



# The California Contractor

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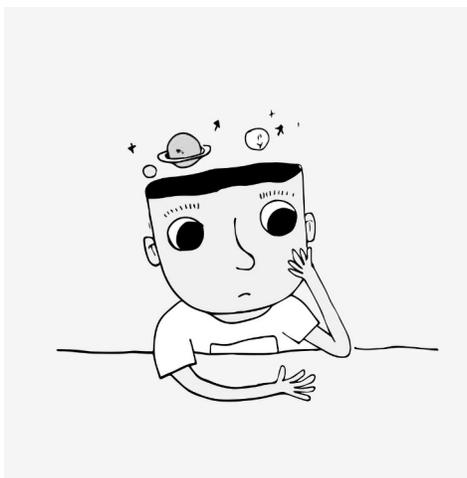
## Be present for your customers and colleagues

By Craig Harrison

They say wherever you go, there you are. Yet how present are you at any given time and place you find yourself? Many professionals appear in body but little else. Don't get marked as missing in action. In the last week I encountered the following professionals missing in action:

**Out of Tune:** My local mail carrier arrived each day, wearing her iPod and delivering my neighbors' mail to me. She's in her own world. She dumps the apartment's mail in a pile each day. In addition to my mail I consistently receive mail from neighbors up and down my street, as well as mail of neighbors two streets over at the same street number. So much for accuracy. Doesn't she realize close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades? **Disconnect:** An airport shuttle driver who greeted us at our hotel and attempted to drive the entire route to the airport while engaged in a phone conversation he was in when he arrived. True, the driver used an ear-piece so we only had to hear his side of the conversation. Yet whether on surface streets or the freeway the constant was the phone call, not our safety.

**Sickening Service:** I showed up at my HMO for a doctor's appointment and was greeted by a lack of greeting. The receptionist was on the phone, and



without making eye contact, stuck out her hand for my medical ID card, processed it, took my money and returned my card, without saying a single word (to me). Her attention was reserved for her call. The call proceeded long after I paid and sat down to wait for my physician. No greeting, smile, acknowledgment of me as a valued patient, or even as a person. Hers was an extended personal call. (How do I know? I was forced to listen in the waiting room for the next 10 minutes.) A Present Danger! Is it too much to ask that people be present when we interact with them? You say you're multi-tasking, I say you're giving poor customer service. And this applies whether you are in sales or service, interacting with

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### At A Glance

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Keeping employees safe from bullying

Addiction in the workplace

Understanding tinnitus

Mixing chemicals can be a deadly mistake

**... and more**

# Presence: Are you giving others your undivided attention?

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external or internal customers. You say you can do two things at once. As a coach I say it's disrespectful and often downright rude to divide attention from a customer or client who has called or is face-to-face. And what's more, the results speak for themselves: errors, omissions, sloppy products and services, missed opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty and allegiance. And a degrading feeling for customers held captive by inattentive service providers.

## Are you Present and Accounted For?

Audit your own interactions with customers. Ask yourself the following:

- Do you greet them with genuine affection?

- Do you know and use their name? (Are you pronouncing it correctly? Not sure? Ask!)

- Are you giving them your undivided attention?

- Are you giving good and consistent eye contact?

- Are you preoccupied with a previous client, customer or call?

- Are you easily distracted?

- If the phone rings while you're in conversation, do you let it ring through?

- Do you listen actively and intently or are you "faking" it?

In today's world customers long to be heard, to be understood and to feel others care about them. Help customers feel connected! Show them you care. Treat them as if they're the most important people in the world. For the brief time they're in your midst, give them your undivided attention. Don't just be here now...but hear now! Or, forever lament the loss of treasured customers.

*San Francisco Bay Area-based professional speaker Craig Harrison's Expressions of Excellence! provides sales and service solutions through speaking. Visit [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com)*

# Keep employees safe from bullying in the workplace

As surprising as it sounds, bullying is a major problem in the workplace. Bullying can take the form of threats, sexual and racial harassment, intimidations, and even physical violence. Bullying is not only harmful to the targeted employee; it also brings down a company's overall morale and profitability. Employers should be aware of the problem and then make it clear that bullying has no place in their business.

For the most part, bullying is a form of psychological violence. However, if left unchecked, workplace bullying can ultimately result in extreme physical violence. In Canada, in 1999, a man went on a shooting spree at his workplace, killing four employees before taking his own life. Investigators later learned he was a victim of workplace harassment. The incident raised awareness

about the effects of psychological violence such as bullying.

Typically, workplace bullies are insecure people with few social skills and little empathy. Their insecurity compels them to try to control others by attacking and belittling them. Bullies tend to target the capable, hard-working employees who they perceive as threats. The more capable the employee, the more determined the bully is to cut them down. Bullies also like to target employees who are cooperative and non-confrontational. The bullied employees endure unjustified criticism. They're often humiliated in front of co-workers. Eventually, they may find themselves ignored and isolated.

While a bully can be a man or woman, studies show that most bullies are bosses (80 percent). The others are co-workers. On rare

occasions, workers bully their superiors. If a boss is a bully, he or she may:

\* Set the target up for failure by setting unrealistic goals or deadlines.

\* Deny the necessary information and resources the victimized employee needs to perform his or her job.

\* Either overload the victim with work or take all the work away

\* Force the victim to do demeaning tasks

Ultimately, a workplace bully is a financial burden to a company. A bully's target tends to become unproductive because he or she spends a great deal of time defending themselves or seeking support from peers. They become highly stressed and unmotivated. Often, they lose time at work due to stress-related illnesses.

But the bully's negative influence extends beyond the target. A bully can poison an entire workplace environment by causing low morale, fear, and anger. This, in turn, leads to high absenteeism and turnover. Efficiency suffers, and the employer foots the bill. In extreme cases, bullying can lead to physical violence and lawsuits.

Every company's employee handbook should make it perfectly clear that workplace bullying is unacceptable behavior and will lead to termination. In addition, employers should establish processes for investigating, recording, and dealing with the issue. Complaints should be investigated quickly.

Employers will benefit by having a happier, more productive, and profitable place of business.



# LAW TALK

By Bruce Rudman  
of Abdulaziz, Grossbart & Rudman

## There are exceptions to the general liability rule

About 25 years ago, in a case called *Privette v. Superior Court* ("Privette"), the California Supreme Court set forth a rule, which generally prohibited an independent contractor or its employees from suing the hirer of the contractor for workplace injuries. This rule has evolved over the years to have certain exceptions, which were recently highlighted in a recent Court of Appeal decision, *Gonzalez v. Mathis* ("Gonzalez"). In *Gonzalez*, an independent contractor who had climbed upon a roof to supervise the cleaning a skylight fell off of a ledge used for access to the roof, and then sued the homeowner. The housekeeper of John Mathis ("Mathis") hired Gonzalez, who was an independent contractor, to clean a skylight which was difficult to access. The skylight covered an indoor pool and protruded through a flat roof. The skylight was surrounded on one side by an exposed two foot ledge and the other side by a parapet wall to hide piping and mechanical equipment positioned next to the skylight. Gonzalez and his workers always utilized a ladder near the parapet to access the roof and clean the skylight.

One day while Gonzalez' workers were cleaning the skylight, the housekeeper noticed that water was leaking in through the skylight and instructed Gonzalez to go tell his employees to use less water. Gonzalez accessed the roof via the ladder, spoke with his employees, and used the small exposed ledge to get back to the ladder; however, he lost his footing and fell off the roof. This accident caused Gonzalez to file a negligence action against Mathis. Gonzalez initially contended that "loose rocks, pebbles and sand on the roof of the property" constituted a "dangerous condition," thus causing Gonzalez to fall from the roof. He later claimed that the construction of the parapet wall forced persons who needed

access to the skylight to walk along the dangerous ledge which had no safety railing; secondly, he contended the shingles were slippery as they were worn; lastly, Gonzalez claimed that the roof lacked tie-off points that would enable workers to use safety devices. In turn, Mathis argued that Gonzalez was aware of the dangerous conditions on the roof and could have taken preventative safety measures such as utilizing the inside of the wall near the parapet to get to and from the ladder.

Mathis moved for Summary Judgment, which is a pre-trial motion to have judgment entered, arguing there were no disputed facts and as a matter of law Mathis could not be held liable under the rule set forth in *Privette*. This type of motion cannot be granted if there are any disputed facts that the "trier of fact" (either a court or jury) might disagree upon. Mathis argued that there are only two exceptions to the *Privette* rule: (1) when the hirer exercised control over the contractors' work in a manner that had contributed to the injury and (2) when the hirer failed to warn the contractor of concealed hazards on the premises. Mathis argued that neither exception applied to Gonzalez because he was not told how to clean the skylight and because Gonzalez had previously performed services to the property and knew of the dangerous conditions on the roof. The trial court granted Mathis' Motion for Summary Judgment.

On appeal, Gonzalez argued that there were triable issues of fact with regard to both *Privette* exceptions. He argued that Mathis "retained control over the worksite" since the housekeeper instructed him to complete specific cleaning tasks in a specific order as well as ordering him to go tell his employees, who were on the roof, to use less water. As to the second

exception, Gonzalez argued that there were triable issues of fact whether Mathis was liable under the hazardous condition exception, which was determined in yet another Court decision, which held that hirer liability existed for concealed hazards or open or known hazards that the contractor could not have remedied through reasonable safety precautions. Gonzalez argued that the second exception applied since he claimed he had to use the exposed ledge to walk over to the ladder since he was unable to walk along the inside of the parapet wall due to the equipment. The Court of Appeal found there was a triable issue of fact whether Gonzalez "could have reasonably" utilized the inside of the wall for access, and therefore it reversed the judgment. In other words, this case was sent back to the trial court to be heard, throwing out the Summary Judgment.

You can protect yourself and your company by being cautious on jobsites with dangerous conditions, maintaining your workers compensation insurance in case an accident does happen, and if an accident does occur, remember that there are exceptions to the *Privette* rule.

*Abdulaziz, Grossbart & Rudman provides this information as a service to its friends & clients and it does not establish an attorney-client relationship with the reader. This document is of a general nature and is not a substitute for legal advice. Since laws change frequently, contact an attorney before using this information. Bruce Rudman can be reached at Abdulaziz, Grossbart & Rudman: (818) 760-2000 or by E-Mail at [bdr@agrlaw.com](mailto:bdr@agrlaw.com) or at [www.agrlaw.com](http://www.agrlaw.com)*

# Watch for signs of addiction in employees

By Steven Gifford

When identifying the signs of addiction, it is important to know that while drug and alcohol use and abuse each manifest themselves as different behavioral changes and inconsistencies, they share a number of commonalities. This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list of signs of drug and/or alcohol addiction, but is instead a list of the most common signs that someone is suffering from addiction.

Often, addicts and alcoholics are the last to know that they have a problem, because they cannot see the outward signs of addiction. They attempt to hide their use from loved ones, escaping to a “safe” space such as a bar after work, or a spot in the garage where they can be alone to drink or use. The addict believes that he or she is keeping the drug or alcohol use secret from everyone else, when in fact, the physical and behavioral signs of addiction are often immediately apparent.

## Isolation

As noted, one of the behavioral changes associated with addiction is isolation. Addicts often cite drug or alcohol use as a way to deal with stress, or just “relax after a hard day”, and will either emotionally withdraw but still partake in their substance abuse in the presence of family and friends, or solitarily by escaping to a quiet spot in the home to drink or use alone. Other signs of addiction are when addicts attempt to hide their use completely, and make lengthy trips outside of the home; for example, a five-minute trip to get a pack of cigarettes or milk from the grocery store will turn into a five hour disappearance, during which time the addicted person will have gone to a friend’s house or a bar to engage in drug or alcohol use.

Akin to isolation, when a person is addicted, he or she often loses interests in hobbies and activities in which he or she used to participate. Someone who was previously interested in sports and socializing with friends in a social club or association might slowly or suddenly drop out entirely. Signs of addiction can



include noticing that an addicted person stops exercising, limits seeing friends or family members, or reduces his or her participation in previously enjoyable activities - because he or she is spending so much time on drug or alcohol use.

## Mood Swings

When an addicted person undergoes such a drastic change in lifestyle, mood swings are often associated signs of addiction. If drug or alcohol use has gotten to the point where someone is using all of the time, the symptoms of withdrawal can include depression, irritability, fatigue, sweating, and anxiety. When that person is using, signs of addiction can be drastic improvements in mood, or suddenly shifting from being cranky to becoming happy and upbeat. These wild mood swings are the result of the drastic changes that drug and alcohol use can have upon the body and mind, and are a highly noticeable sign of addiction.

## Money Troubles

One sign of addiction that is more closely aligned with drug addiction (but can be found sometimes with alcohol addiction) is that money becomes an issue. People involved with opiates or other drugs are often scrambling to find money to support their habit. Drug use, especially on a regular basis, can become a very expensive habit to maintain and addicts will often drain a bank account, steal from family

members or friends, deplete a Roth IRA or drain a 401(k) in order to support their use. Signs of addiction also include noticing that a friend or family member won’t have money for staples like groceries, clothing, rent, or bills, but will often find a way to continue drug or alcohol use. A partner or roommate to someone with addiction might notice that the mutual monthly contribution to finances or utilities begins to come in late, or not at all. It may even take a few months to realize a pattern in that the addicted individual is not contributing their part of the money.

Finally, signs of addiction tend to be grouped under general deceitfulness and insincerity. Isolation, withdrawal, hiding drug and alcohol use, and stealing are all behaviors that are dishonest, and lying becomes a daily habit for individuals struggling with addiction. Rarely are people truthful about their addiction. Family members often know that something is going on, but even when they confront or approach the addicted individual about their problem, the person will deny having a problem - most often because he or she is in denial about even having a problem with drug or alcohol use and abuse.

As previously stated, this is not a complete list of signs of addiction, but rather a series of common habits and behavioral changes present in both drug and alcohol users. The degrees of addiction may vary, but the common signs of isolation, lying, and behavioral / mood changes are present in almost every single person with a substance abuse problem. If you think that you or your loved one may be struggling with drug or alcohol use and addiction, consider having a discussion about how outpatient or residential addiction treatment can help you achieve sobriety and reclaim your life.

*Steven Gifford, LICDC, LPC, currently serves as Clinical Program Director at Northland, an outpatient rehab center in Ohio, and also as the Clinical Program Director at The Ridge, an inpatient drug and alcohol treatment center.*

# Stand out from the crowd with these tricks

By Donna Gunter

**I**ncreasing online visibility is the goal of most online business owners. After all, without visibility, you have no traffic and thus no business. However, when you start to research how to increase your online visibility, you discover so many options, yet have so little time for research and implementation. Where does an online entrepreneur turn first to get the visibility (and traffic) you seek to help you promote your online venture?

New tricks and gimmicks come out every day, but unfortunately, most of them are like so many recording artists and become one-hit wonders. In my business, I've discovered that there are a handful that are able to stand the test of time. Some have been around for as long as websites have been around, while others are newer kids on the block. Here are my 10 most effective strategies to massively increase your visibility online:

**1. Social Networking.** Social networking ranks near the top in terms of attracting much visibility to your business for a very low cost. If you don't yet have accounts on the two most popular social networking platforms, Facebook and Twitter, today is the day to hop on board and begin to network. Choose 1-2 social networking platforms where your target market hangs out, and then begin to work it by making connections, joining groups or networks, sharing resources, and asking questions. Dedicate 15-30 minutes each day to your effort to begin to see results.

**2. Blogging.** Business blogs (a web log or journal), have gained popularity over the last few years as an online visibility tool. Blogs use RSS feed technology to immediately get new posts and updates out to your blog subscribers through a feed reader. Unlike ezines or traditional websites, search engines index blog posts almost immediately, which help you generate traffic to your website. To use effectively as an online visibility tool, you need to post 2-3 times per week to keep your readers interested and coming back.



**3. Search Engine Optimization (SEO).** Optimizing your site or your blog for organic (naturally-occurring) searches has been around from the beginning of Internet marketing. Use a keyword research tool and create a list of keywords applicable to your business. Don't forget to add things like "how to", "tips", or short descriptions of your target market's problems to your research. Then, take a look at your page titles, page descriptions, page headlines, and formatted text on a page (bolding, italicizing, underlining) and include your keywords in those areas, as well as sprinkling 1-2 keywords throughout the content of your page. Make the SEO appear to be natural, not forced, and the search engines as well as your visitors will love you.

**4. Email Newsletter (Ezine).** Regular publication of an email newsletter (weekly is most effective) will enable your prospects to get to know, like and trust you and have you be top of mind when they are ready to solve the pressing problems that fall within your line of expertise. If you make opting into your ezine list the primary call to action on your website, you continually build your list with prospective customers. Best of all, if they like what you write, they are more likely to pass along the issue to their contacts, thus increasing your visibility yet again.

**5. Videos.** With the popularity of

broadband Internet connections, it's much easier for almost anyone to view online video these days. And, with high-quality yet low-cost web cams, video cameras, and screen capture software readily available, anyone can make a video today. You might record a live Q&A session on Vimeo and post it on your site. Or perhaps you want to record a "how to" tutorial using screenshots from your computer and upload that to your YouTube channel. Remember to include your call to action in your video so that you drive traffic back to your site. Just think—your video may cause you to become the next YouTube star!

**6. Expert question sites.** Most people conduct online searches to find free information that answers their questions. Many online entrepreneurs are registering as experts on an expert or answers site, like Yahoo Answers or AllExperts.com, in an effort to get visibility online. To be an effective expert on these sites, you need to seek out questions that you can knowledgeably answer as an expert. Your answer needs to be very detailed and as specific as possible. The more thorough your answer, the better chance you'll have of getting chosen as the "favorite" answer, which is the one rated highest on the site and in the search engines.

**7. Viral marketing.** Viral marketing involves creating a marketing piece (ebook, video, software) that gets passed along free of charge from person to person. Publicity Hound Joan Stewart does this quite effectively each year when she compiles the best tips she's written about in the previous year in a "best of" ebook compilation that she gives away free of charge on her site. She also encourages her list and website visitors to "regift" it.

You've got two options when you try to get online visibility: the "steady and effective over time" method or the "quick and short and probably get banned" method. I prefer to use methods that have stood the test of time and won't result in my site being removed from the search engines. Use one or more of these time-honored strategies to get you the visibility you deserve online.

# Understanding and treating tinnitus

**T**innitus, from the Latin word for “ringing,” is the perception of sound in the human ear in the absence of corresponding external sound(s). Tinnitus can be perceived in one or both ears or in the head. It is usually described as a ringing noise, but in some patients it takes the form of a high pitched whining, buzzing, hissing, humming, or whistling sound, or as ticking, clicking, roaring, “crickets” or “locusts”, tunes, songs, or beeping. It has also been described as a “whooshing” sound, as of wind or waves. Around 15 per cent of people experience tinnitus at some stage and it’s more likely to occur after the age of 60.

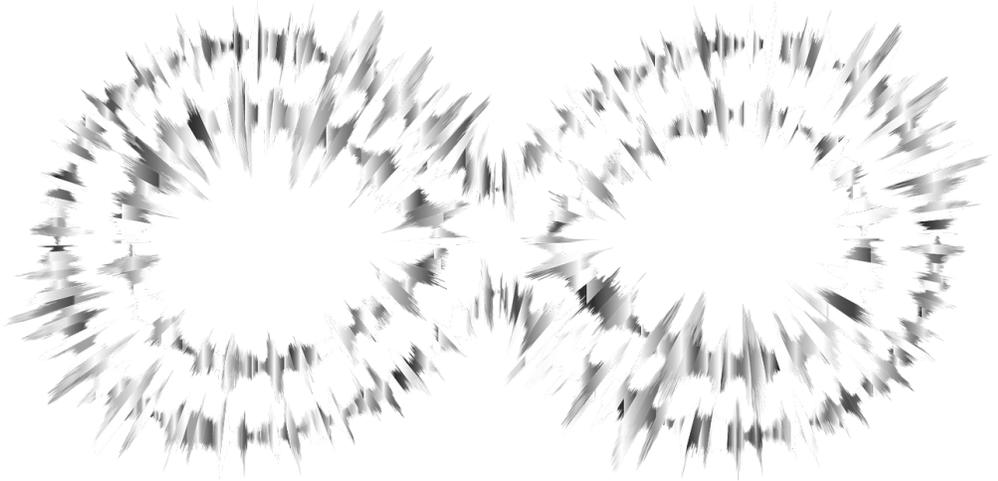
## What causes tinnitus?

Most tinnitus comes from damage to the microscopic endings of the hearing nerve in the inner ear. The health of these nerve endings is important for acute hearing, and injury to them brings on hearing loss and often tinnitus. If you are older, advancing age is generally accompanied by a certain amount of hearing nerve impairment and tinnitus. If you are younger, exposure to loud noise is probably the leading cause of tinnitus, and often damages hearing as well.

There are many causes for “subjective tinnitus,” the noise only you can hear. Some causes are not serious (a small plug of wax in the ear canal might cause temporary tinnitus). Tinnitus can also be a symptom of stiffening of the middle ear bones (otosclerosis).

## Can noise-canceling headphones cause tinnitus?

Floating around the internet is the idea that noise-canceling headphones, that common accessory, may contribute to tinnitus. A recent blog article on [audiology.org](http://audiology.org) refutes the idea, stating that noise-canceling headphones are not a cause of tinnitus—but can actually be part of the solution. Using noise-canceling headphones can help some people drown out the noise in their ears, making it easier for them to concentrate on their work or other things.



The blog post goes on to emphasize, however, that headphones CAN increase the possibility of developing tinnitus through unsafe noise levels. “The problem is that people, especially young people, tend to listen at high volumes for extended periods of time. This can and often does cause hearing loss, which in turn can cause tinnitus.” The article states that safe listening levels are no more than 70 percent volume with over-the-ear headphones and 60 percent with earbuds. Having trouble modulating your volume? There’s a phone app for that (and some phones have settings that can limit volume).

## Tinnitus symptoms

With tinnitus, you quite simply hear a noise that no one around you hears. This noise is usually a buzzing or ringing type sound, but it may be a clicking or rushing sound that goes along with your heartbeat. The sound is sometimes accompanied by hearing loss and dizziness in a type of syndrome known as Meniere disease.

In addition to the noises associated with tinnitus, certain other symptoms may accompany this condition. These include: \* Dizziness \* Pain in the ear \* A sense of fullness in the ears \* Headache

## How is tinnitus diagnosed?

Persons with tinnitus should be seen by a physician expert in ear disease, usually an otologist or a neurotologist.

Why is my tinnitus worse at night? During the day, the distraction of activities and the sounds around you make your tinnitus less obvious. When your surroundings are quiet, your tinnitus may seem louder and more constant. Fatigue may also make your tinnitus worse.

## Is tinnitus a common problem?

Yes. Almost everyone at one time or another has experienced brief periods of mild ring or other sound in the ear. Some people have more annoying and constant types of tinnitus. One third of all adults report experiencing tinnitus at some time in their lives.

## What is the treatment of tinnitus?

After a careful evaluation, your doctor may find an identifiable cause and be able to treat or make recommendations to treat the tinnitus. Once you have had a thorough evaluation, an essential part of treatment is your own understanding of the tinnitus, i.e., what has caused it, and your options for treatment. In many cases, there is no specific treatment for tinnitus. It may simply go away on its own, or it may be a permanent disability that the patient will have to “live with.” Some otolaryngologists have recommended niacin to treat tinnitus. However, there is no scientific evidence to suggest that niacin helps reduce tinnitus, and it may cause problems with skin flushing.

# SAFETY ... IT PAYS



## Mixing chemicals can be a deadly mistake

**M**ixing two different cleaning products will double the power to disinfect your home, right? Everyone knows that bleach kills viruses and bacteria and rubbing alcohol is great at removing grime, so why not mix the two and kill two birds with one stone? Here is why – many cleaning products contain chemicals that when mixed with each other can form extremely toxic compounds. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, accidental exposures to chlorine gas from mixing bleach and acid occurred 2,284 times in 2017. This Tox Topic was developed to help you understand why you should not mix cleaning products, what compounds could be formed if you do mix cleaning products, and how exposure to these formed compounds can harm you. By understanding these key concepts, you will be better prepared to keep yourself and your family safe from harmful exposures.

**Exposures to Cleaning Products:** If you think about how you use cleaning products, it is easy to figure out how you could be exposed to chemicals in the products. When you open the cap, it is possible to get the product in your eye or on your skin. When you apply the product, it is possible to get the product on your skin. If you spray the product, you could inhale mists or vapors. If you do not wash your hands after you clean, you could transfer the product from your hands to your eyes or to your mouth. **The most DANGEROUS exposure is to gases that form when you mix cleaning products.** For example, the chlorine gas that is formed when ammonia and bleach are mixed can be inhaled. When the chlorine gas reaches the lungs, corrosive compounds such as hydrochloric acid, hypochlorous acid, and hypochlorite are formed in the lungs. These compounds can actually dissolve lung tissue, making the lungs unable to function. The potential routes of exposure to cleaning products include



dermal contact, inhalation, and incidental ingestion.

**Harmful Effects (Toxicity) of Mixing Cleaning Products:** If a chemical mixture gets into your eyes, the chemicals could burn your eyes. You could lose focus in your eyes and your vision may be damaged. Contact of mixtures with skin could cause irritation or burns. If you inhale mists or vapors that are generated from mixing cleaners, your throat may swell, and it may be difficult to breathe. The corrosive compounds formed from the chemical reactions of chemicals in the lung will cause difficulty in breathing, severe lung damage, and can even cause a coma or death. If you swallow even a small amount of a cleaner, there could be swelling or pain on your lips, in your mouth, and burning of your esophagus. You could have gastrointestinal tract symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and pain. You could also have blood in your stools. The following includes the harmful effects of compounds formed when you mix certain cleaners:

### Toxic Chemicals Formed When Products are Mixed

Hydrogen peroxide and vinegar: Peracetic acid. Harm to eyes, skin, nose, throat, damage to the lungs

Ammonia and bleach: Chloramines. Irritation of eyes, nose, throat ; chest

pain, damage to the lungs

Rubbing alcohol and bleach: Chloroform, hydrochloric acid, chloroacetone. Damage to the nervous system, eyes, lung, skin, liver, kidneys

Bleach and toilet bowl cleaner, bleach and mold/mildew remover, bleach and oven cleaners, or bleach and vinegar: Chlorine gas. Burning in eyes, nose, throat, coughing, breathing difficulties, nausea, vomiting, death

Mixing certain cleaners can cause chemical reactions that lead to the formation of toxic substances. Mixing cleaners can quickly produce toxic fumes and if you inhale these fumes, it could cause irritation or burning of the eyes, nose, and throat; coughing, difficulty breathing, lung damage, and even death. On a final note, you should NEVER drink any cleaning product. Bleach is corrosive and can burn your mouth, esophagus, and stomach. It lowers your blood pressure and if ingested, can kill you. Rubbing alcohol causes dizziness and nausea. It also irritates the respiratory system and alters the functions of your heart. If ingested, it can also kill you.

For more information on safe chemical use, visit the following websites:

<https://cen.acs.org/safety/consumer-safety/Accidental-mix-bleach-acid-kills/97/i45>

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/operations/infograms/031920.html>

<https://www.poison.org/articles/2015-mar/spring-cleaning-old>

<https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/explainer-why-is-mixing-cleaning-chemicals-such-a-bad-idea/4011257.article#/>

# Three ways to reduce stress, naturally

By David Leonhardt

There is good stress, and there is bad stress. Good stress is the type that propels a person to excel, to reach new heights or to complete a big project on time.

And there is bad stress. Stress that comes from conflict or worries. Stress that keeps a person from sleeping and happiness. Stress that calls for relief. Here are three stress-relief tips you can follow.

## Meditation for stress relief

Can there be a more obvious stress relief strategy than to bring your entire physical being to a calm? Meditation techniques often involve visualization of something calm, like a blank screen or clouds. Or it can mean clearing your mind entirely.

If stress is caused by how we allow our minds to be captured by worries and fears, then replacing those worries and fears with calmer images is the obvious way to reduce stress.

You can sign up for a free meditation to reduce stress course at my website, [thehappyguy.com](http://thehappyguy.com).

## Exercise to reduce stress

If relaxing to a state where even your blood vessels are almost still is the ultimate in stress relief, surely exercise, which gets even your blood pumping at breakneck speed, must be the ultimate stress demon.

Not so. Exercise is a big stress reliever. In fact, the bigger the muscles you exercise, the more stress you will bear. That's because exercise releases physical tension in the muscles.

Here's another tip: exercise in water to reduce stress even more. Why? Because you are more buoyant on water; gravity takes a much gentler toll on your body, so the tension created in your muscles just by holding you up gets released. For the ultimate stress release, exercise in water. Or meditate in water. Or laugh in water.

## Laughter reduces stress, too

Yes, laughter also relieves stress. The muscles we use to laugh are those tense ones in our faces. When we loosen them, we release tension from our faces. We also allow more blood to flow to the pleasure centers of the brain

(which might be why someone with a 'good sense of humor' is considered more attractive).

I think I will close with this excerpt from my newsletter, A Daily Dose of Happiness, which shows the value of a little creative humor:

Little Lady was guarding the space between the trees, as I tried to kick her little ball past her. Then an idea struck me. Off to the side lay a large, purple fit ball that the kids like to be bounced on. A rushed over, rolled it into the clearing and kicked it toward Little Lady. 'Giant Blueberry Soccer!' I shouted. She laughed. For the next ten or fifteen minutes, we rolled and licked and laughed and shouted, "Giant Blueberry Soccer!"

What a great family moment, stress relief, joy-injector, fun and more. My formula was simple, and you can do it too. Look around and find something that just would not belong, like a too-big ball. Then imagine what it might be, like a blueberry. Then thrust it into your situation with all the gusto you can apply. Have fun.

*David Leonhardt is a Canadian freelance writer on [seo-writer.com](http://seo-writer.com).*



## We've moved!

Please make note of our new address:

Western Regional Master Builders Association  
12501 Seal Beach Blvd. Suite 250  
Seal Beach, CA 90740

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