

# The Greyhounds are Loose!

DOT YOUR I's, CROSS YOUR T's AND GET YOUR ZZZ's

By Gail Lowney Alofsin



Event professionals who staged performances in their living rooms since their earliest years have been in the events business for several decades. Think about it - many people volunteer to do what we do. We are paid to produce or work on events. When it is no longer fun and exciting, it may be time for a sabbatical, retirement or a head check!



"What do you do in the off season?" is a question that many of us are asked. This is often followed by, "Your job must be so fun!" Yes, we have great jobs and exciting careers yet stress does not elude any of us. So I humbly offer a few tips to "Keep Calm and Carry On," as the British are famous for saying, as we approach "show time" and the height of our "busyness."

### The Greyhounds are Loose

When greyhounds are let out of their pens at the races, they have one focus: to get the job done and run around the track as fast as they can. They set their sight on the finish line with astute focus.

As it gets close to "show time," the "should have" "would have" and "could have's" arrive in unison. For instance, suggestions are rampant: "Let's add this, change this, have you ever thought about...xyz?"

A greyhound pin sent to me by an IFEA audience member is prominent on my office bulletin board, a reminder that we cannot do everything that we would like to do and stay on track.

We all have great appreciation for new ideas and enthusiasm. However, there is a time and a place to decide if we are going to add the plate spinning, fire eating juggler to the event versus 24 hours in advance. You may want to put your innovative ideas in a "parking lot" for the next event. The greyhounds are loose, focus on what you need to achieve in the next two weeks, two days, two hours and do your best to stay focused.

### Parking Lot

Events and venue should always be improving. There is no shortage of new and inspiring ideas. When there is not enough time to execute the ideas effectively, consider putting them into a "parking lot." This can be as simple as a flip chart where great ideas are tabled for future projects.

### Curve Ball

Build in time for the unexpected, as rest assured, it is on its way. Weather is one of the biggest culprits, why not plan for it? Choose comfortable shoes, boots and outerwear so you can address inclement weather head on. Design site plans that will lead to fluid (pun intended) changes that work for all members of the event team.

In addition to weather, there will be other challenges inclusive of exhibits that need more space than anticipated (get the shoe horn out!), parking, lost credentials and tickets, birthday cakes, backstage meet and greets, etc... Reach for your magic wand and assist with a smile. Respect the requests being asked of you, they make for great stories later!

Author Steve Yastrow professes that "Special requests are a gift." You will have

requests from exhibitors, co-workers and sponsors prior to an event. If a request is truly a difficult one to fulfill, explain this in person or over the phone; it will go a long way versus an email or text that states "no" or "it's not going to happen." Positive communication will keep relationships strong and intact when the pressure is on.

### Gumby

Unlike the clay character and TV icon, Gumby, we do not have the ability to stretch to the point that we can be in two places at once! When your event covers several acres and "events within the event," you will have to rely on other people to assist you. While no one can do it as well as you can (smile face!), your colleagues will put their own special touch on the project assigned to them.

### Temperature's Rising

In a busy kitchen, frantic action and high stress is referred to as being "in the weeds."

Whether your event is a few hours, a few days, or a season, there is extreme pressure, accelerated by unexpected demands and changes. Be prepared for the unexpected and build "white space" into your day to take time to address the issue at hand.

### Dot your I's, Cross your T's and Get your ZZZ's

Our brains are hard-wired with a "fight or flight" response for our protection. Once the perceived threat is gone, we return to our normal state. What happens when we are on overdrive, 24/7?

Sometimes we find ourselves forgetting to "dot our i's," and "cross our t's," as we move at an accelerated pace prior to and during events. Best practices during event season include keeping your activation plans in a folder, Ipad or on your smartphone. Have the information where you can access it quickly- from the names of your clients, their families and guests to the details of their sponsorship.

Bank your sleep - do your best to get as much rest as you can weeks prior to the event. Try going to bed earlier with light reading versus trade magazines or distressful articles. Take time to get exercise and stay hydrated - drink plenty of water!

Did you forget to order the cheese plate for the wine and cheese reception? This happens. Do what you can to solve this challenge. When the event is over, make note of what was forgotten in your "wisdom file" so you do not make the same mistake again. Get over it! It's silly to continue to berate yourself or others for mistakes made. Stay future focused, and positive.

### Yes You Can!

Your reaction to a situation versus the actual situation will often cause addition-

al or unnecessary stress. Avoid negative self talk. Stay positive. Jump in and help others who appear to need it. Shoulder's back, head high - *know* you have done it, can do it, and will get through it!

### Cartwheels and Cupcakes

It is always a joyful experience to be in the company of family. While I was putting the final touches on this article, my 11-year-old triplet nieces gathered around my computer and asked me what I was writing about. I explained that I was crafting an article about how to handle stressful situations and asked them if they ever experience stress. "Yes," they replied in unison. When asked for a few examples, they mentioned that their parents, friends and homework stressed them out. To alleviate their stress, they offered the following sage advice.

"Take a deep breath." - Sydney Alannah Martin

"Do cartwheels!" - Madison Healy Martin

"Eat a cupcake." - Paige Trinity Martin

When the greyhounds are loose, and it does not seem like we are going to get it all done, why not take a minute to take a deep breathe, enjoy a cupcake and do a cartwheel or two?

Enjoy!

**Gail Lowney Alofsin** has been blessed with a career that has enabled growth, education and excitement for over two decades. From the cruise and resort business to her current role as Director of Corporate Partnerships for Newport Harbor Corporation (NHC), she has been afforded the opportunity to be an entrepreneur and an integral team member in the development of hundreds of events. From operations, marketing, public relations, new business development, catering, food and beverage, sponsorship sales and experiential marketing, Gail is consistently pushed out of her comfort zone, expanding her knowledge and professional development.

In addition to her position at NHC, Gail serves as an adjunct professor at the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island. She does her best to "breathe" while the greyhounds are loose and work with a vibrant events team to produce exciting and creative events. Between cartwheels and cupcakes, Gail can be reached at 401-640-4418 or [gailalofsin@yahoo.com](mailto:gailalofsin@yahoo.com).