

Sally arrived early. As she walked around the old house, she couldn't
1 [help feeling sad because of what was about to happen. It was almost a year
] 2 [since her dear grandmother had passed away in this house at the age of
] ninety-two. The family had very much wanted to keep all her things. Unfortunately, the family business had failed and left them with heavy debts.
3 [In the end, the bank had forced the family to have an auction sale to repay
4 [their debts. The auction was to be held today.
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Sally wandered into the yard where all her grandmother's things were
6 [neatly arranged, including dishes, old furniture, and the like. She was
] 7 [especially anxious to see the quilt that had been in her family for over one
] hundred years. She found it in a corner of the yard, lying on her grandmother's bed as she always remembered it. Coming close, Sally began to touch gently the patches of cloth which had been sewn together with so much love and care.

If this quilt could talk, she thought, the stories it would surely tell! Her entire family history was contained within its borders. For instance, there
8 [was the patch of cloth from her great-grandmother's baby dress. Another
9 [square was made up of material from her grandmother's wedding dress.
] There were even bits of cloth from her own mother's graduation and wedding dresses.

Around the edges of this family treasure there were, of course, the newer additions. These pieces of cloth were related directly to Sally and her
10 [cousins, recording baby births, graduations, weddings, and other happy
] 11 [occasions. Sally was so glad that her grandmother had kept all these pieces.
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Sally had never attended an auction before. She had heard you had to bid for things you wanted. In other words, people offered money for an item, and the person who offered the most money would get it. Over the previous
12 [several weeks, she had managed to save \$100 in order to bid on the quilt.
13 [Surely this will be enough, she had thought. Now the big moment had arrived. Looking around, Sally was surprised to see how many people had

turned up, some from far away.

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As the auction began, Sally waited. Finally, the time came to bid on the quilt. She held her purse tightly and listened. The first bid was \$50. She was

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shocked. It was so high! Quickly other people bid and soon the bidding reached \$85. It was now or never. Taking a deep breath, Sally yelled out

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"\$100!" For a moment there was silence. Hope filled her. She glanced again at the quilt, thinking how pleased her grandmother would have been with her

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at this moment.

Just then, from the back, another person shouted "\$125!" In an instant,

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Sally's eyes filled with tears. That was it. She had lost her chance. Suddenly feeling very miserable, she couldn't help wondering why so many people

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would be interested in that old, torn, dirty quilt. The quilt finally sold for \$500 to a complete stranger. For the rest of the auction, with an empty

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feeling inside her, Sally just stayed around to bid for a few small items that

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reminded her of her childhood.

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After the sale, she went to the counter to pay for the few items that were now hers. The woman at the cash register handed her a rather large box. When Sally opened it, there was the quilt. "There must be some mistake.

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Someone else got this," she said. At that moment, she noticed a handwritten

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note attached to the quilt with a safety pin, which read:

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Dear Madam,

Before the auction, I noticed you admiring the quilt. Clearly,

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this object was very precious to you. Your sadness at losing the

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bid was so apparent that it broke my heart. Although you don't

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know me, please accept this quilt as my gift. I don't expect

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repayment from you. I only ask that you do a similar favor in

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the future for a stranger who happens to cross your path.

Yours,

A Sentimental Stranger

It is well known that stress affects workers' health. When workers are
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not well, they tend to miss many days of work every year. The organizations
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they work for are, in turn, not as productive as they should be. However,
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levels of stress in different occupations, and the ways that workers relieve
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such stress, have not been studied in depth. The Occupational Psychology
Association (OPA), therefore, conducted a survey on the effects of stress on
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workers in four different occupations and on the methods they use to relieve
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workplace stress.

The OPA researchers interviewed 100 workers in each of four occupations:
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nurses, air traffic controllers (ATCs), computer programmers, and junior high
school teachers. The workers were asked about the kinds of stress symptoms
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they had and how they dealt with stressful situations.

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The four types of stress symptoms mentioned most often were high blood
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pressure, overeating, depression, and sleeplessness. The OPA researchers
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found that workers in the different occupations reported different frequencies
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of these stress symptoms.

The nurses reported that they ate more when they felt stressed. The
ATCs were more affected by high blood pressure than other disorders. Many
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of the computer programmers tended to feel nervous and anxious. The

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teachers reported that they could not sleep well.

The researchers found that workers used five main methods to fight stress both at work and at home. They were interested in how these ways of fighting

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stress differed in the four occupations. The figure below shows how people in]

the four occupations relieved stress.

The nurses interviewed claimed that talking to others and shopping were

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the usual ways to relieve stress. They also said that they liked listening to music from time to time. The ATCs claimed that the responsibility for

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hundreds of lives on the job put a lot of pressure on them. They relieved this]

stress by shopping or sleeping, and when possible by playing sports. The computer programmers, on the other hand, preferred sleeping and playing sports as the best ways to escape the effects of any stress. They said that

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shopping, talking to others, and listening to music were less frequently used

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methods of stress relief for them. The teachers preferred talking with other]

teachers as well as listening to music, particularly classical music, as the best

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ways to relieve stress.

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The OPA researchers concluded that workers in different jobs have

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different types of stress symptoms and employ different ways of relieving

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stress.