



Seven Steps to Reducing Computer Frustration

by The Software Revivalist™

Software-induced stress, unfortunately, is a common occurrence - possibly more than you realize. However, there are ways to keep things under control even when it feels like you have none!

Here is my “technology version” of a stress reduction technique posted on MayoClinic.com.

1. Identify the cause of your stress. The majority of the time it will be a software issue, either due to lack of skill or difficulty with the software interface. However, there are times when the stress is a result of being reluctant to adopt new software that may have recently been implemented. Understanding the root of the stress is vital in order to lead to the correct and appropriate solution. It is also important to be specific in order to get help. Just saying, “It is not working,” will only lead to more questions and more time lost. State the problem clearly, “The document formatting is wrong,” or “I am unable to access the data I need.”

2. Clarify what solution you are looking for. What needs to happen and what needs to stop happening?

You need to see specific information and you need to stop having to hunt for it. Or you need to format a document based on the margins of the letterhead and need to stop having to figure out the spacing manually.

3. Create some options. Time to be creative, and possibly share your problem to invoke additional knowledge to quickly lead to the right solutions. Instead of hunting for information in the software, you need to use a custom report. Instead of manually moving text around the document, you need a

template that meets your specifications. Also, understanding the best practices of each software you use allows for better usage decisions. A document with graphical layout requirements is best created in a layout designer, not a word processor.

4. Choose one of your options. Use process of elimination to pick the best one.

5. Evaluate your choice. Take a second look at the pros and cons of the option selected. Consider if it will cause any new problems that could escalate the stress. Also, consider if your option is a short-term or long term solution. For example, running a report that includes more data than you need and then highlighting the information may work for now, but try to communicate a long-term solution to the appropriate person who could either create the custom report, or at least authorize it. Another example is adding spaces to get the document to print correctly on your letterhead will get the job done this time, but having to count the spaces every time you need to print will be very frustrating.

6. Implement the best option. Move forward with confidence that you gave the problem the thought that it needed, regardless of how much time it took, and go for it. If it doesn't work, then you still have options to choose from, and can maintain a low stress level. The truth is you should never be out of options! Consider using the help function (although sometimes difficult to understand), or an Internet search for additional help in plain-English, or calling the software technical support. When it comes to software, you can always find an outside source to go to, even if they cost money.

7. Reflect to find the lesson. When it comes to software there are 5 lessons to be learned from frustration; 1. additional software training is needed, 2. the software interface needs modification, 3. the software structure needs customization, 4. you require better internal technical support via a centralized knowledge base, or an employee designated as the company “help desk”, and 5. you need technical support plan from the software vendor. You will know which is best for you.

Copyright 2009 © Ellen DePasquale