



# ARRRGH!

*Don't stress out. Superintendents and experts provide tips on staying calm during the busy spring season*

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Contributor

**O**verseeing the care of a golf course can be stressful at any time of the year, but during the busy spring season stress can multiply like crabgrass on a fairway. Especially in the northern United States, where winter can take its toll on a course, spring can mean extra long hours, more time away from home and more demands from customers and owners who expect perfection. Fortunately for golf course superintendents, there are many ways to efficiently manage stress.

"You have to remember that you are not a miracle worker," says Ryan Bancroft, superintendent at Salis-

han Golf Links, Gleneden Beach, Ore. "If you work at a club that demands perfection, it helps to be a perfectionist. If you are not a perfectionist and your owner desires perfection, you need to be in a different job at a different course."

Anyone who manages a golf course knows that stress can come from many different directions each day—Mother Nature being one of the primary sources.

"My No. 1 stress is the climate because it is so unpredictable," Bancroft says. "Here we can have 30 consecutive days of rain or 30 consecutive days of sunshine. We also have to deal with diseases. There are so many variables that need to line up for the course to be in good shape. Weather also drives revenue. We need good weather to help everyone to keep their jobs."

Bancroft, who manages one 18-hole course, also has to monitor several wetlands, lodge grounds and acreage

## Stress Management Sites:

[www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)

[www.stresstips.com](http://www.stresstips.com)

[www.jobstresshelp.com](http://www.jobstresshelp.com)

[www.stressremedy.com](http://www.stressremedy.com)

[www.getagripsonstress.com](http://www.getagripsonstress.com)

[www.managingeverydayconflict.com](http://www.managingeverydayconflict.com)

[www.frager.com/tips.htm](http://www.frager.com/tips.htm)

adjacent to 600 home sites. During his busy four-month season, he often works 70 to 80 hours a week. He says he manages his stress by trying to keep everything in perspective. Jay Winner, M.D., author of *Stress Management Made Simple: Effective Ways to Beat Stress for Better Health* (Blue Fountain Press/Santa Barbara, Calif., 2003), agrees that perspective is important.

"We sometimes get stressed out about the smallest things," Winner says. "One way to elimi-

nate stress is by listing the things in life for which you are grateful. All of a sudden, a great stressor will seem smaller."

Steve LaFrance, director of Turf Care at The Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village in St. Augustine, Fla., says the stress level can be extra high during tournaments at the resort's two courses.

"Professional golfers' expectations are much higher," LaFrance says. "They are very vocal about conditions and expect courses to be the best they can be."

LaFrance says the fact that his courses are resort courses also raises expectations.

"People come here from all over the world," he says. "It definitely keeps us on our toes."

To deal with his stress, LaFrance says he tries to maintain a level of emotional consistency.

"I have learned to let things go when I leave the property and start anew the next day," he says. "I try not to let things bother me 24 hours a day."

Bob Losyk, a professional speaker and author of *Get a Grip! Overcoming Stress & Thriving in the Workplace* (John Wiley & Sons/Hoboken, N.J., 2004), says it is not necessarily what happens that can be stressful; it is how one handles it.

"The way you react determines the level of the stress most of the time," Losyk says. "Think positive and give yourself positive self-talk. That is important because your body hears everything your mind tells it."

Losyk says the two primary ways one can handle stress is through exercise and meditation.

"Even if you are out there on the course during the day, you still need to get some type of exercise," he says. "It does not have to be an hour, but it is critical to get the body moving through stretching, resistance and aerobics."

Meditation, Losyk says, is the perfect antidote for stress, or what is considered the "fight or flight response."

"You need 10 to 15 minutes at the most," he says. "It is easy to learn but difficult to do. What you try to do is stay in the present moment. It clears your mind and relaxes your body. It is almost like taking a power nap."

Winner and Losyk agree that not working long hours and spending more time with family, friends and hobbies is also a guaranteed way to relieve stress. ■

## Quick Stress Management Tips

- Take breaks throughout the day.
- Think positive and let go of those thoughts that are focused on things you cannot change.
- Learn patience with others.
- Quit smoking.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Maintain a good sense of humor.
- Take a vacation.
- Decrease the frustration of failure. Ask what you can learn from your mistakes.
- Exercise and meditate.



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