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COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

**Shock effect of credit crunch**

By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News  
Published: September 01, 2008, 23:54

Surely it can't be happening in Dubai - not here, of all places!

But of course, that is how the shock-effect of the credit crunch is now rippling out to touch even this most-favoured corner of the economic world. A severe case of 'trouble in paradise', with doctors already reporting evidence that normally healthy patients are skipping meals and cancelling the gym membership, as a sign of belt-tightening.

For example, UAE inflation has now hit double figures, similar to that which I myself experienced when I started my own business in the UK, and that followed a long period in which people had come to believe that an ever-expanding economy was a permanent feature of the commercial landscape and that the London stock-market could only ever go upwards.

What do I remember from that time? It might get even worse - talk of a possible 'meltdown' similar to the Wall Street crash - along with a good deal of private denial, identity crisis, depression, drug abuse, and a tragically high suicide rate. (I was also directly involved with a charity for potential suicides.)

Denial is the one factor that we can focus-on today. Expatriates, in particular, come here for a better life, to leave behind all those poor people struggling in weaker economies. There is no harm in this - for as long as the good times keep up. It is when the economy switches into reverse that you may go into denial about your true status and prospects, relative to others.

Now it is just possible that you could 'tough it out' - take an aggressively confident view and push ahead with that big promotion or that giant contract, and ride out the storm by floating above it. But the odds may be against that succeeding in these uncertain times.

Much more likely, you're going to have to modify your expectations and your targets.

First, you might have to look very much more closely at both your financial outgoings and your incoming salary - when the possibility is that your annual bonus might have disappeared, or at least been cut in half. The luxury apartment and the new car might have to be put on hold. This will make you feel rather nervous but it will also take you closer to reality.

Then look again at your priorities - which

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Ramadan



**SPACES INSPIRE  
COMMUNITIES**

means safeguarding your health through a healthy regime that you've probably regarded previously as 'uncool'. That means sensible, regular exercise, good plain cooking, adequate sleep, perhaps helped further by deep breathing exercises and meditation.

With this newly cleared state of mind, establish which aspects of your life you have control over, and which ones you haven't. Then set your goal and start working towards it, however slowly.

*- The writer is a BBC broadcaster and motivational speaker, with 20 years' experience as CEO of Carole Spiers Group, an international stress consultancy based in London.*

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