



International  
**Wellbeing Insights**  
People, Culture & Wellbeing



Stress Management Society  
from distress to de-stress

# NECS

## Creating Connections

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North of England  
Commissioning Support Unit



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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 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 and poor wellbeing; 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.

‘The Bridge’ analogy can also be applied to a team or organisation as a whole by looking for more general signs such as team deadlines not being met or a decrease in team morale.

# ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

What kind of support network do you have for your Bridge? This can be anyone from your best friend, a family member, a colleague, 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

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## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

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## TRUSTED ADVICE

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## A REALITY CHECK

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## A DISTRACTION

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## IN AN EMERGENCY

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## A CONFIDENCE BOOST

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# UNIQUE THING IN COMMON

**WITH A PARTNER, FIND THE 3 MOST UNLIKELY/UNUSUAL/  
UNIQUE THINGS YOU HAVE IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER**

Suggestions including but not limited to:

Where you're from. Where you've been. What you like to do. More suggestion on the next page

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**WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN COMMON?**

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**WHICH ONE WILL SHARE WITH THE GROUP?**

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# ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS PART ONE

- Top 3 destinations you've ever visited?
- What are your guilty pleasures?
- What was your first job?
- Have you ever met anyone famous?
- What are you reading right now?
- If you could pick up a new skill in an instant what would it be?
- Who's someone you really admire?
- Pick one: flight or invisibility—why?
- Seen any good films lately you'd recommend?
- Have you got any favourite quotes?
- What have you been pleasantly surprised by anything lately?
- What was your favourite band 10 years ago?
- What's your earliest memory?
- Been anywhere recently for the first time?
- What's your favourite family tradition?
- What was the first thing you bought with your own money?
- What was it that you valued when they were younger.
- What's something you want to do in the next year that you've never done before?
- What has made you smile recently?
- Have you had your 15 minutes of fame yet?
- What's the best advice you've ever heard?
- How do you like your eggs?
- What advice would you give yourself at 16 years old
- Our customers who ask this question are always shocked by how popular the answers to Do you have a favourite charity you wish more people knew about?
- Do you have any phobias?
- Have you returned anything you've bought recently? Why?
- Do you collect anything?
- What's your favourite breakfast cereal?
- Top 3 biscuits?
- Top 3 albums ever?
- Top 3 films ever?

# LISTEN EMPATHETICALLY

**SYMPATHY**: feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.

**EMPATHY**: the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

It is important to put yourself in other people's shoes and provide emotional support. When engaging with your colleagues, consider Professor Albert Mehrabian's communication model, which states the following percentages when communicating feelings or attitudes:

- **BODY LANGUAGE /FACIAL EXPRESSION ACCOUNTS FOR 55% OF MEANING**
- **tone of voice accounts for 38%**
- **WORDS ACCOUNT FOR JUST 7%**

Understanding someone's body language is vital when communicating and empathising with their current state.

Some ways that you can show empathy to your colleagues are:

- **Recognise each others differences and appreciate and respect them. Embrace the traits that each individual has e.g. approach an introvert differently to an extrovert to gain the best response from them.**
- **Listen to your colleagues. Creating opportunities for colleagues to tell you their opinions and feelings without judgement or interruption.**
- **Ask questions to better understand the individual in your teams**





# ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS PART TWO

## HOW ARE YOU...GOING TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

Why bother asking a question that is almost guaranteed to generate no new information? That's why the question, "How are you?," is in need of a drastic makeover.

When asking "How are you?", 99% of the time—what is the response? "...alright" Sometimes, the respondent doesn't even answer, they simply bounce the question back.

Let's think about asking better questions, particularly in a way that shows you are genuinely asking about the person's life. Or better yet, in a way that shows genuine care and leads to new information that can inspire positive action.

Some of those questions might be:

- "What's on the Bridge?"
- "How's your Bridge?"
- "What's your current state of mind?"
- "What are you looking forward to this week?"
- "What is going well this week?"
- "How are you feeling?"

## WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF A MORE PRODUCTIVE QUESTION THAN 'HOW ARE YOU?'

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## HOW COULD WE USE THIS?

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# MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

**IN WHAT KIND OF SETTING SHOULD YOU MEET WITH YOUR COLLEAGUE? WHY?**

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**WHAT KIND OF SEATING ARRANGEMENT? WHY?**

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**HOW WILL YOU START THE CONVERSATION? WHY?**

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**HOW COULD YOU USE A.C.T TO DEVELOP A CONNECTION?**

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**IF ANYONE FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE; WHAT COULD YOU DO? WHY?**

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## SUPPORT RESOURCES

THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP) is a 24/7 phone and web service providing confidential support and advice in such areas as family matters, debt advice, counselling, dealing with illness and relationships. Further details of the service can be found on the intranet. You can access the service at [www.pamassist.co.uk](http://www.pamassist.co.uk) or on 0800 882 4102. When using the service online you will be asked for your organisational username and password which is; Username – necs Password – necs1

THE WELLBEING ACTION PLAN and SIGNPOSTING TOOL can be found on the Health and Wellbeing Page on the Intranet.

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS

**WOW INTRANET PAGE – Where you will find information and access Individual Risk Assessment**

Access to national support, wellbeing support apps and guides can be found here: <https://people.nhs.uk/>

Access to your LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH RESILIENCE HUB – The NHS staff mental health and wellbeing hubs have been set up to provide healthcare colleagues rapid access to local evidence-based mental health services and support where needed. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/staff-mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs/>

**BETTER HEALTH –Better Health is here with lots of free tools and support**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/>

## SUPPORT RESOURCES

**EVERY MIND MATTERS** - Expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

**LIVE WELL** – Advice, tips and tools to help you make the best choice about your health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

**National health and wellbeing support for our NHS people** – Health and wellbeing support options available to all NHS staff [www.england.nhs.uk/people](http://www.england.nhs.uk/people)

**National NHS mental health and wellbeing support options** – If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, or just want to feel happier, the NHS website can help signpost you to existing support options <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>

**NHS APPS LIBRARY** – Find apps and online tools to help you manage your health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

**WELLBEING WORKSHOPS**- NECS has a number of wellbeing sessions which can be booked on <https://learning.necsu.nhs.uk/>

**Take personal responsibility  
to get the support you need**

# MY ACTION PLAN — 30 DAY CHALLENGE

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

GO TO [STRESS.ORG.UK](https://www.stress.org.uk) FOR HUNDREDS OF TIPS

THINK OF THREE COMMITMENTS YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE TO ENSURE YOU ARE BUILDING BETTER CONNECTIONS.

**ACTION POINT 1:**

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**ACTION POINT 2:**

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**ACTION POINT 3:**

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**Who will you make yourself accountable to over the next 30 days?**

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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 an organisation 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 SMBC, Garrett, Dragados, DHL, and the NHS—guiding them through the wellbeing solution maze.

For more information or to book a workshop or a coaching session see [www.wellbeing.work](http://www.wellbeing.work) or call 0203 142 8650 or email [info@stress.org.uk](mailto:info@stress.org.uk)

If you want to promote wellbeing in your company using branded stress management products, go to [www.stress.org.uk](http://www.stress.org.uk).



# 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:**

The Lighthouse  
Suite S, Quay West  
Salamander Quay  
Harefield, Middlesex

**Call Us On:**

Switchboard: +44 (0) 203 142 8650

**Email Us On:**

[info@stress.org.uk](mailto:info@stress.org.uk)

**Visit Us On:**

[www.stress.org.uk](http://www.stress.org.uk)  
[www.wellbeing.work](http://www.wellbeing.work)

**We have supported many organisations, including:**

