

Building Resilience

What is Stress?

You will learn..

- We are hardwired to respond to high pressure situations
- Pressure causes stress
- Some pressure and stress is good
- Causes of stress
- The signs of too much
- 5 simple ways to promote your own mental health and wellbeing

You may believe that you are a modern human, but beneath the surface you are still primitive, programmed to live in a wild and savage environment, struggling to survive from one day to the next. Millions of years of evolution ensured that you would respond to any threat in one of two ways - by attacking or by running away. This fight or flight response to a threat is instinctive and so it is largely outside our conscious control. The body responds to threats by producing adrenalin. In situations where a person's life (or the life of a loved one) is threatened, it's amazing what the surge of adrenalin can help someone to do. People have jumped five-bar gates, coped with major

traumas like the loss of a limb or lifted huge weights off trapped family members. The trouble is that evolution moves slowly and hasn't caught up with the rapid changes in the way we live. Our bodies deal with the pressure of work or the congestion in commuter traffic in the same way as they learnt to deal with wild animals on the savannah - by producing adrenalin and preparing

for a fight or a flight. You may sometimes wish that you could settle disagreements at work or deal with that awkward customer with a sharp-edged spear, or imply by running away, but that option isn't available. Our bodies tense up ready for a physical reaction but that isn't possible. Instead, we bottle it up. That's stress.



Pressure Causes Stress

If you put a little bit of pressure on the end of a strip of wood or metal it will usually bend. Let it go and it will spring back into shape. But push it too far and it can break.

You have put the material under different degrees of stress. Some materials will accept more stress than others. Some can be bent double and spring back without a problem. Some will snap with the slightest pressure. People are the

same. Put them under a degree of pressure and they will spring back easily, but push them too far and they will break.

Just as different materials respond differently to pressure, people will respond differently as well. Some seem to relish pressure, soaking it up like a clock spring, easily able to unwind. Others are far

less able to cope with any pressure. You need to understand what stress is, what effect it has on people and what causes it.



Some Pressure is a Good Thing



*“A diamond is a chunk of coal that is made good under pressure”
~ Henry Kissinger*

We need a certain amount of pressure to perform at our best, this is shown by the graph, which was created by Robert Yerkes and John Dodson in 1908

The curve shows that as the level of stress increases, the performance level also increases, this is healthy tension and is a key ingredient in feeling engaged and motivated – wanting to do more and better. When we are performing at our best, we are experiencing levels of pressure that we are able to manage.

An example is the short but

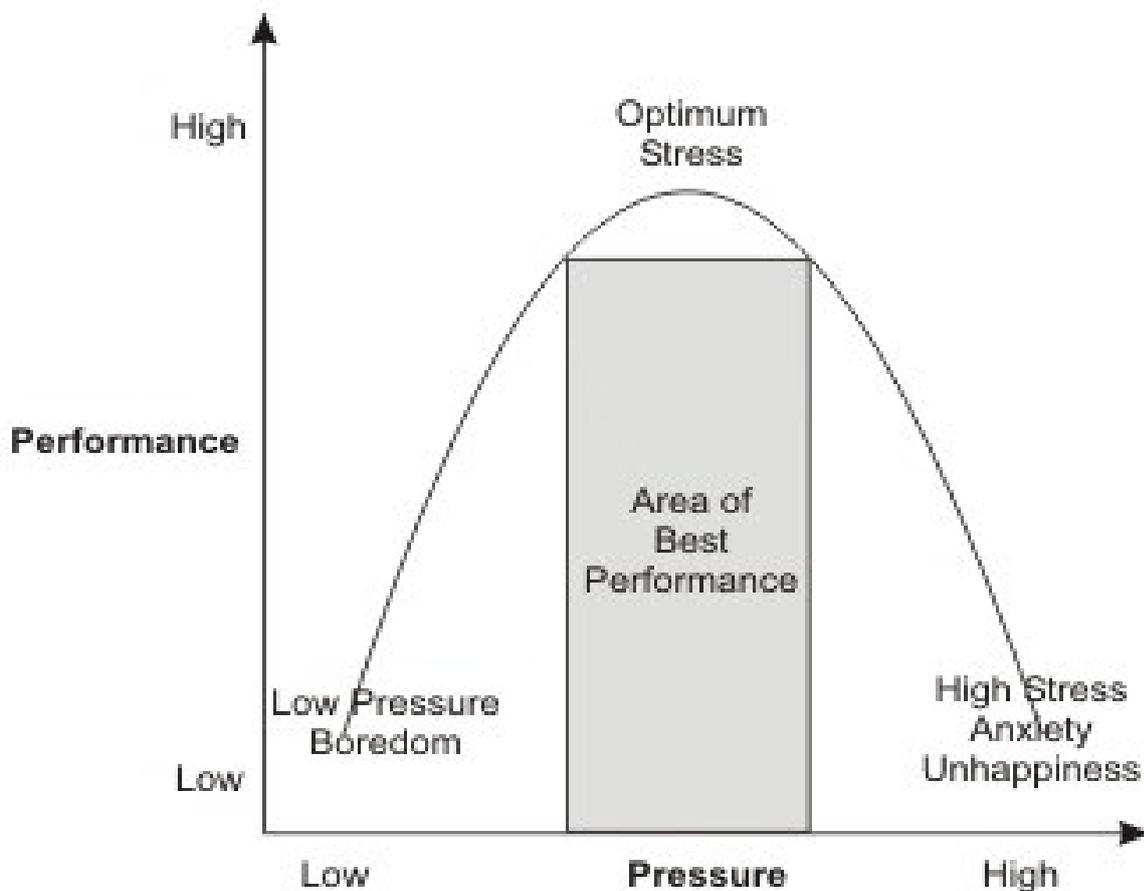
adequate deadline given to an employee, which motivates and encourages her to work actively and efficiently on the project assigned to her. Another might be an approaching major examination which leads a student to double time on studying and reviewing of lessons.

As stress begins to be perceived as overwhelming or excessive, the person reaches a fatigue point and performance levels and enthusiasm start to decline. This can lead to exhaustion, burnout, or ill-health.

For instance, a very tight deadline is given to an office em-

ployee who has to take care of her four children at home and a sick mother at the hospital. This overwhelming mix of situations, if not managed carefully and totally, will result to a poor performance at work, bad relationships with other members of the family, ill health, and burnout.

Fortunately, there is a region called the “area of best performance”. In this region, moderate pressure resulting to optimum stress or stress that is totally manageable leads to the highest level of performance (and satisfaction).



The Inverted-U relationship between pressure and performance

Causes of Stress

There are many causes of stress in life including:

- Death: of spouse, family, friend
- Health: injury, illness, pregnancy
- Family change: separation, divorce, new baby, marriage
- Argument: with spouse, family, friends, co-workers, boss
- Physical changes: lack of sleep, new work hours
- New location: vacation, moving house
- Money: lack of it, owing it, investing it
- Environment change: in school, job, house, town
- Responsibility increase: new dependent, new job
- Stress at work

The UK's Health and Safety Executive lists six key workplace stress factors:

- The demands of the job
- The control staff have over how they do their work
- The support they receive from colleagues and superiors
- Their relationships with colleagues
- Whether they understand their roles and responsibilities
- How far the company consults staff over workplace changes.

Remember, how we respond to situations varies from person to person. One person's fearful situation is another's source of excitement. The key is to know your own risk factors and manage yourself accordingly or learn techniques to manage your responses in situations that generally cause you unwanted stress.

Symptoms of Stress

We all respond to stress in different ways. Common symptoms of too much stress include:

- Getting very anxious about possible events.
- Regular headaches or other physical pains.
- Mood swings - sharp changes from gaiety to anger and back again.
- Bursting into tears over small

things.

- Becoming obsessive over aspects of the work.
- Frequent lateness and absenteeism.

The key is knowing yourself, and being aware of changes in your own state or behaviours. When you notice a change, try to identify the trigger and if possible remove it.



Mental Wellbeing—Get Your 5-a-Day

Connect

Be active

Take notice

Keep learning

Give

5 ways to Mental Wellbeing

Connect...
Be active...
Take notice...
Keep learning...
Give...

We all have a sense of when we feel mentally and physically well. But sometimes we need extra support or a gentle nudge to look after ourselves so that we keep well.

The New Economics Foundation has assessed the latest scientific evidence and created a set of simple actions to improve wellbeing in everyday life.

By adopting the five ways to wellbeing, you can increase your life expectancy by 7.5 years. And with one in four people today experiencing mental distress during their lifetime, there's never been a better time to take your health into your own hands.

Live longer, feel healthier, be happier.

Connect... with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be Active... Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take Notice... Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and

what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters.

Keep learning... Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give... Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

About ACT Personal Development

We created the ACT Personal Development Strategy and the ACT course as a result of our passion for helping people reach their potential. We have harvested what is good in the world of personal development and packaged it into a simple to follow process. Anyone with a genuine desire for change can easily apply this process and make things happen.

Our backgrounds were in law (Mel) and science (Andrzej). In these two disciplines we spent many years mastering the art of exploring issues and really getting to a deep understanding of what is at the heart of those issues, whether a point of law or a scientific puzzle. However our real passion is personal development. We have transferred our prior skills into the field of personal development, not only to create a better happier and choiceful lives for ourselves, but to share the knowledge with others.

We offer a wide range of one-to-one solutions (Coaching and Hypnotherapy) as well as a range of courses for individuals and organisations

Contact us for more information:

Email: actpdinfo@gmail.com

Web: www.act-pd.co.uk