

# Four Temptations\*

## Excesses Under Favorable Conditions

### LIFO® Professional Bulletin #2

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OUR FAVORITE LIFO® STYLES of living and working give us considerable pleasure. We feel like our true selves, doing what comes naturally. The temptation is to experience this pleasure and wherever and whenever we can. Ironically, when temptation takes over, we can do too much of our good thing and undermine our work and relationships.

The four behavior patterns that promote excellence are:

**HELPING:** Giving our all to be a helpful, worthy person who does the greatest good for the greatest number of people and does the right thing.

**DOING:** Taking charge and taking what we need to get fast results completing challenging projects and quickly moving on to the next project.

**THINKING:** Holding on to what has worked and analyzing new plans and decisions a step at a time with facts and figures.

**PLEASING:** Dealing and compromising to keep things running smoothly between people and influencing them with a light, friendly touch.

Those are some of our tempting pleasures. That's us. We love it! Therefore, why not do as much of it as possible? It's so confirming and pleasurable.

Ah, but gluttony is our undoing. There can be too much of a good thing. Our pleasure can be someone else's displeasure. Others can sense the self serving nature of our efforts and feel put upon, and react negatively to stop us.

What's more, perhaps the task at hand does not require so much hard work, quick action, extensive analysis, or that much compromise. What comes naturally to us may not be what is naturally required in a particular situation. Nevertheless, we pour our time and energy into it, often letting other projects pile up. But because our favorite patterns give us such pleasure, we don't think twice about whether our actions can lead to overload and stress. Pleasure wins out.

We have created stress and undermined effectiveness by reducing the time we have for our many other pressing responsibilities. Underlying time management is managing the four temptations.

### 'Supporting' Temptations

With this pattern, it is important to remember that pleasure comes from hard work and seeking excel-



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lence. It also comes from being thoughtful, trusting, idealistic, and loyal. People with this pattern try to do the very best and set high standards for themselves and others.

When overdone, the person with a supporting pattern can become trapped in the pursuit of perfection. Practical standards, however, clearly indicate that what is already accomplished is acceptable. The situation does not warrant more effort. To give it more is like being on a treadmill—much exercise but going nowhere. Trying harder may be a waste of effort if new thinking is required. In some cases, it might be better to work smarter, not harder.

With the supporting pattern, we also can be delighted at any opportunity to help someone in need. We can be happy trying to make things right when they go wrong. At the slightest sign of someone's need, we can jump to rescue them.

While these inclinations are admirable and pleasurable, we can become overcommitted helping others. As a result, we can neglect our own needs, and neglect the needs of other people who should be our priority.

Instead of taking so much responsibility, we need to think about whom else should share the responsibility and let go the stressful pleasure that diminishes excellence.

### 'Controlling' Temptations

With controlling, the pleasure goal is realized by seizing opportunity, showing how competent we are, and getting quick results, even on the most difficult task. Pleasure also comes from making things happen by taking charge, being confident, and persuasive.

But we can be so captivated by the challenge of a difficult situation that we persist just to prove we can master and overcome the difficulty. Say it can't be done, and we'll show you it can. Overcoming is the pleasure, showing ourselves and others we can do it. We feel

powerful. But we can overlook the time, effort and money it may have cost to get the results. We absorb the stress because the pleasure can mask the pain.

At the other extreme from difficult tasks, trivial tasks are also taken on just because they are there and require some action. It may be an inconsequential effort in the scheme of things but there is pleasure in the doing. For the sake of pleasure, we wind up overdoing, and running ourselves ragged. Trying to do too much too fast is sure to result in stress.

### 'Conserving' Temptations

Pleasure comes from being methodical, logical, precise, and tenacious. Before acting, we try to analyze every angle, always look for the fail safe way to do a job. We enjoy the tried and true, the practical, making the most of what we have.

With Conserving, the pleasure of being right and accurate makes precision and completeness very important. When this is self-serving, it can lead to analysis paralysis, over elaborate planning and the overuse of information. Asked for the time of day, we'll give you a lecture on how a watch works.

Meanwhile, precious time is lost and tasks pile up waiting to be completed. This lack of closure is a source of stress.

Because we get such pleasure from making the most from existing resources, we may hold on to things that are well used and worn. In those cases, others can be stressed waiting to move on with the new, and we can be stressed when things need repair or just stop running, disrupting our schedule.

### 'Adapting' Temptations

With flexibility, enthusiasm, and tactfulness, people characterized by this Adapting pattern find pleasure in getting along with others. Those of us who have this pattern are pleased by pleasing, keeping events

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and relationships running smoothly. Getting to know people, therefore, and being aware of their needs and wants, helps us to facilitate them in getting what they want.

Often this leads us to ignore our own needs until we help others fill their needs first. If we are not careful, the pleasure of getting along can create the stress of continually placating others at our own expense.

Along with facilitating other people comes an unstated expectation. "Now that I have helped you get what you want, the bargain is that you must allow me to do what I want." If this private expectation is not realized, the stress from resentment can take over.

If we are involved in a significant situation with a number of people, we may find ourselves being pulled in different directions at the same time, particularly when

they meet as a group. Trying to please everybody leads to conflicting positions and stress.

So there are the four temptations—in a word, helping, doing, thinking and pleasing.

These are all positive contributions to others and a pleasure to us—except when we overdo them.

But this is not a dead end. We can learn over a period of time how much pattern pleasure is enough, so that other people are not frustrated with us, and so we don't waste time and sacrifice effectiveness for undue satisfaction.

### Watch for LIFO Professional Bulletin #3

"Breaking Free from the Four Temptations," by Dr. Stuart Atkins. 