

## Give me a break

Sanity-saving solutions available for those trapped by pressure of life

IRENE SEIBERLING  
POSTMEDIA NEWS

Give yourself permission to pause. In fact, make a point of it. It will help ease life's load and create a more satisfying work and life experience — for you, as well as those around you, says Saskatoon-based balance and productivity expert Patricia Katz.

"Say goodbye to overloading practices that drain energy, sap productivity, cripple capacity and poison relationships," Katz recommends. "Say hello to right-loading strategies that engage your mind, encourage your heart, energize your body, and strengthen your spirit."

Working as a life-balance strategist for 25 years, Katz strives to help people and organizations manage their loads in healthy, satisfying and sustainable ways — to shift from overloading to right-loading. And that means taking time to pause, re-energize and renew. In her fifth book, *Press Pause ... Think Again: More Balance & Perspective for Work & Life* (Optimus Consulting, \$19.95), Katz delivers 64 sanity-saving solutions for those feeling trapped by the pace and pressure of 21st-century life.

Over the years, as her own life has changed, Katz has shifted the focus of her presentations and weekly e-zine, *Pause* (pauseworks.com).

"Initially, it was about getting organized," she explained in an interview after a presentation in Regina. "Then I moved into time (management), and then stress, and balance and wellness. And I feel like I'm now moving into the legacy-perspective stage. It's very much less about the how-to, and more about how we think about life and situations. It's a big shift."

The overall focus of her latest book (which builds on the success of its earlier companion, *Press Pause ... Press On*) is about being more thoughtful, Katz said, "about how we respond to situations, and about the choices that we make."

"What I found is that people feel overloaded and overwhelmed — exhausted, life-wise — sometimes under-appreciated," she said. "And some of it's self-inflicted."

"Because we're so busy running and trying to keep up and catch up, we don't stop to step back and say, 'Is there a different way to do this? Is there another choice? Am I locked in a certain way of looking at things?'" she explained. "The key is to stop, to step back, to step out of the flow."

Katz noted that people often see breaks as rewards for being done, whether it's a particular task, or a long to-do list. She encourages people to shift their thinking.

"We really need to see that whole business of renewal and positive renewal as an investment in being able to continue, not a reward for being done —

that it's a legitimate practice, that it's a necessary practice," she suggested. "Otherwise, we just exhaust ourselves and end up in those crash-and-burn kind of cycles again and again."

Research shows that people actually work in 60- and 90-minute cycles, Katz said. "So we wear out."

On a periodic basis, it's important to flip the off switch on the 24-7 technology that surrounds us today, she stressed.

"This business of always having to be available ... the world will not fall apart if we don't respond right away, if we're dealing with something that's not an urgency or an emergency," she said.

Katz also draws attention to how people look at pace, and the language they use: wanting to ask a "quick" question, or take time to make a "quick" phone call, or go for a "quick" lunch. "Every time we insert that adjective — quick, quick, quick, quick, quick — you can just feel the pace happen," she said.

Katz encourages people to ease the load.

"I think meltdowns are optional," she said.

The key is to think about the situation you find yourself in, and find a way to carry on. For example, if your computer has a meltdown, you don't have to have a meltdown, as well. "Nix the DBs — discretionary burdens," Katz said.

"If something goes sideways in our work lives or our personal lives, people often get into awful-izing," she said. When things appear awful on the surface, they aren't necessarily a bad thing, Katz added — in fact, they may turn out to be a great thing.

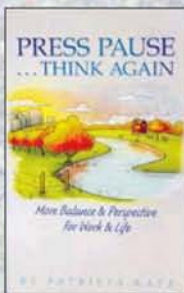
All too often, people create a burden where it doesn't actually have to exist, because of the way they respond to a situation, Katz said.

"How many times do we add pressures, stress, to situations, by thinking the worst of something, or making up stories in the absence of information?" she asked. "But if we simply stopped and didn't create these fantasies that, in turn, cause us difficulty, we might be further ahead and less stressed."

And Katz encourages people to consciously say yes to things that will have a positive impact on their lives — things to which their immediate response might be, "Oh, I could never do that!"

As a society, we have a poor track record when it comes to pausing to find more balance and perspective for work and life, Katz said. "We are dismal in our lack of progress," she said.

But while baby boomers tend to be notoriously bad for this, there appears to be hope for the millennial generation, Katz said. "I think they will be instrumental in changing expectations. There's hope!"



Postmedia News  
**Patricia Katz's latest book is called Press Pause ... Think Again.**

TO SUBSCRIBE TO KATZ'S FREE PAUSE E-ZINE, GO TO PAUSEWORKS.COM

Patricia Katz says not overloading in life will energize your body and strengthen your spirit.