

# Hurry Sickness

## *An* Epidemic *in* Our Workplace

By Dr. Ann McGee-Cooper and Duane Trammell

### How do I know if I have "Hurry Sickness"

- I typically drive 10 or more miles/hour over the speed limit.
- I interrupt others and/or finish their sentences.
- I get impatient in meetings when someone goes on a tangent.
- I find it difficult to respect people who are chronically late.
- I rush to be first in line, even when it doesn't matter (for example, getting off an airplane first in order to stand at Baggage Claim longer).
- If I have to wait over a few minutes for service in a store or restaurant, I get impatient and leave or demand service. To me time is money!
- I generally view as less capable those who may be slower to speak act or decide. I admire people who move at my speedy

pace! I pride myself on my speed, efficiency, and punctuality.

- I view "hanging out" as a waste of time.
- I pride myself on getting things done on time, and will sacrifice the chance to improve a product if it means being late.
- I often rush or hurry my children and/or spouse.



\*You can find more on "Hurry Sickness" in the Bantam book, *Time Management For Unmanageable People* by Ann McGee-Cooper.

## What is "Hurry Sickness?"

The hurrier I go, the behinder I get!" Ever have that overwhelming feeling of hopelessness? You go into work earlier, determined to get caught up, only to get hit with a deluge of crises, interruptions, and new projects. By the end of the day, you've worked as hard as humanly possible. Yet you marked nothing off your list while you added six big new responsibilities.

Sound familiar? Then you aren't alone because most people are experiencing the influence of downsizing, the acceleration brought about by new technology and the pressure to get more done in less time with fewer people and fewer dollars.

But Hurry Sickness is more than just feeling rushed and wanting to get off the "worry-go-round" of daily obligations, the corporate rat race, or relief from pressure cooker lives.

Just as Pavlov's dogs learned to salivate inappropriately, we have learned to hurry inappropriately. Our sense of urgency is set off not by a real need to act quickly, but through learned cues. Our 'bells' have become emails on our i-phones, stalled commutes, impatience at the long line at Starbucks, and the hundreds of self-inflicted expectations that we build into our daily routine. The subliminal message from the watch and the clock is: time is running out; life is winding down; please hurry," says Dr. Larry Dossey in his book, *Space, Time & Medicine*. He continues, "The perceptions of passing time that we observe from our external clocks cause our *internal* clocks to run faster ... [Hurry sickness then is] expressed as heart disease, high blood pressure, or depression of our immune function, leading to an increased susceptibility to infection and cancer."



Another metaphor comes from the medical world, called fibrillation. When your heart begins fibrillation (a rapid beating), the blood is blocked rather than pumped through it. In Hurry Sickness, you begin to rush without noticing that you may be defeating your larger purpose. By rushing through a meeting, for example, you may "end the meeting on time" but fail to build the trust or gain the buy-in needed from all parties. If you rush through a phone call, proud of your efficient use of time, you may miss the hesitation in your client's voice, and lose the sale as a result.

Most important of all, you may rush through your life — be the youngest to become CEO, first to win the marathon, and first to earn your million — only to realize that, in your rush, you never quite had the time to enjoy your loved ones, or all the special moments that make life worthwhile. When a grown child tells you that you were never there for them, it can be too late to go back. However, it's never too late to hear the "wake-up call" of choosing to change and live life differently.

**OK, so you've made your point! But how do I change when all my life I've been rewarded for rushing?**

It's true. In school, you rushed to be first in line. You were rewarded for good work by being first to go to lunch. And the best student was described as being first in his/her class. So you must do lots of unlearning if you are serious about renewing your spirit, rediscovering your true effectiveness and enriching the quality of your life, work, purpose, and joy.



**Here are some ways to begin:**

1. As you plan each day and look ahead to the week, plan windows of time to go off the clock.
2. Take off your watch for the evening or weekend.
3. Plan time to do nothing.
4. Enjoy day-dreaming, doodling, snoozing, or coasting.

5. When you evaluate your day, week or month reward yourself for creating a balance of doing AND being, accomplishing work AND smelling the roses, being efficient AND being aware.
6. Purposely plan silence into your life. Listen to your body, your feelings, and your intuition. The inspiration of genius rises out of silence.

Did you ever stop to notice the cars in the "Indy 500" race? Of all the cars that begin that race each year, less than half finishes the race! Not a great performance record for the most expensive, best engineered, and most carefully maintained cars with price tags of approximately \$5 to 7 million. What is the single greatest factor leading to their failure? They are driven at only one speed — and the faster the better!

If you have the courage to recognize your own Hurry Sickness and choose to balance this compulsive life style with a more nurturing and balanced blend of speeds (neutral, 1st gear, 2nd gear, and even reverse), you will improve your health, long-term effectiveness, and quality of life. You'll also become a far better leader and a positive role model for those who love, respect, and trust you.

Seminars and additional resources are available from Ann McGee-Cooper and Associates, Inc. 214 357-8550 or visit us at [AMCA.com](http://AMCA.com)