

## Running the Numbers

### Scope:

Put actual numbers on the scope of the stress. How big part of your work-day, relationship, life etc. is it actually a part of? Define what a good and bad day is.

Optional: Consider keeping track and treating yourself (e.g., extra chocolate or extra time reading a favorite book) if it becomes more than what you have defined as a bad day. As it turns out, people usually overestimate how often/long the bad parts are, so the “bad days” become rare.

Example 1: My work colleague is really negative and stressful to be around – he is making negative comments “all the time.” On a bad day he will make at least a 100 negative comments. Well, okay, maybe not a 100, but at least 10. That is almost 1 per hour. Can I deal with one negative comment per hour? If it becomes 15 comments in a day, I’ll put another \$100 toward parts for that old car I am working on.

Example 2: My husband and I argue all the time! – on average once each week that is. The arguments feel like they go on forever! –usually for 15 minutes. I am with my husband (while awake) 45 hours each week and when not arguing things are mostly good. That means that 15 /180 minutes are bad and 165/180 minutes are good.

### Likelihood:

Identify the possible consequence that you are really afraid of. Identify all the steps that would need to happen for that to come true. Step by step assign probabilities of each step happening. Then multiply them together and see the actual probability. If you are not certain of the probability, it usually works best to err on the side of assuming it is on the likelier side.

Example: I am having my annual job review. My real fear is that I will get a bad review. No... it is that I will lose my job... no.... it is that I won’t have a job...

- Chances of getting a bad review: 10% (they have always been good or okay in the past).
- Chances of a bad review being so bad they may consider letting me go: 20% (not all bad are equal)
- Chances that they would actually fire me if I had a bad enough review: 10% (they always give a second chance or set up a remedial plan)
- Chances that if they did fire me an appeal would not work: 75% (appealing the decision only works some of the time)
- If I am fired, the chances that I can’t find another job within 6 months given my existing experience and work history: 10%.

The chances that this will have my feared outcome:  $.10 \times .20 \times .75 \times .10 = 0.15\%$  (15 out of a 1000).