

Stress-Free Chiropractic?

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We live in a time of measurement. All aspects of life are quantified, qualified, sorted out and ranked. The popular media apparently likes to use the crescendo of anticipation inherent in ranking, since I see TV shows exposing the "Top 10 Nude Beaches of Brazil" or articles detailing the "Top 5 Armenian Cemeteries of Los Angeles."

Recently, I came across a Web site called Careercast.com, which helps people find jobs or examine career choices. The site published its rankings of the professions with the most and the least stress. Chiropractic was ranked #10 on the "least stressful occupation" list. The first posted comment on the Web site summed up my reaction when I read this. The comment simply said, "Huh?!"

Being a health care provider of any kind, especially a doctor in private practice, seems to me to beg the question, "Why didn't I just become a plumber?" I started a list of stresses and frustrations inherent in chiropractic practice, but then thought better of it. Enumerating these stress factors just seemed silly, since we DCs and our staffs know them intimately. The rankings of the first nine professions on the list, and the comments of some of their members, were often more interesting to me. After reading many of the posts, I had to conclude that no profession is "low stress."

Careercast.com actually has a convoluted formula to rank professions on its stress scale, but I couldn't figure it out. The number-one least stressful profession was awarded to audiologists, who evaluate and treat hearing and deafness. After reading the posted comments, it appears a few of them agree with the low-stress designation, although with some caveats. But overwhelmingly, other audiologists disagreed. "Careercast should be sued for libel," complained one. "Try pediatric and special-needs work," remarked another. "Try breaking the news to parents that you can't cure their kid's deafness, then tell me about stress!"

One audiologist resented the selling aspect of his responsibilities, when he said he was tired of customers or patients calling him a "thieving crook" because of the expense of hearing aids. Apparently, having hearing aids thrown in your face by upset and disappointed patients is a hazard in the audiology profession.

The second "least stressful" profession was dietician. But as one member seemed to sigh, "No one ever does anything I tell them to do." There were lots of comments about hospital schedule chaos. Job satisfaction did not seem to be particularly high.

The third and fourth rankings went to software engineers and computer programmers, respectively. The posts shared a good deal of existential angst. "Is this a sick joke?" said one engineer. "What about impossible deadlines, rancid coffee, and being chained to your cubicle?" complained another. An unhappy programmer referred to being a "hunched-over slave" and another worried about the "loss of her soul." I sense some stress here.

Then there are the dental hygienists, number five on our list of carefree professions. My own experience treating these folks would have me question their "low-stress" ranking, since muscle and spine disorders are endemic due to the twisted [postures](#) they must take on in their work. The only pain-free hygienist is probably a retired hygienist.

Sixth on the list is the speech pathology profession. "You're a liar and a piece of (scatological reference here)!" wrote one angry pathologist. That's probably enough said. But the seventh low-stress profession was judged to be that of the philosopher (?) This was not some kind of attempt at humor. It appears that the ranking was meant to refer to college professors, not the paranoid street people who approach me in the city. "You'd better have tenure," warned one professor. Another argued, "The stress of living with your parents because you can't find a job is what 95% of us experience!" A third philosopher reminded us all that Socrates died from being forced to drink poisonous Hemlock.

Mathematicians ranked eighth. There was only one posted, indecipherable comment, and one reply to that comment which also made no sense. But ninth on the list was occupational therapy. Comments seemed to often start with "Wow! whether used in a positive or negative post. Perhaps this is some kind of special OT lingo. However, overall the therapists seemed to have the most positive comments posted, although they complain frequently of wheelchairs breaking down.

I like being a chiropractor. It fits me. I would never have made a good mathematician, even though I can imagine being an unemployed philosopher. There is no doubt that I would have preferred many chances, or evolutions, in my profession. I am still waiting. But often when I have been the most dissatisfied with my job, it was usually because I was dissatisfied with myself.

Every cow looks for greener pastures. Most humans share this trait. I read about the dean of a medical school who, when addressing the freshman class, asked the students to raise their hands if a medical doctor had ever tried to talk them out of becoming a [physician](#). Every student's hand went into the air.

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