly ambitious nor overly competitive, and not under constant time pressures. Type A personalities, which are found among white-collar executives, are prone to heart disease. These individuals have characteristics which include high competitiveness, aggressiveness, feelings of time urgency with frequent deadlines, desire to control their environment, and impatience with delay. "Unless Type A's learn to control their chronic stressors," Dr. Froum says, "they are predisposed to coronary diseases such as heart attacks, coronary thrombosis and strokes, including disorders of the digestive tract, ulcers, and nervous stomach; nervous disorders and depression; migraine and tension headaches; insomnia; asthma; mononucleosis; sexual dysfunction;

shoulder and back pains; and a host of others.

"Stress-related diseases," Dr. Froum says, "take their toll on productivity. One estimate has it that American industry loses between \$10 and \$20 billion dollars annually through lost work days, hospitalization, and early death caused by stress."

## Stress begets stress

An added loss of productivity occurs as the executive continues to work in his stressful condition. "He loses self-confidence," Dr. Froum says. "Usually a manager under stress will no longer relate well with his subordinates. He tends to disregard his employees' feelings and problems in his haste to achieve his goals. The employees resent this and their productivity falls. It is difficult to work in a tense atmosphere, without you yourself becoming tense." Consequently the employees feel this tension and may themselves feel distressed.

"Distress ultimately causes feeling of depression and isolation," Dr. Froum says. "The executive begins disliking his work. He can no longer handle any additional problems. His performance suffers."

A manager under stress may also find his family life suffering. "Try as he may to not bring home problems, distress has a tendency to spill over into one's personal life. Family problems become too bothersome to contend with, and his sexual life begins to suffer. The executive under stress often tends to use coping mechanisms such as smoking, drinking, overeating and drugs which not only adversely affect his health but have a detrimental affect on his family. These 'outlets' further tend to cloud his thought processes and his effectiveness suffers. Another type of coping mechanism involves avoidance and procrastination. According to Froum, the executive postpones decisions, meetings, and

responsibilities with the false hope that someone else will handle them. A more severe form of avoidance is the executive getting sick often and actually missing days of work.

"To sum this up," Dr. Froum says, "the executive under stress has personality changes which decrease his productivity and reinforce feelings of inadequacy. Stress can never be eliminated and in reality one would not want to eliminate stress entirely." Coping with stress safely and effectively is the key.

### Controlling stress

Executives under constant daily pressures can alleviate stress by using certain methods of hypnosis. Dr. Froum says, "Self-hypnosis as a relaxation-meditative technique relieves mental fatigue, which is a great deterrent to evaluating and decision-making," Dr. Froum says. "This can be done almost any time during the day, and for any length of time. There is no special preparation. All that is required is a quiet, private place where one can be alone for a few minutes.

"We know all people have individual highs and lows during a normal day. This is a biological fact that has led to the concept of biorhythms. But instead of just learning when your low periods are, self-hypnosis allows you to rest prior to or during these lows to decrease their frequency or duration."

Self-hypnosis can help and prevent stress-related diseases. It also can be of value when these diseases or symptoms already exist. Self hypnosis can also help overcome depression, self-doubt, negativism, and feelings of isolation which can be stress-related.

### Case histories

Many executives have been relieved of stress through hypnosis, and thus have improved their interpersonal relationships, relations with their subordinates and their productivity. Dr. Froum cites three such cases.

Case number 1: A successful marketing executive found himself out of shape, lethargic, heavy, etc. He complained that with his schedule he had no time for exercise. He came home late at night and had time only to eat and drink. Self-hypnosis relaxed him during the day and evening. He used it to diet suc-

cessfully, and the stress-relief and rest it gave him left him with enough energy to exercise. He now does not drink, is 20 pounds lighter, and has more energy.

Case number 2: An executive in an advertising firm suffered from insomnia. He was exhausted and on edge and found interpersonal relations suffering. He felt that part of the large turnover in personnel was due to his personality. Self-hypnosis gave him rest during the day and allowed uninterrupted sleep at night. He also used self-hypnosis to visualize problems and conceptualize new ideas. He reported major improvements in his ability to work and function. Also, in the past few years, he has increased his own and his staff's productivity.

Case number 3: A branch manager of a large manufacturing firm felt under pressure to increase sales each year. He was in competition with other branch managers and with himself. Staff turnover was high, yet he pushed his workers because he knew they could produce more. Self-hypnosis enabled him to visualize his problems, alter his personality and motivate his staff. Last year he headed the leading sales branch in the country.

### Who can use hypnosis?

According to Dr. Froum, almost everyone is capable of using the techniques of hypnosis and self-hypnosis. "It is estimated that 90 to 95 percent of the population is hypnotizable to some extent," Dr. Froum says, "if they wish to be.

"Executives should be especially adept since statistically the better the imagination, the better the ability to concentrate and the more intelligent the person the better he or she is in terms of hypnotizability," Dr. Froum says. "Executives should find these techniques very compatible with their lifestyle because once learned, both hypnosis and self-hypnosis require very little time or energy to use them effectively."

### Hypnosis and meditation

Most types of meditation, such as hypnosis, reciprocal relaxation, TM, and the like, are effective in producing a state of relaxation. "Meditation is an altered state of consciousness brought on by a repetition of a constant stimu-

lant usually a word called a Mantra," Froum says. "Teachers of TM claim it is most effective when practiced twice a day for at least 20 minutes at a time. Self-hypnosis is different in that it may be done from one to as many times as one wishes, for as long as one wishes and still derive benefits."

There are many other stress release methods, such as exercise which has been shown to prolong life and decrease incidence of serious disease. "But even exercise can be stressful to the stress-prone individual," Dr. Froum says. "The exercise often becomes the compulsion. Stress-prone individuals become so obsessed with the regularity of their exercise that this becomes stressful. These individuals bring their competitiveness to the exercise and the sport becomes an added source of stress rather than a stress alleviator."

### Workshops

Attending a workshop on self-hypnosis and learning how to cope with stress can prove to be money well spent. According to Dr. Froum, "Workshop programs bring together executives from various fields who are taught the concept and use of hypnosis and self-hypnosis techniques. At the end of the workshop, every individual has experienced the techniques and is able to use them to relax and relieve stress, build self-confidence, review solutions to specific problems and methods of reaching desired goals, anticipate interferences in various courses of action in solving problems, and increase creativity, insight, and inspirations."

### Living with stress

In the business world, each display of talent or ability usually results in a promotion, a raise, and added stress. With the high turnover rate of executives in many industries, some experts maintain there is too much stress in industry. Dr. Froum says, "If stress is kept at the optimum level for individual functioning — and this varies from person to person — stress can be used to keep productivity at a maximum without the negative consequences of disease or breakdown. By using self-hypnosis techniques, the individual can actually control and monitor his level of stress whenever necessary."