



International
Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing



Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

Home Start

Excelling Under Pressure

Part 2

2021

For further information, please contact
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Contents

Welcome	3
The Bridge Analogy	4
Lifestyle Balance	5
Lifestyle Balance Solutions	6-9
Sleep Hygiene Exercise	10
Breathing Mindfully and Body Scan	11
Acknowledging Your Support Network	12
Support Resources	13
Action Plan	14
About International Wellbeing Insights	15
Notes	16

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 2014).

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.



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.

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?

(0 = Low skilled, 10= Highly skilled)

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

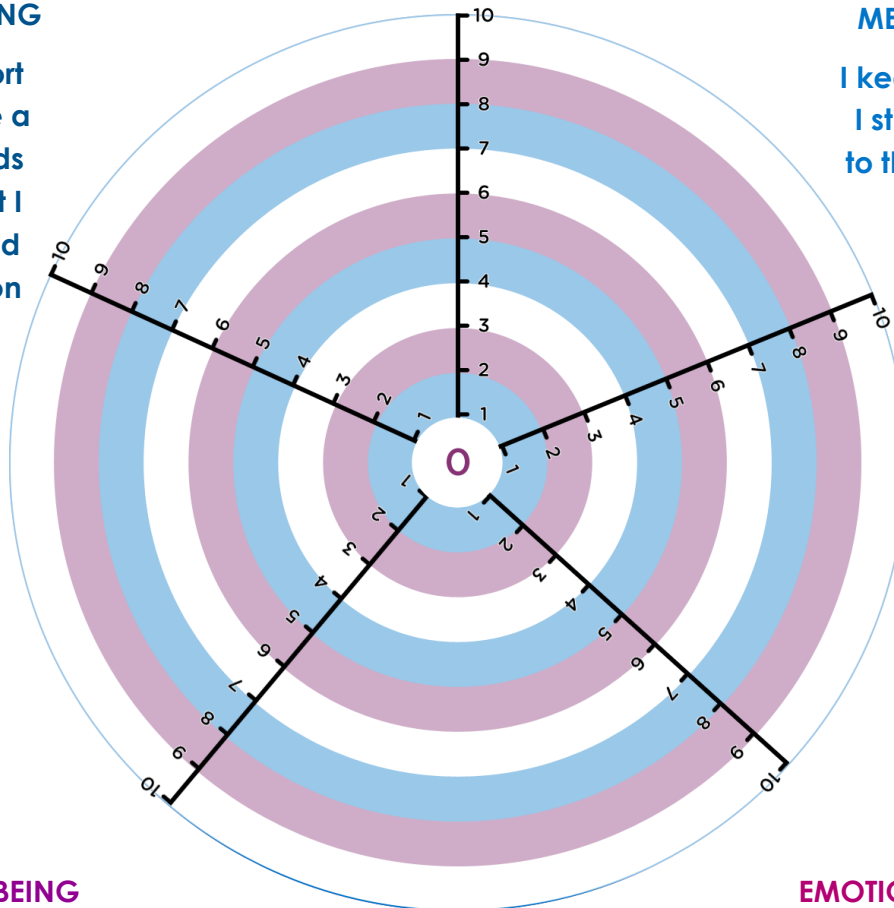
I keep my body moving: I feed, water and exercise it well

SOCIAL WELLBEING

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

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 just me

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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



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

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?



WHAT COULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

MENTAL

- **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... ¡Puedes 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.feedbooks.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**
- **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!**

WHAT COULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

EMOTIONAL

- **Mindful colouring.** The amazingly talented Sam Antolik has designed a Stress Relief Colouring Book. Download from www.stress.org.uk/30daychallenge
- **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**
- **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?**

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'**

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!
- **Arrange a virtual quiz with your friends, family, colleagues.**

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 messages 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.

SLEEP HYGIENE

ASSESS YOUR SLEEP HYGIENE	AGREE	DISAGREE
I KEEP A CONSISTENT BEDTIME AT LEAST FOUR TIMES A WEEK	Y	N
I RELAX BEFORE MY BEDTIME	Y	N
I SPEND THE LAST 45-60 MINUTES OF MY DAY FREE FROM WATCHING TV, BEING ON THE PHONE OR USING A SCREEN	Y	N
THE BEDROOM IS CLEAR OF TV'S, PC'S AND MOBILES	Y	N
THE BEDROOM IS DARK	Y	N
I HAVE A PROCESS I FOLLOW TO WIND-DOWN BEFORE BED	Y	N
I CAN RECOGNISE WHEN I AM BOTHERED BY SOMETHING; I AM ABLE TO PROCESS THE DAY AND END THE THOUGHT-LOOPS	Y	N
I HAVE A QUIET AND CALM MIND WHILE TRYING TO FALL ASLEEP	Y	N
I FIND IT EASY TO GET TO SLEEP AND STAY ASLEEP	Y	N
I CAN FALL BACK TO SLEEP EASILY IF I WAKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT	Y	N
I GET AN AVERAGE OF 7-8 HOURS OF SLEEP AT LEAST FOUR TIMES A WEEK	Y	N
I DREAM OFTEN	Y	N
THERE ARE DAYS WHEN I CAN WAKE UP NATURALLY WITHOUT AN ALARM AND IT WON'T CAUSE PANIC OR DISRUPT MY DAY	Y	N
I HAVE A CONSISTENT WAKE-UP TIME (WITHIN 60 MINUTES), EVEN ON THE WEEKENDS	Y	N
MY SLEEP IS RESTFUL; I WAKE UP FEELING REFRESHED AT LEAST FOUR TIMES A WEEK	Y	N
TOTAL		

MY PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

I promise myself I am going to improve my sleep patterns by taking these actions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Enter your commitments to log your actions and progress



BREATHING MINDFULLY & THE BODY SCAN

1-Minute Focus Practice

This breathing exercise is an easy mindfulness technique that allows us to practice being purposeful, in the present moment, and non-judgmental:

- Close your eyes and breathe normally
- Watch your breath, focusing your awareness
- Notice the sensation of your breath around the nostrils
- Where is your breath coming in to? Is your breath fast or is it slow?
- Do not force the breath, just observe it for a few minutes

Step 1

Choose a quiet place where others can't disturb you and where you feel comfortable. Turn off any devices that may distract you such as your phone or TV.

Step 2

Make sure you are in a comfortable position and move your awareness to your body. Check in with your body as it is right now, notice any sensations that are present, feeling the areas that are in contact with the surface you are lying/sitting/standing on. Mentally examine your body for any tense areas, such as the thighs or shoulders, and see if you can relax and loosen them.

Step 3

Allow any thoughts from your past or future to float out of your mind so you can fully engage in the present moment. The only thoughts you now have are your awareness of your body; and all of these thoughts are met with a sense of positivity and friendliness. This means letting go of judgmental thoughts that label problematic or painful areas as the enemy. These areas are just as they are.

Step 4

In your mind, turn your attention to each individual part of your body. Only concentrate on one area at a time, such as one hand. Feel the sensations in and around your hand, the temperature, any textures it is touching, a possible breeze flowing across the skin; is it relaxed, tense, heavy etc. Make sure you don't start thinking about it ("That blanket is really making my hand itch, should I itch it or leave it? And my finger is aching, where does that come from?"). Instead, just be aware of the sensations in a non-judgmental way: "The rough blanket is touching my palm, and there's a sensation in the index finger". The latter means you are aware but you are staying neutral, and are able to progress with the scan. The main point is being curious and open to what you are noticing.

Step 5

Finally, become aware of the entire body as one entity, and maintain this awareness for a few minutes. Feel the body both internally and externally, still aiming to stay fully in the present.



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

An emergency

A confidence boost

A reality check

A distraction

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Hub of Hope

- <https://hubofhope.co.uk/>

Shout

- <https://www.giveusashout.org/>
- Get 24/7 help from their team of Crisis Volunteers
- Text Shout to 85258

Mind

- supported online community where you can safely share and be heard, as well as listen to others:
<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/support-community-elefriends/>
- Mind info-line: 0300 123 3393
- Text: 86463
- <http://www.mind.org.uk/>
- info@mind.org.uk

Samaritans

- 08457 90 90 90* (UK) *Calls will cost 2p per minute plus your telephone company's access charge
- 116 123 (free to call) (ROI)
- Text: 07725 909090
- jo@samaritans.org
- <http://www.samaritans.org/>

Take personal
responsibility to get the
individual support you
need

MY 30 DAY ACTION PLAN

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

THIS IS ABOUT LIFESTYLE BALANCE;
GO TO [STRESS.ORG.UK/LIFESTYLEBALANCE/](https://www.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](https://www.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...

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



NOTES

A large rectangular area defined by a dashed purple border, intended for taking notes.



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

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

Find Us Here:

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Visit Us On:

www.stress.org.uk
www.wellbeing.work

We have supported many organisations, including:

