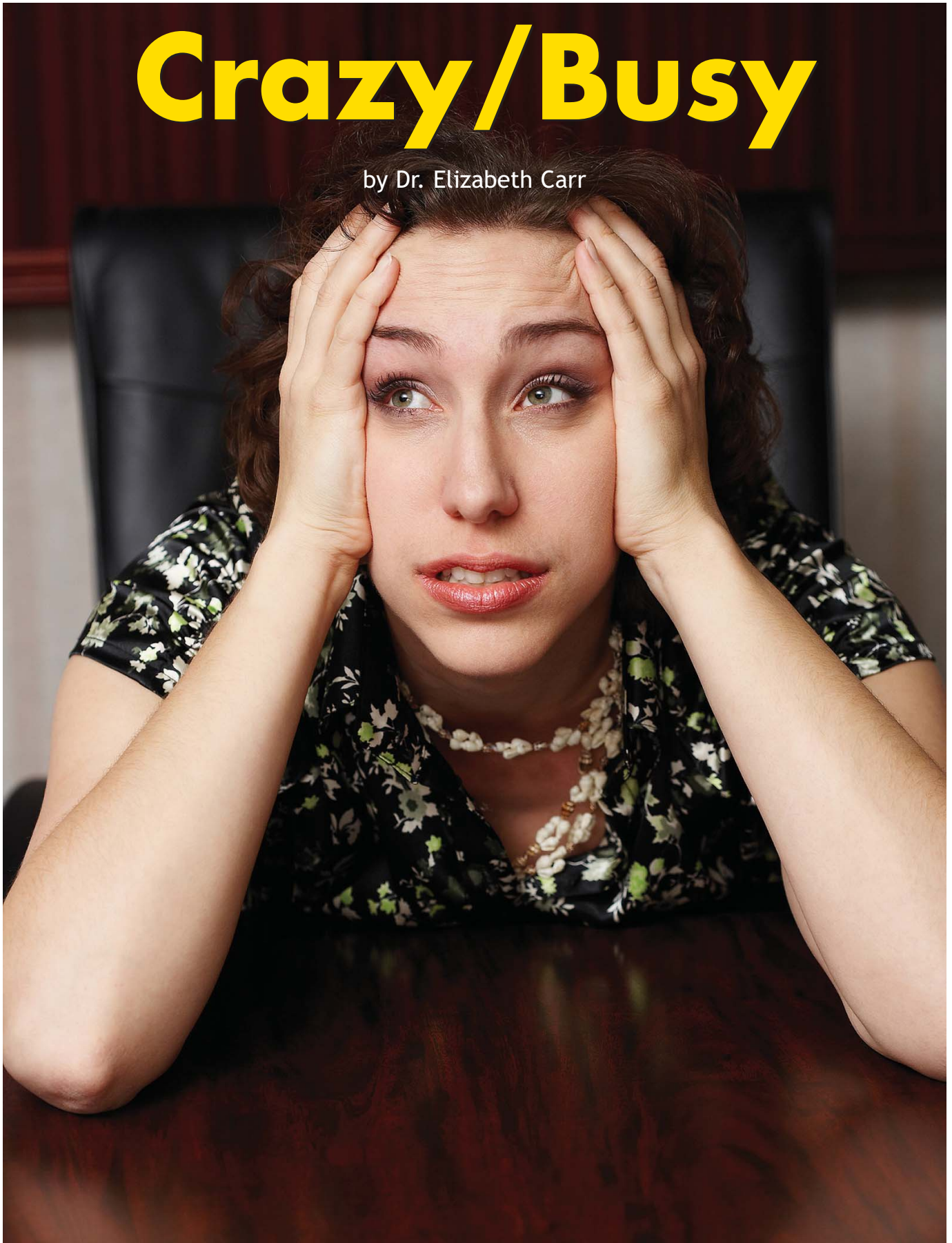


Crazy/Busy

by Dr. Elizabeth Carr



The irony was not lost on me when the editor of Insight Magazine asked if I could write a piece on crazy/busy—and do it within a few days. Could I find the time—in my own busy schedule—to add one more project to an already full week?

Summer was supposed to be my down time. Time to catch up on things before the push of fall demands caught up with me. Preparing a new class for September, getting back to the gym, and finally doing my “spring” cleaning were just a few of the projects on my summer to-do list. In May, I was certain that I would be able to throw myself into these tasks in early June. But by mid-July, I was optimistic about beginning in August.

Why am I surprised? Isn't this how it always is? We tell ourselves again and again, “Next week I'll have more time.” Maybe it speaks to our eternal optimism, a lifetime of past experience notwithstanding.

Recently, I ran across a blog entitled, “The myth of the less-busy future me.” How perfect, I thought. I see this so clearly in my own experience that I had to smile at the truth of it. How often do you tell yourself: “This month is crazy/busy, but next month will be better?”

If there was ever a time when the reality of being perpetually busy can't be denied, it's at the end of summer. Whether you are parenting school-aged children who'll soon have a volume of homework, facing a heavy workload—or both—fall is a crazy/busy time for many of us.

Do you anticipate being “crazy/busy” all over again this fall? Maybe you would rather avoid it. Are you wondering how you can make your life a little saner, a little more manageable? Often, time-management books suggest the problem is rather simple, and can be addressed through a combination of organization and assertiveness. I think this is part of the answer.

Modern life certainly offers new challenges, such as information overload and general “screen sucking” (a term coined by Dr. Hallowell that means wasting time online through compulsive web-browsing or e-mail checking). Certainly, limiting these behaviors, becoming more efficient, and learning to say “no” to others can help fend off crazy/busy. (In reality, people who feel they can't say “no” are often unaware of how frequently they are the first to make unsolicited offers to assist).

Yet, many time-management perspectives fail to capture one key reality. Often, we face an endless stream of appealing opportunities that outpace our capacity to exploit them. In this regard, perhaps it is our zest for life that is a primary risk factor for crazy/busy. Although I can't adhere to it most of the time, I am inspired by M*A*S*H's Charles Winchester's philosophy: “I do one thing, I do it very well, and then I move on.” For most of us, life is more like juggling spinning plates, than doing one thing very well.

If this downside of too much zest rings true for you, peace of mind may require you acknowledge three truths. First, there are only so many hours in

the day. Second, sleep is imperative to recharge the brain and rest the body—rather than an optional leisure activity easily replaced by strong coffee. And finally, a central part of the solution to crazy/busy rests in making tough choices to limit which of life's myriad opportunities you want to pursue. Do what matters most to you. Choose wisely, allow yourself to move on when your desire to participate in something changes, and enjoy.

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