



Rest Ethic: Be More, Have More, Do Less

Sean Orr

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Outlining the dangers of excessive stress, the self-help text Rest Ethic includes tools for making rest and recovery a healthy, lifelong habit.

Sean Orr's self-help text *Rest Ethic* argues against addictive work ethics and suggests powerful tools for combating the scourge of overwork.

Orr experienced stress, burnout, and health issues because of his intense work ethic before realizing that he more needed a "rest ethic." He encourages the same in this probing book about the positives and negatives of stress, which, while it is necessary for growth and development, does extensive damage to the body when it is prolonged or excessive. All of the book's claims are backed by alarming statistics, including that seventy-three percent of Canadians, and a similar number of Americans, report that their lives are stressful, as well as by scientific research, books and articles by experts in their respective fields, and Orr's training and experiences with patients.

Calling for an end to the common practice of regarding long work hours and the resulting burnout as a "badge of honor," the book argues that the current work ethic is an addiction that fosters unhealthy, addictive behaviors like overeating, poor food choices, and drinking alcohol to excess to compensate for insufficient rest and recovery time. "It is simply not possible to live a healthy life in a constant stress response," writes Orr. "However, most of society tries—and suffers the consequences." Spare, jargon-free language helps to make the book's case that stress itself isn't the killer; it's the lack of recovery time that is destructive. Stories of patients' experiences, together with Orr's admissions of his own, often funny, mistakes add a lighthearted, personal touch.

The book takes a practical, holistic approach to combating excessive stress and is up-to-date in including the effects of social attitudes and technology on stress levels. It pinpoints some of the attitudes that contribute to overwork, including the drive to have it all; fear of missing out; and not wanting to be seen as a "slacker." Suggestions for making change include paring expectations down to realistic levels and focusing on a desired result, saying "no" to everything else.

Organized around four types of energy (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual), the book suggests treating energy types as "currency" and being attentive to the deposits and withdrawals that are made in each area. This down-to-earth approach makes it easy to see why a deficit in one area will spill over to take a toll on all others. Logical, step-by-step instructions are given for building a strong and sustainable "energy portfolio."

At the end of each chapter, thoughtful questions for reflection and practical action steps encourage implementation of what has been learned, and chapter summaries facilitate quick reviews. Outlining the dangers of excessive stress, the self-help text *Rest Ethic* includes tools for making rest and recovery a healthy, lifelong habit.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July 14, 2020)

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