International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

Babcock

ME&S (South)

Excelling Under Pressure

2021

For further information, please contact

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babcock™

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People, Culture & Wellbeing

Stress Management Society
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WELCOME

Stress is the driving force that keeps us on our toes and ensures that we push to be the best we can be. However that is only valid up to a certain point. If we have too much stress and endless wear and tear, it can drive us into physical, mental and emotional exhaustion.

Certainly we can't avoid the problem. Situations arise on a day-to-day basis, which make physical, mental and emotional demands on us. There may be decisions that need to be made, deadlines that need to be met, and lessons to be learned.

Unreasonable stress affects one in five of the working population and after acute medical conditions it is the most common cause of long term sickness absence from work (CIPD Absence Management 2019).

Stress undoubtedly makes people ill. It is now known to contribute to heart disease, hypertension and high blood pressure, it affects the immune system, is linked to strokes, IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), ulcers, diabetes, muscle and joint pain, miscarriage, allergies, alopecia and even premature tooth loss.

Therefore it is imperative to strike the right balance. As individuals, we must take stock of all aspects of our life and situations and learn to cope better.

Treat it early, and your prospects are good. Ignore the problem, and there is a risk that 'burnout' may become a permanent state of affairs.

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UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Stress is a physical response. Under stress, the body thinks it is under attack and switches to

'FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE' MODE

releasing substances such as adrenaline, cortisol and norepinephrine to prepare the body for physical action. This causes a number of reactions, from blood being diverted to muscles, to shutting down unnecessary bodily functions such as digestion.

The common physical symptoms when we are faced with a highly stressful situation are:

HEART RATE INCREASES

BREATHING BECOMES SHALLOW AND FAST MUSCULAR TENSION INCREASES

FEELING OF ANGER AND HOSTILITY INCREASE

TEETH GRITTED BLADDER RELAXES

BLOOD PRESSURE INCREASES BLOOD SUGAR INCREASES

Our bodies have evolved to produce this stressed state in order to survive life-threatening situations like attacks from sabre-tooth tigers, however, in modern times we're no longer living in caves and running away from sabre-toothed tigers so becoming stressed is more of a hindrance than a useful tool.

There are still situations where it is beneficial to work yourself into a stressful state, such as participating in competitive sports; so the challenge is being able to control the effects of stress when it isn't beneficial to the situation.

What is fight, flight or freeze mode?

Fight or flight means building up the energy to be able to respond to a life-threatening situation.

For many people however this life-threatening experience sets the stage for 'dysregulation'. The energy mobilised by the perceived threat gets "locked" into the nervous system when we go into freeze. This freeze response sometimes reveals itself when you breathe. Holding your breath and shallow breathing are both forms of freeze. The occasional deep sigh after a period of stress is the nervous system catching up on it's oxygen intake.

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IS 'STRESS' GOOD OR BAD? THE PERFORMANCE ZONE

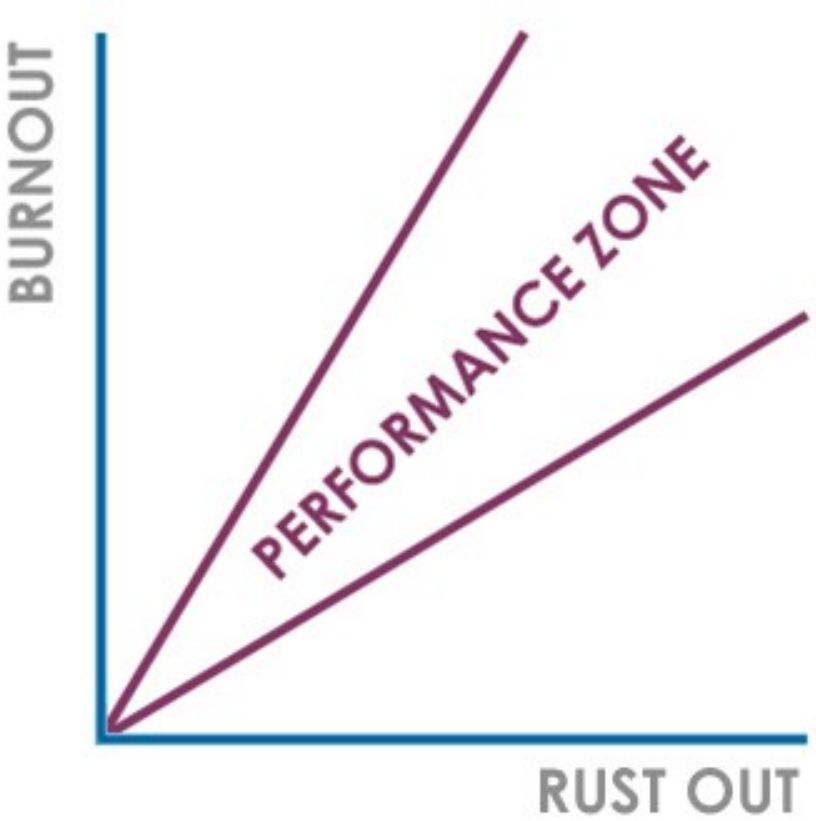
Manageable levels of stress are not a problem, a stress-free environment is not the ultimate goal - we need pressure in our lives in order to perform. The issue is long stages of inactivity causing distress from stagnation or prolonged exposure to high levels without a rest or reset period.

The Performance Zone is the area that drives optimal performance, whether applied to sports, work or even driving. Burnout and Rustout present in different ways but are both as traumatic to experience.

When our stress levels move beyond the Performance Zone and edge towards Burnout we will struggle; problem solving, lateral thinking and creative thinking diminish. We are unable to think clearly and make good decisions, and can become reactive, angry and sometimes even aggressive.

Below the Performance Zone is Rustout where we may find ourselves unable to motivate ourselves; energy and enthusiasm will be low and we will be bored sluggish and lethargic.

Make yourself familiar with the signs when your stress levels move above or below the Performance Zone so that you can reign them back in or raise them up accordingly.



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STRESS EVALUATION EXERCISE

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It may be helpful for you to think about how stress affects your life and to share this with a partner. www.stress.org.uk/see

1. What does stress mean to you?

2. What is the cause?

3. How does it affect you:

A. Physically?

B. Mentally?

C. Emotionally?

4. How often does it affect you?

5. How have you been dealing with it until now?

6. How could you deal with it instead?

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THE BRIDGE ANALOGY

The Health & Safety Executive defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'.

This links very closely to one of our definitions of stress; a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that:

"DEMANDS EXCEED THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES THE INDIVIDUAL IS ABLE TO MOBILISE."

International Wellbeing Insights uses 'The Bridge' analogy to approach the topic of mental health, wellbeing and stress. When a Bridge is carrying too much weight, it will eventually collapse. It is possible to see the warning signs before this happens, 'The Bridge' would bow, buckle and creak.

The same principle can be applied to human beings, with excessive demands and challenges placed on our bridges. There may be early warning signs. However stress can creep up on some of us, resulting in an unexpected breakdown.

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RECOGNISING STRESS

Early identification of stress and stress-related problems

One of the difficulties with stress is that people experience stress in different ways. This contributes to stress manifesting in non-uniform presentations, so it would be wrong to overgeneralise when giving advice on how to identify stress in others. However, what we can say is that because stress can have negative effects, it will usually manifest itself in unusual behaviour for that person.

It isn't always possible to prevent stress, so a key action in order to minimise risk is to identify stress-related problems as early as possible, so that action can be taken before serious stress-related illness occurs (thus preventing a costly outcome for all concerned).

There will be changes in the stressed person. These changes may be emotional, physical or behavioural, or a combination of all three. So, the key thing is to look out for negative changes of any kind. Bear in mind that the negative changes are also likely to have knock-on effects

e.g. reduced performance at work, damaged interpersonal relationships

Of course, we all experience 'bad days', so we are really talking about situations where people display these negative changes for a period of time (e.g. 5 days in a row).

Certain factors at work may indicate a potential problem

- More accident prone
- Forgetting things
- Showing a negative change in mood or fluctuations in mood
- Avoiding certain situations or people
- Using more very negative or cynical language
- Becoming withdrawn
- Showing a prolonged loss of sense of humour
- Becoming increasingly irritable or short-tempered
- Arguments and disputes between people
- A tendency to suffer from headaches, nausea, aches and pains, tiredness and poor sleeping patterns
- Indecisiveness and poor judgement
- Self-harming
- A problem with drinking or drug taking
- Looking haggard or exhausted all the time
- Unable to think creatively

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CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK

These are some traditional causes of stress at work

Feeling out of control of your destiny

Unreasonable demands in the job

Overwork

A feeling of being under-appreciated

Difficulty with resolving problems

Bullying or harassment

Difficulty with communication

Uncertainty about job security

Office politics

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WHAT'S ON YOUR BRIDGE?

1. **We don't have a Work Bridge and Personal Bridge, it all goes to the same place and we tend to carry it around with us.**
   Take a moment to think about what is on <u>YOUR</u> Bridge.

2. **What are the signs and symptoms that you display when your Bridge is bowing and buckling. Take a moment to think about what that means for <u>YOUR</u> Bridge.**

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FLAWED STRATEGIES WHEN DEALING WITH STRESS

When the general public were asked to complete the sentence

"I'm So Stressed, I Need A…."

The most popular answers are:

1. ALCOHOL

2. NICOTINE

3. REFINED SUGAR

4. CAFFEINE

All of these are stimulating and will not directly alleviate stress (with the exception of alcohol which is technically biphasic i.e. in small quantities it is stimulating and in large quantities it is a depressant)

If you take away the consumption of the top 4 cravings from the act, you are left with a constructive experience. The act of smoking itself won't relieve stress, however, taking a couple of minutes away from your work at an appropriate time to have a 'fresh air break' will have a positive effect on your health and efficiency.

STRESS & NUTRITION

Many of us feed ourselves platefuls of food loaded with toxins, chemicals, fats, sugars and other nasties which are of no benefit to our bodies and we expect it to cope.

There has always been a link between stress and nutrition. A balanced diet will boost our resistance against the effects of stress on the body.

Therefore it is important to constantly top up on vital nutrients.

Someone with a healthy and balanced diet is likely to be far less stressed than someone with a poor diet as their bodies are working more efficiently and they are more resilient to stress.

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LIFESTYLE BALANCE EXERCISE

Knowledge is power…only if you apply it or take action

This is about lifestyle balance; as a starting point, think about the different areas of your life and give them a score.

Rate on a scale: Zero being poor, 10 being Excellent

HOW DO YOU RATE YOURSELF OUT OF 10 ON THE FOLLOWING SKILLS/ STATEMENTS?

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

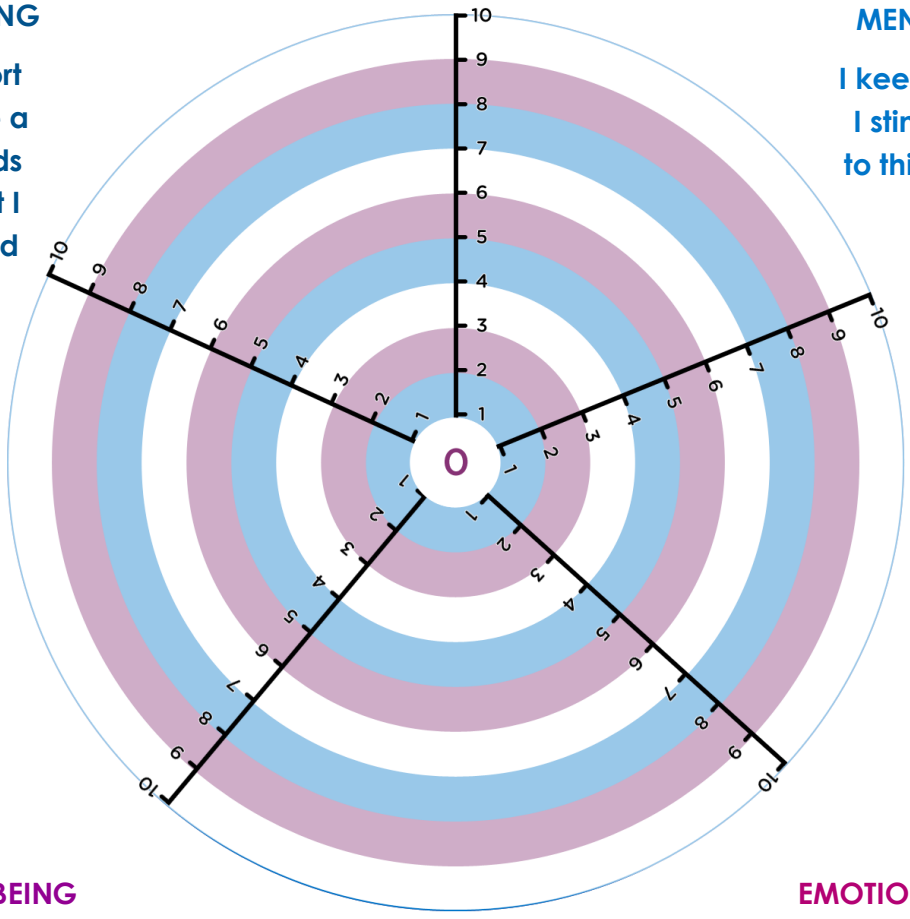
I keep my body moving: I feed, water and exercise it well

SOCIAL WELLBEING

I keep a support network: I have a variety of friends and family that I can rely on and

MENTAL WELLBEING

I keep my mind alive: I stimulate my brain to think and problem solve



SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

I keep mindful of a bigger picture: not necessarily religious but connected to something other than

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

I keep a positive mood: I recognise and acknowledge how I feel and can process my emotions

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WHAT COULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

PHYSICAL

- Move every day. Take time to stand, to adjust, pause to notice your posture
- Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system.
- Make sure you are getting a good amount of sleep each night, a sleep hygiene plan may help
- Take this time to get your fitness levels up and see how long you can run for – Why not take up a Couch to 5k challenge?
- Eddie Izzard: "We were never made to sit still or settle, but to place ourselves in challenging situations, and then work out how to cope"
- The simpler the better, the more fun you can make it – just get active!
- Balance out the chocolate with some physical activity: every time you eat a mouthful, U.O.U one minute of movement
- Get a good night's sleep, how is your sleep hygiene?
- Encourage the sunlight to shine through your windows, get a bit of vinegar and give them a good clean
- Move every day. Take time to stand, to adjust, pause regularly to notice your posture
- Take this time to get your fitness levels up and see how long you can run for – Why not take up a Couch to 5k challenge?
- Your body is the only one that you'll get, treat it better and it will reward you. Feed, water and let it out once in a while – change things up to keep it guessing!
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet to look after your Bridge https://youtu.be/QO13yNvBLtk?t=61
- If you're working from home, take regular screen breaks . If you're stuck in the car or the van– get up and move!
- Keep hydrated. Drink plenty of water throughout the day, avoid that vicious cycle; thirsty because you're stressed and stressed because your thirsty
- Go for a walk: even if you don't feel like it, you must have a change of scene – the Vitamin D is good for your mood and immunity
- Has your food looked a bit beige lately? A little bit carby? Limit your intake of processed foods, lets get some vibrant colours on the plate and eat a bit cleaner
- Try a new/different form of exercise: if you usually walk, throw a couple fi 1-minute jogs in there with it
- Grow your own food – it's as easy as slicing a tomato and burying it in some soil!
- Green therapy: if you have a garden, go outside – if not, use your exercise time wisely and plan a route where you can get a nature fix – green is good!
- Join an online workout class, there's tonnes available on YouTube
- Learn a new breathing technique; box breathing, the 7/11, baby breath – find one that works for you and add it to your toolbox
- Is the weather too hot, too cold, or just a bit rubbish? You can still stay active – move and stretch: www.health.com/fitness/every day-stretches

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WHAT COULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

MENTAL

- A tonne of resources at TED Talks: www.ted.com/talks
- Clear out/clean your bedroom. Create and respect healthy boundaries – even if you work from this room, this is your own personal space
- Sounds simple but; how many times do you actually spend 5 minutes reflecting on your day? Not thought loops, but reflection. A simple exercise is to play your day through like a film from start to finish; it can help as part of your sleep hygiene to switch of the day
- Moving and committing to being active stimulates the brain and avoids stagnation
- Is your sleep disturbed? Are you giving yourself the chance to feel 'sleepy'? How much screen time are you taking in? Could you shut off the device an hour early and read by lamp or candlelight instead?
- Make a 'to do' list, get it all down on paper and then prioritise what needs to be done. What is the most urgent and important? What can be planned for later?
- Manage your energy instead of your time. Look into Tony Schwartz or the Pomodoro technique – short, sharp bursts of work… and then you must recharge
- Clean and organise your workspace/room: starting with what you can actually control (what's immediately in front of you) and then gradually increase your sphere of influence
- Take some time out to stimulate your brain – learn something that's a bit difficult that is just for you
- Keep a thought journal – this will help you to rationalise your thought process
- Stimulate a different part of your brain; try a language app: Duolingo, MemRise, Babbel, Hello Talk… iPuedes hacerlo!
- Brain training exercises, such as sudoku and puzzles keep different parts of the brain stimulated – if you don't use it, you lose it!
- Take some time out to add a new string to your bow; go to Skillshare and see what takes your fancy: www.skillshare.com/browse/painting
- Enrol in a new range of online webinars – keep on learning! There's a wide range of online courses to be explored, take a look on www.futurelearn.com
- A responsible 'No' is better than an irresponsible 'Yes'. Unless you have invented a second brain, another pair of hands and a 25th hour – you can say 'No', it's alright!
- Start reading a new book or finish one you gave up on! Find free reads at https://m.teedbooks.com/publicdomain
- Listen to a new podcast, we recommend Life Changing Conversations go to www.soundcloud.com/user-112824117

EMOTIONAL

- "It's better out than in", goes the old adage. Sure, it's a different context but its better to speak about your feelings than bottling things up. Begin sentences with "I feel that…" or "I think that…"
- Communicate with your friends/family/colleagues about how you are feeling. You could try using The Bridge as a way to communicate https://youtu.be/12qq9hR6zVA
- Grounding exercise: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste (even if it's the inside of your mouth)
- Get your sleep hygiene sorted: have a bath, wind down, minimise screen time, talk about how you feel, eat good food regularly
- Sense of humour failure is a good barometer for your wellbeing. Give your funny bone tickle.
- Lead by example: take a risk, be vulnerable – break down the taboo
- Set yourself daily positive affirmation: why do you like you? How compassionate are you to YOU?
- Be kind to yourself, take time out for self-care – it's like the oxygen mask on the plane; put yours on first and you'll be in a better position to help others

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WHAT COULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

EMOTIONAL

- Sharing time with the family to do something constructive has a massive emotional pay off. If you're not with your nearest and dearest – what could you do
- Keep a happiness jar; reflect on your day by writing down what made you happy, then put it into the jar– it's great when you read them all back!
- Mindful colouring. The amazingly talented Sam Antolik has designed a Stress Relief Colouring Book. Download from www.stress.org.uk/30daychallenge
- Sharing time with the family to do something constructive has a massive emotional pay off. If you're not with your nearest and dearest – what could you do instead?
- Practice mindfulness
- Write a gratitude letter. What are you grateful for? What did you take for granted and really appreciate? Even just writing down 3 positive experiences that have happened to you every day
- Write down your strengths: what are some of the things people have said about you that have made you feel good, strong and elated?
- Digital Detox – do something that doesn't involve a screen to allow you to disconnect from the 'always on' world we're currently living in. Could you make a 'tech free zone'?
- Learn something new such as a new recipe! Learning something new can improve your confidence and mix up the day-in-day out
- Limit the news you are watching/reading to prevent being exposed to endless editorials and opinion – focus on trusted sources for information and facts
- Learn a new breathing technique; box breathing, the 7/11, baby breath – find one that works for you and add it to your toolbox
- Do you find it hard to describe how you are feeling or detect how others are – use Dr Gloria Willcox's excellent 'Feelings Wheel' to help open the conversation
- Be strict with your boundaries; work is work and life is life – make sure to schedule in time for doing things for yourself
- It's natural to get caught in the 'What ifs…', the 'Haven't done…' and 'Didn't do's…' What are your weekly 'wins'? They're not always goals and achievements

SOCIAL

- Embrace VC software to ensure connection. Start conversations with "I feel like this today…" Be honest—what's the worst that will happen, someone might know the truth?
- Practice some unconditional positive regard: say "I love you because…" about the friends and family you think of today… could you widen the circle?
- Challenge yourself to tell at least 3 other people: "I really like … about you" today – notice what happens
- Plan something to look forward to in the future – write a daily note of what you want to do and put it in an 'I look forward to…' or 'Do something' jar
- Connect with people – check in with your support network; are they ok, are you ok? Pick up the phone and find out!
- Keep in regular contact with your family members, set them up on a video app like Zoom. Checking up with them is checking up on you too!
- Connect with people – check in with your support network; are they ok, are you ok? Pick up the phone and find out!
- Ask for help if you need it – it's OK not to be OK
- Perform a random act of kindness – it's nice to be nice
- Get in touch with an old friend – pick up the phone and say 'hello'
- Arrange a virtual quiz with your friends, family, colleagues.

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WHAT COULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

SOCIAL

- **Stay connected. We might not be able to be with our loved ones in person right now, but we could invite them to dinner over the phone or WhatsApp/Facetime/ Zoom/Skype instead**
- **Join something, anything that involves other people: a club, a community, a sport, a society—humans need connection...but sometimes we don't like to admit it!**

SPIRITUAL

- **Write down 3 positive experiences that have happened to you every day**
- **It's really important to find that time for connection; to yourself, to others, to the things around you, to nature**
- **Do nothing. Can you be still, with no input for 2 minutes? 5 minutes? How about 10? It's not often that we pause to stop the information—it's a noisy world out there!**
- **Volunteer or make a contribution to a cause that is important to you**
- **It's really important to find that time for connection; to yourself, to others, to the things around you, to nature**
- **Make time out to do something you enjoy; watching a film, cards, backgammon…what brought you joy as a child?**
- **Perform a negativity fast—can you cut out negative mnessages for a day a week, two days a week...three?**
- **Give yourself some direction. Write down your future aspirations and goals. Where do you want to be in a year, in two and five years time?**
- **There's always a good time to 'wiggle your green fingers' – planting seeds can give you a real lift to see them live and keep them growing**
- **Meditate: there are many different types, try a few out and at least one will work for you. No-one can tell you if you're doing it right, you can be guided but you'll figure it out yourself – the way you do it *is* the right way!**
- **Be kind to yourself and others: you're only here to do the very best you can… that's it!**
- **Forgive and forget: you have a finite load that your Bridge can take – let go of grudges, it's weighing you down**
- **If you're going through hell, keep going! The law of impermanence means that all things must pass - as will this.**

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BREATHING EXERCISES

(Please do not use this if you are pregnant, have high blood pressure, heart disease or musculo-skeletal issues)

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

Benefits

More oxygen = calmness and more oxygen in brain increases concentration and focus

INSTRUCTIONS

- Imagine a triangle that starts at your belly button and the corners are at your hips
- Inside that triangle is a ball or a balloon
- Every time you take in a breath, imagine that ball or balloon filling up with air
- Take a nice slow deep **breath in through the nose** and fill the belly up with air
- Hold at the top of the breath for 5 seconds and then slowly **exhale through the mouth**, pulling the navel to the spine. Repeat 5 times

RE-ENERGISING TECHNIQUE

Benefits

This protects against airborne diseases; tones the heart; burns toxins; increases exchange of O2 and CO2 in bloodstream, thus stimulating metabolism. Excellent for asthmatics. Balances nervous system.

Instructions

- Stand in a comfortable position
- Inhale and raise arms out sideways, Diaphragm descends, belly pumps out
- Exhale and bend arms in to ribs
- We will be repeating this 30 x
- 10 x slow, 10 x medium and 10 x fast

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ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

What kind of support network do you have? This can be anyone from your best friend, a family member, or a counsellor. There may be a whole group of people that support you, or just one.

Write down who you can turn to for the following:

Fun

Emotional support

In an emergency

A confidence boost

A reality check

A distraction

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SUPPORT RESOURCES

CIC CONFIDENTIAL CARE

Free and confidential information, support and counselling service.

Provides confidential support from trained councillors for both personal and work-related problems.

Counselling can be face to face, or accessed remotely

Call: **0800 085 1376**

Email: **assist@cic-eap.co.uk**

Visit: **www.well-online.co.uk**

Online and Live Chat

Username: **BXLogin**
Password: **wellbeing**

WELLBEING

Managers can refer employees for Mental Health support by emailing DevonportOH@Duradiamondhealth.com and submitting form HS(D)-FM-013.

E&M WELLBEING TEAM SHAREPOINT SITE

https://connect.babcockinternational.com/sites/emwellbeing/_layouts/15/start.aspx#/

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MY 30 DAY ACTION PLAN

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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER…ONLY IF YOU APPLY IT OR TAKE ACTION.

THIS IS ABOUT LIFESTYLE BALANCE;
GO TO STRESS.ORG.UK/LIFESTYLEBALANCE/
TO TAKE THE DIAGNOSTIC

HOW DID YOU DO? WHAT ARE YOU DOING WELL? WHAT COULD NEED IMPROVEMENT?
BASED ON YOUR RESULTS: THINK OF THE COMMITMENTS YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE TO BUILD YOUR PERSONAL RESILIENCE.

MAKE YOUR ACTIONS FOCUSED ON THE ASPECTS WITH THE LOWEST SCORE FIRST.
FINDING MEANINGFUL WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN AND OCCUPY YOUR TIME CAN HELP ALLEVIATE THE DISTRESS AND IRRITABILITY THAT POOR WELLBEING BRINGS.
THE COPING MECHANISMS THAT WILL WORK BEST FOR YOU WILL HAVE A LOT TO DO WITH YOUR PERSONAL SITUATION.

FOR EXAMPLE:
"IF I AM NOT FEELING OKAY, I WILL REACH OUT TO SOMEONE IN MY SUPPORT NETWORK".
"I WILL GET OUT EVERYDAY IN THE FRESH AIR, WHATEVER THE WEATHER"
"I WILL SCHEDULE AN HOUR EVERYDAY TO RECONNECT WITH MY READING"

IF YOU NEED SOME IDEAS, GO TO STRESS.ORG.UK FOR HUNDREDS OF TIPS FOR WHAT YOU COULD DO INSTEAD

ACTION POINT 1: (PHYSICAL): I WILL...

ACTION POINT 2 : (MENTAL) I WILL...

ACTION POINT 3 : (EMOTIONAL) I WILL...

ACTION POINT 4: (SOCIAL): I WILL...

ACTION POINT 5: (SPIRITUAL) I WILL...

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ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WELLBEING INSIGHTS

Stress is a much used (and abused) term these days. You frequently hear people say "I'm stressed" or "I'm depressed", yet there is still much confusion about what these terms actually mean and how best to tackle them. This is where we can help. We are the UK's leading authority on stress management issues, which is why you will regularly hear us talking about this topic in the media.

International Wellbeing Insights is dedicated to leading effective universal change by maximising your resilience, happiness, productivity and success with our passionate approach to reducing stress and promoting wellbeing.

Our extensive knowledge of stress and wellbeing and our cutting edge interventions have made us the primary organisation dealing with work-related stress reduction and wellbeing promotion in the UK since 2003.

For years, we've been empowering individuals to take charge of their wellbeing through our workshops, guides and regular updates. We also act as a trusted advisor for many companies such as British Airways, Allianz and Shell, guiding them through the mental wellbeing solution maze.

For more information or to book a workshop or a coaching session see www.stress.org.uk, call +44 203 142 8650 or email info@stress.org.uk

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International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to dis cuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

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www.wellbeing.work

We have supported many organisations, *including:*

BRITISH AIRWAYS · NHS · ASDA · Allianz · ENGLAND · itv · STANDARD LIFE · HM TREASURY · Hackney

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