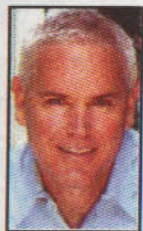


## HEALTH CARE REPORT

# Here are steps to take if your job is making you sick



By ANTHONY ZOLEZZI  
Special to the  
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Control issues include but aren't limited to dress codes, constant conference calls, unrealistic timelines or goals, and budget and sales goals which are impossible to meet.

## Control scenarios

An understanding of how control scenarios stem from either the insecurities of co-workers and superiors or their hidden agendas will help you lose the fear that would-be controllers try to instill in you.

Why are we drawn to reality shows like "The Apprentice?" We're attracted to the first part of the show where contestants are ambitiously using all their creative ideas to figure out how to market and produce a product or service. That's how we're wired. We're supposed to be creative and innovative, using our talents to further a cause or idea.

But it's the second part of the show that sheds the true light on the drama that happens in Corporate America. In the second half, the contestants find themselves in the boardroom — all fighting for their jobs — where one slip up could mean, "You're fired!"

The corporation, by its very nature, is subject to control dramas. Anyone looking at an organizational chart can see there is only one box at the top and the boxes beneath it are linked in a cascading fashion until you have a power pyramid. The assumption is that no one but the person at the very top knows how to do things the right way. It only takes one insecure superi-

or or peer to create undue stress on those below.

The problem arises when you respond by doing things out of fear, which are inconsistent with your inclinations and counter-productive to your priorities. Such reactions affect the cells in your body, causing your immune system to react just as it would to an invasion of bacteria.

With your body working hard to try and restore its balance, you're going to feel like you're fighting off an illness. This fear hangover doesn't benefit anyone — not you, your family or the company you work for.

## Detachment steps

Once you realize the nature of others' attempts to control and coerce you, and the kind of harm that can result, you're ready to take detachment steps to make your emotional, psychological and spiritual escape. It's then when you can achieve renewed creativity and become a peak performer. Here are some easy first steps you can take:

1. Quit taking it personally. Come to realize that whatever the situation is at work, it likely stems from someone else's agenda and insecurities, so emotionally detach from it.

2. Make sure you are rested and feel good. When you're relaxed you're able to achieve peak performance, which is what the company is looking for. Speak up when you feel deprived of rest or exercise. If you don't, your own insecurity will make you ripe for control.

3. Recognize attempts at control and use them to your benefit. When working for control freaks, be aware of it, and use it to your advantage whenever possible by letting them do most of your work for you. Don't worry if what they want seems like the wrong approach, or isn't up to your standards. Remember that it's their issue, not yours. Get your satisfaction from a personal creative pursuit which you can control.

4. When you have to work over the weekend, make it on your terms. Assess the situation for what it is — an imposition. Don't act as if this is something that's routinely expected of you.

5. Keep everything in perspective. When stress levels build, keep telling yourself, "This isn't me — it's only a job."

While workplace stress and its pernicious effects have been steadily worsening because of factors like layoffs and job insecurity, there are several ways you can reduce your own stress level. You can start by assuming control of as many things related to your work as you can — even the little ones.

*California-based Anthony Zolezzi is an entrepreneur who works with CEOs to unite every level of their organization for more creative productivity. He's also responsible for more than 20 product innovations and developments in the food industry. Zolezzi is the author of "The Detachment Paradox." More information is available at [www.detachmentparadox.com](http://www.detachmentparadox.com).*

Do you find yourself suffering from sleepless nights, tension headaches or stomach ulcers? Perhaps the source of your problems is a series of control dramas that have been inflicted on you by the people you work with.

You may be working in a toxic environment without even realizing it. Most people have come to accept 12-hour workdays without lunch breaks and working overtime on the weekend as a way of life. But the fact is, we are putting our physical, emotional and mental health, more and more at risk.

It's costing U.S. business almost \$300 billion per year in absenteeism, health problems and programs to help stressed-out (or burned-out) workers. The American Institute of Stress estimates that a million workers are absent each day due to effects of stress.

To eliminate your stress-related illnesses in the workplace, you must face up to the reality that someone is attempting to control you. Once you do, you can begin to detach by stepping back and determining whether the drama at work has any relevance to your life or if its purpose is purely manipulation.