



The Curse of Complacency

Balance of tasks and time are important factors for living and working in the top of the curve.

3 Primary Factors that Promote Complacency

1. Fatigue
2. Too many things happening at once.
3. Too few things happening

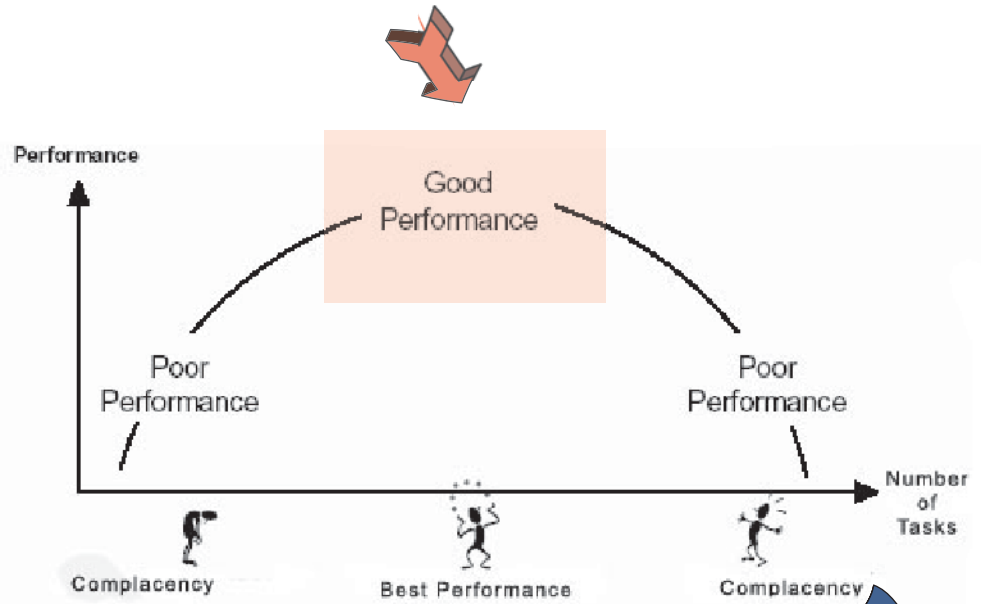
Fatigue is identified as one of the dirty dozen of human factors. Fatigue impacts all other human factors, compounding problems that already exist.

Fatigue is different from drowsiness. In general, drowsiness is feeling the need to sleep, while fatigue is a lack of energy and motivation.

Drowsiness and apathy (a feeling of indifference or not caring about what happens) can be symptoms of fatigue.

Fatigue can be a normal and important response to physical exertion, emotional stress, boredom, or lack of sleep. However, it can also be a nonspecific sign of a more serious psychological or physical disorder.

When fatigue is not relieved by enough sleep, good nutrition, or a low-stress environment, it should be evaluated by your doctor. Because fatigue is a common complaint, sometimes a potentially serious cause may be overlooked.

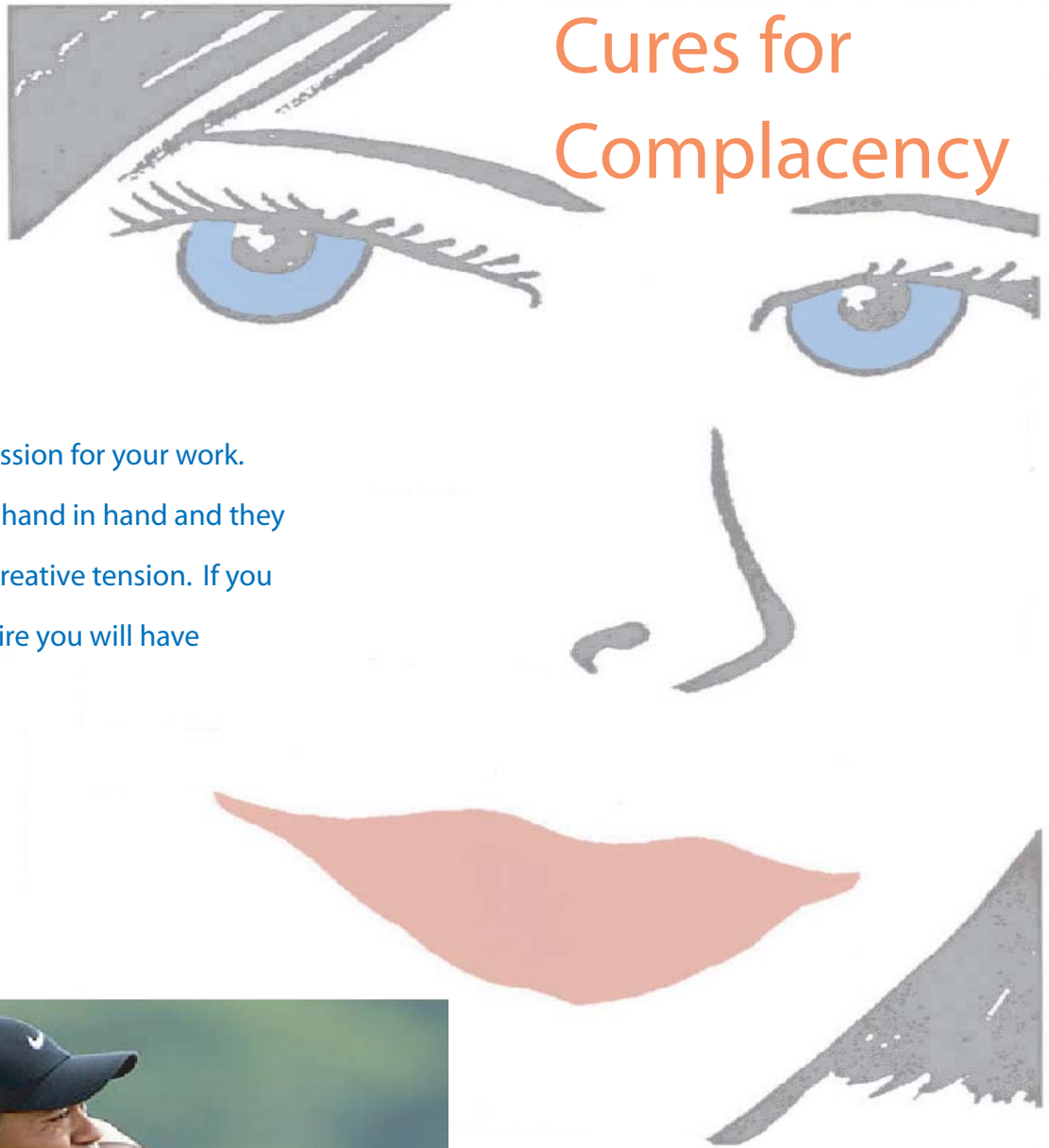


A key problem with too many tasks is the feeling of being overwhelmed. When we get overwhelmed we either throw up our hands and say "What's the use?" or we narrow our focus ... this is selective attention.



In a situation where there are too few tasks . . . focus is easily skewed and before long boredom sets in - attention and situation awareness drift.

Creative Tension is that healthy state where tension exists between where we are at and where we want to go. Tension by nature seeks resolution and the most natural resolution of this tension is for our reality to move closer to what we want.



Cures for Complacency

Cure #1 Rediscover passion for your work.

Passion and desire go hand in hand and they are directly linked to creative tension. If you have passion and desire you will have creative tension.



Cure #2 Release the Power of Repetition

Think of the power of repetition in the golf swing. A good golfer practices – they practice a lot. Practice – repetition produces muscle memory and a swing becomes somewhat automated. Don't replicate bad habits. Instead release the power of repetition which results in an increase in skill level.

Safety Nets to Protect Against Complacency

Try the following to protect against monotony, selective attention and complacency.

1. Remove Distractions
2. Check Environmental Controls
3. Create a Strategic Approach to the Task

AYCE vs AYCD

Someone wrote . . . I've always tried to work hard enough to provide for my family and be content. The problem is, when I'm content, I get complacent, and everything starts to fall apart. How do I keep going and avoid getting complacent?

There's nothing wrong with feeling content. It's something that we all strive for in life. The problem comes, as you have so well stated, when we drift from contentment into complacency.

Let me give you an example of the results of complacency, and then how to overcome it.

I recently heard Clay Shiver, former FSU All-American center and former center for the NFL Dallas Cowboys, speak about complacency. When he got to the NFL, Shiver, who played center, was the only starter on the offense who wasn't an All-Pro player.

The team also had won three out of the last four Super Bowls. The year he started, the Cowboys posted a record of 6 wins and 10 losses. Shiver said he thought the reason for such a bad season was that the team had gotten complacent, had lost its hunger. He remembered being in the huddle where two All-Pro Super Bowl champions talked about how they couldn't wait until the season was over so they could go on a fancy trip. They lost the next five games. That's the best example of complacency I think I could offer you.

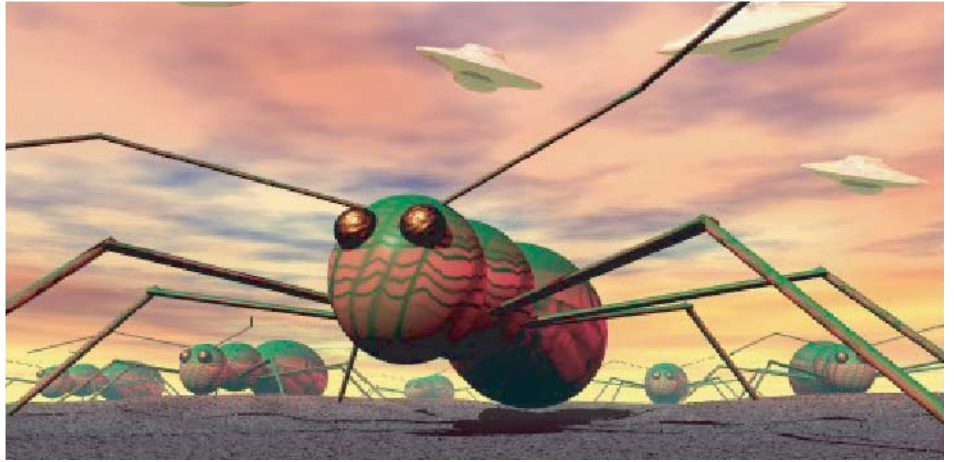
I can sum up the cure in just one word. Ready? **Ants**. That's right, a-n-t-s, ants. One of the benefits of having grandkids is you get to watch their favorite videos hundreds of times. In the movie "Bug's Life" the ants teach us at least *five strategies* for dealing with complacency.

1. Ants never, ever give up. Put something in front of them, and they will get around it, over it, under it or through it. If one way doesn't work, they will try another. If that way does not work, they will try still another way. And so on until they find a way around the obstacle. There's nothing wrong with feeling content. It's something that we all strive for in life.

2. Ants are always getting ready for what's next. They don't ever rest on their laurels. In the summer, they are thinking about the winter and getting ready for it.



Emulate the Activities of the Ant to Avoid Complacency



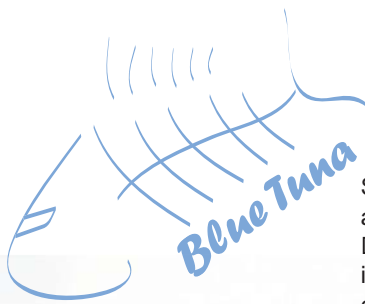
3. Ants are creatively industrious and resourceful. Ants don't complain about not having the right tools to do what needs to be done. They take what is available right in front of them and find a way to make it work.

4. Ants are always hopeful In the winter, when they are holed up in their little ant mound, they are using what they stored up all summer and know that as cold as it is, summer is coming, and they are getting ready for it.

5. Ants don't seem to believe in the concept of enough. They store up all that they can for the winter. You have seen the acronym on restaurant signs AYCE. I used to think that must be some kind of special brand of food. It took me forever to figure out that it stands for All You Can Eat. Instead of focusing on All You Can Eat, I think we would do better to focus on what the ants do, AYCD, which stands for All You Can Do.

If you constantly follow these five tips, you will consistently beat complacency. Think of it as being content and always hungry to make things better.

ALL YOU
CAN DO



The two-headed foe: Mr. Murphy & Ms. Complacency



Fresh Eyes

Imagine being dropped into a new, fresh environment, where your primary task is to figure out what is going on..... who the players are, where the danger lurks.... Who are your allies, what represents the most present and critical danger. Fresh eyes, fresh perspective will give you the advantage.

When you feel fatigue setting in, or you feel burned out . . . rotate another person into whatever maintenance process you are involved in . . . if possible. A new, fresh set of qualified eyeballs may be just the thing to catch a mistake or slip that otherwise might have go undetected.

Supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM was an all-out effort that paid off in an early victory. Despite the fact Baghdad has fallen, it's important to remind ourselves the war is not quite over, not in Iraq and certainly not at many deployed locations. Saddam's regime was one enemy, but there are other enemies close by that can sneak up on us without warning. The first enemy is the mother of all accidents. Her name is Complacency, and when she drops in, you can rest assured that her best friend, Mr. Murphy, is lurking around the corner. This was true for me when I first arrived in the desert.

There I was at a bare base somewhere in the Middle East. When I arrived, personnel and equipment were already in place, but as I looked around it appeared as if everyone and everything had just fallen out of the sky, landed, and never been moved. As I examined the locations of personnel, equipment, and munitions, I discovered numerous weapons safety violations. Munitions were too close to the tent city, too close to unrelated facilities, too close to personnel, and too close to the aircraft. As I looked at all the violations I asked, why did I get picked to come to this place? Especially when I knew there are so many other places with fewer corrections to be made. I had to ask myself, was I ready for this? Did I have the experience to handle such an enormous job? All my questions would soon be answered.

Shortly after I got off the DC-10 and picked out a little corner of the 12-man tent to call home for an undetermined amount of time, the safety team hit the ground running. We showed up to our new office, but there was no one there who could tell us what was going on. After calling CENTAF, we finally had somewhat of a starting point. The first thing we were told was that all jobs are critical to the mission. However, with the pace of the mission being rush here, and rush there, no one had the faintest idea of how many safety dangers were lurking at every corner.

Complacency and Mr. Murphy had moved in and now called the place home. And so it began.

One of the first things we looked for was the ASHS II program. It was missing in action and nowhere to be found. We also realized that none of the facilities had explosive site plans completed on them. We discovered that the people did not consider them important because this temporary base would only exist for the duration of the war. Despite that, we knew we had a lot of work to do to keep Complacency and Mr. Murphy at bay.

Walking through dirt and fighting the wind and dust every step of the way, we pushed our old faithful friend the measuring wheel to develop a site plan. Time after time we discovered we were short--things that went BOOM and things that didn't were just too close ... How could this be? We did not meet the distance between our holding yard and non-related facilities, worse than that we did not meet the distance to related facilities either. How do we tell the wing commander that he is sitting on top of one of the biggest safety violations known to man?

Another violation we noticed when we drove around the flight line was that there were too many munitions. You could see GBU-12s, JDAMS, and missiles absolutely everywhere. I must admit, I worried every day that something catastrophic would happen on my watch. After an ORM assessment, we were able to convince the leadership that we were putting too many personnel at risk. There was just too much Net Explosive Weight (NEW) in one place. The leadership agreed. Loaded munitions trailers began making their way back to the bomb dump. A safety win!

When Baghdad fell, and victory was in sight, the anticipation of going home was definitely building. Complacency and Mr. Murphy were again knocking at our door. Despite the excitement, we had to remind ourselves there was still a job to be done. This job required 100 percent effort from everyone in order to accomplish the mission safely. It would serve no purpose to win the war, but send people home in a metal box, instead of an aircraft seat, because we had become complacent. So with this in mind, we continued to put forth a great effort to be safe.

We had to take care of each other. Supervisors took a look at their people and work areas for ways to improve the safety of all. We also kept an eye on our folks ensuring they didn't take any unnecessary risks. If risks were involved, we used ORM to determine the right path to take. Time was on our side and rushing a job was no longer an excuse. Everyone was tired, and Complacency was eager to set in.

Now we had to ensure that we beat Complacency and Mr. Murphy the same way we beat Saddam himself. *We ensured all tech data was adhered to. We made sure all explosives on trailers were properly secured. With safety in mind we continued to work professionally knowing so much was waiting for us at home, our families and our friends.* None of us wanted to explain to families back home that their loved one was not coming home alive, because they had decided to befriend the enemy, Complacency and Mr. Murphy. So I ask you all to remember, in a war, there is always more than one enemy and they all can kill you. Be aware and be safe!

Combat Edge, August, 2003 by Raymundo Morales