



Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

LEVEL UP

STRESS BUSTERS

For further information, please contact
The Stress Management Society — 0203 142 8650
support@stress.org.uk





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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 ab-

sence 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



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 non-critical 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 a sudden build-up of energy to be able to respond to the perception of 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.

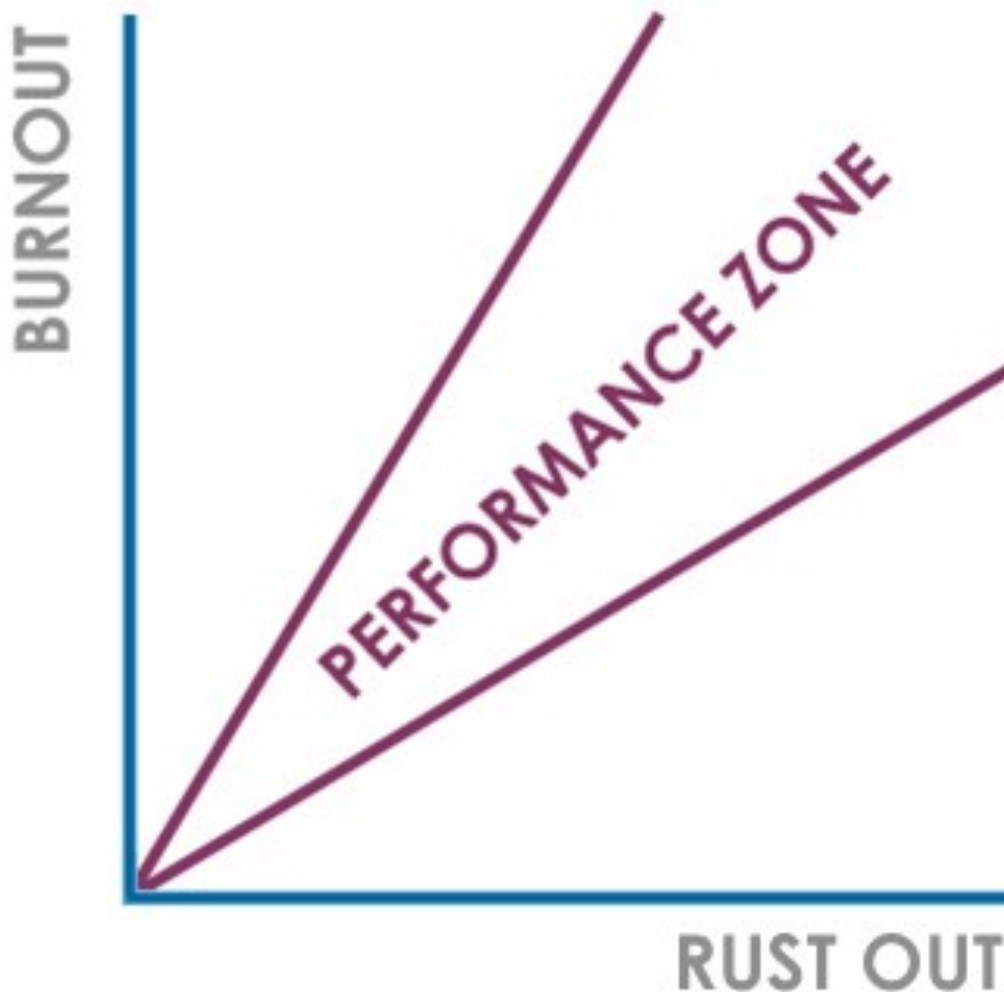
IS 'STRESS' GOOD OR BAD? THE PERFORMANCE ZONE

This is the zone to drive optimal performance, whether applied to sports or school.

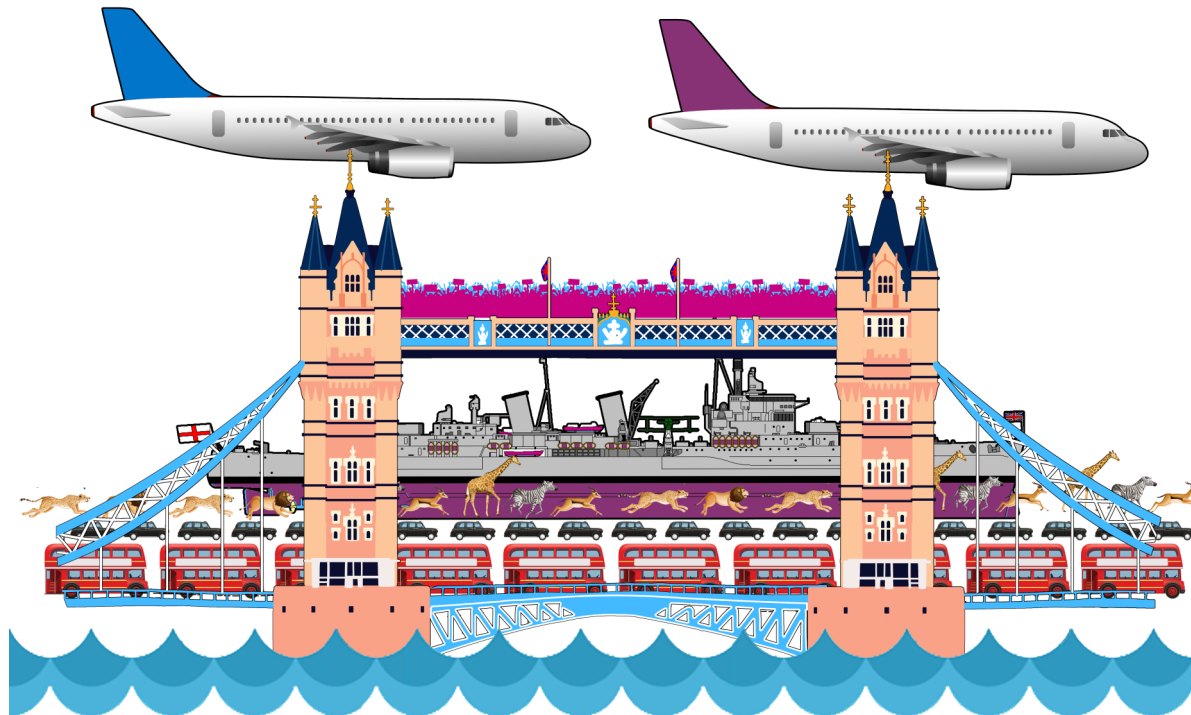
When our stress levels move above the performance zone and edge towards burnout we will struggle; problem solving, lateral thinking and creative thinking diminish. We are unable to think clearly and make good decisions, and can become reactive, angry and sometimes even aggressive.

When we are below the performance zone we may find ourselves unable to motivate ourselves, energy and enthusiasm will be low and we will be bored sluggish and lethargic.

Whether below or above the Performance Zone, both states have their own signs and symptoms and can be equally as stressful. Make yourself familiar with the signs when your stress levels move above or below the performance zone so that you make the necessary healthy adjustments.



THE BRIDGE ANALOGY



The Stress Management Society uses The Bridge analogy to approach the topic of stress. What will happen if we continue to add more and more load to the Bridge? It will bend, creak, buckle and show signs of being under stress...eventually it will collapse.

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.

To prevent the collapse you have two choices, either:

1. ALLEVIATE THE LOAD OR
2. REINFORCE THE BRIDGE

Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that:

**“DEMANDS EXCEED THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES
THE INDIVIDUAL IS ABLE TO MOBILISE.”**

We use the analogy of the Bridge to enable people to have more honest and productive discussions around stress, pressure and mental wellbeing. If you give people the ability to speak about themselves or their problems in the third person, we naturally avoid the stigma or feelings of failure that many of us can experience. Instead of talking about 'me', I am now talking about a 'thing'.

We can then start to evaluate the load (is it really on there), decide what we do first, second, third and so on. We can decide what to let go for now, or even forever.

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 itself differently. 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 has negative effects, it will usually manifest itself one way or another.

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 school.

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).

SIGNS OF STRESS IN YOUNG PEOPLE CAN SHOW UP IN A NUMBER OF WAYS:

Including, but not limited to:

- **Irritability and anger:** You might not always have the words to describe how you are feeling and sometimes tension bubbles over into a bad mood. A stressed-out person might be more short-tempered or argumentative than normal.
- **Changes in behaviour:** For example, you used to be a great listener and suddenly you are acting out. Or a once-active person now doesn't want to leave the house. Sudden changes can be a sign that stress levels are high.
- **Trouble sleeping:** Feeling tired all the time, sleep more than usual or have trouble falling asleep at night.
- **Eating changes:** Eating too much or too little can both be reactions to stress.
- **Conflict and vicious cycles:** neglecting responsibilities, dropping the ball on homework, forgetting obligations or procrastinating more than usual - then getting nagged for it which causes a worse situation as we can feel resentful and not want to contribute.
- **Getting sick more often:** Stress often shows up as physical symptoms. A person under stress often reports headaches or stomach-aches, sometimes they may experience digestive trouble.
- **Thought loops and 'future-tripping':** finding it hard to switch off thoughts or endlessly playing out (usually negative) future scenarios.
- **Doomscrolling:** spending an excessive amount of screen time devoted to finding and absorbing negative news - this never improves anyone's mood!

THE BRAIN

HOW THE BRAIN FUNCTIONS

PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Good for: complex thinking, reasoning, multi-tasking, problem-solving

PREFRONTAL CORTEX & BASAL GANGLIA

Good for: attention, task switching, inhibition

FRONTAL LOBE & INSULA

Good for: Thoughts, feelings & emotions,



PARIETAL LOBE

Good for: visual-special processing

AMYGDALA

Good for: fear and anxiety

CEREBELLUM

Good for: attention

LIMBIC SYSTEM: HYPOTHALAMUS

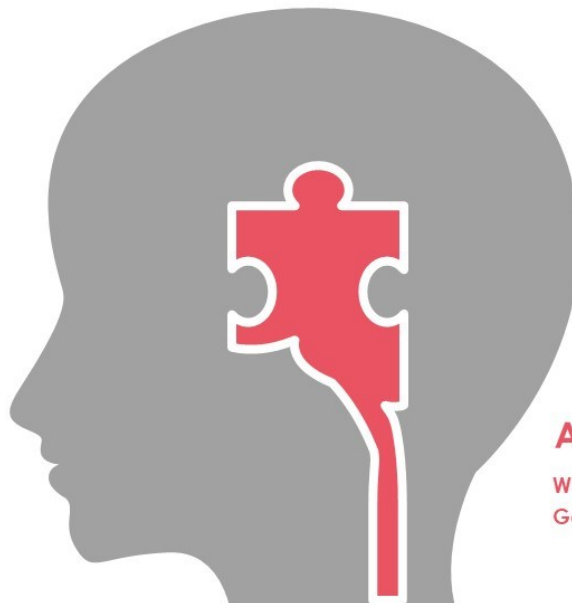
Good for: appetite regulation, threat response

LIMBIC SYSTEM: HIPPOCAMPUS

Good for: Memory, Emotions

THE BRAIN: AEROBIC EXERCISE

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN



AEROBIC EXERCISE

WHAT? HIPPOCAMPUS
Good for: memory

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN SOMETHING IMPORTANT?

How many times have you found yourself searching for a word in the middle of a sentence? How many times have you become frustrated because you can't remember something that you know you know - it's just at the tip of your tongue?

WHAT CAN I DO?

AEROBIC EXERCISE

Aerobic exercise is any type of cardiovascular conditioning where we get our heart and lungs working - you probably know it as 'cardio'. It can include activities like brisk walking, swimming, running, cycling or anything you might do as a general warm-up to increase the heart-rate and loosen up before the main activity.

You would have seen this, for example, before a Premiership football match, - the coach will often then go over or quiz the athlete on the tactics or game plan whilst this area of the brain, the Hippocampus, is stimulated.

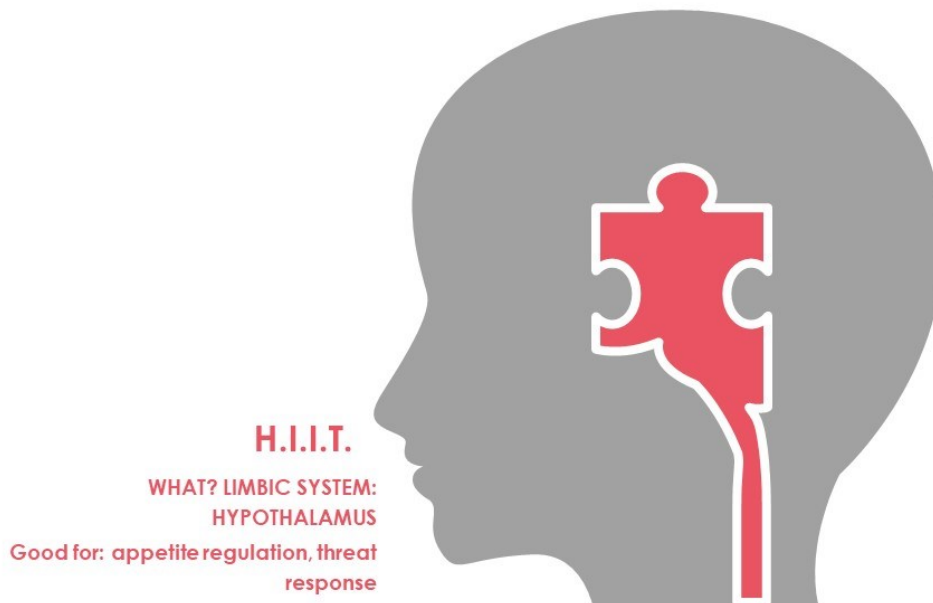
By definition, aerobic exercise means "with oxygen." Your breathing and heart rate will increase during aerobic activities.

Examples:

Jogging on the spot, squats, burpees, star jumps,

THE BRAIN

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN



HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU EVER FELT THREATENED?

How many times have you felt like running away? How many times has your blood boiled and you have wanted to take it out on something? How many times have you found it difficult to get over that feeling and let it go? This is our natural reaction to danger and is known as the threat response.

WHAT CAN I DO?

HIGH INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (H.I.I.T)

The hypothalamic, pituitary, adrenal axis (HPA Axis) is our central stress response system - that is where the 'Fight, Flight, Freeze' response starts. This is the area of the brain that has been responsible for the survival of our species. This is not a problem or harmful, but an issue can occur if our natural reaction to threat is left unchecked. This process is supposed to last for around 30-60 seconds to 'turbo-boost' your body to deal with a threat - the point being that you're supposed to use it, not subdue it.

HIIT training involves repeated bouts of high intensity effort followed by varied recovery times which very much mimic the characteristics of dealing with a threat response in a healthy manner.

Examples:

Tabata training, cardio HIIT, full-body HIIT, HIIT with weights, and HIIT for runners.

THE BRAIN

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN



SPORTS DRILLS

WHAT? PREFRONTAL CORTEX & BASAL GANGLIA

Good for: attention, task switching, inhibition

WHAT? PARIETAL LOBE

Good for: visual-special processing

WHAT? CEREBELLUM

Good for: attention

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU EVER FELT DISTRACTED?

How many times have you found it difficult to switch between tasks? Can you remember a time when you haven't been able to pay attention no matter how hard you have tried? In these cases we can use physical exercise to stimulate our brain to be more effective at working for us.

WHAT CAN I DO?

SPORTS DRILLS

When we experience stress for a long period of time we tend to rely more on the parts of our brain that are focused on survival more, and less on the areas responsible for complex thought. Similarly to someone who does lots of pull ups and not many squats might have bigger arm muscles, people living in a constant state of stress might rely more on their reactive and primal parts of their brain.

Sports drills are great 'all-rounder' repetitive activities that involve muscle conditioning (endurance, flexibility, strength), technique training, tactical understanding and mental agility.

Examples:

Cone dribbling, shuttle runs, join a local club for a sport you enjoy, game play drills., ladder drills

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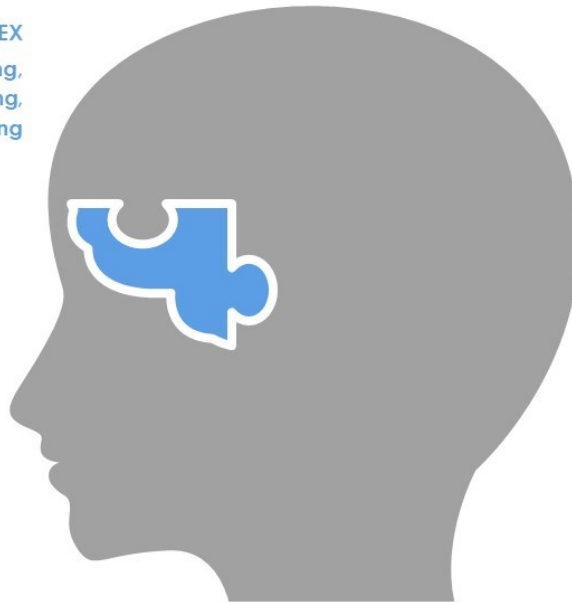
THE BRAIN

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN

WEIGHTS

WHAT? PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Good for: complex thinking,
reasoning, multi-tasking,
problem-solving



HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU EVER HAD 'BRAIN FOG'?

Can you think of a time your head felt fuzzy and confused? When is the last time that your thinking felt slow and unfocussed? Brain fog is characterised as a lack of mental clarity and is often brought on by being overwhelmed

WHAT CAN I DO?

WEIGHT EXERCISE

Lifting weights has been found to not only work out your muscles, but to also increase neural connections in parts of your brain used for complex muscle function. This increases communication between different areas of your brain and helps you with complex thinking skills, such as how to cope with stress at school and at home.

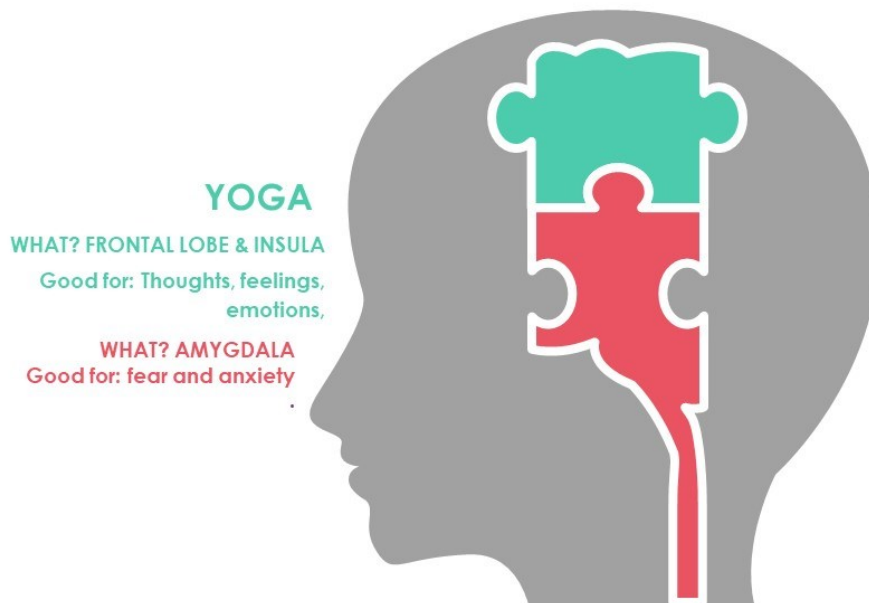
You don't have to become a body builder to feel the benefit of weight training! You can do exercises like squats or push-ups at home using your own body weight or use household objects like tins of pasta sauce to add extraweight to bicep curls.

Examples:

Squats, bicep and hammer curls, glute bridges, plank, deadlift, kettlebell swing, lunges

THE BRAIN

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN



HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ANXIOUS, SCARED OR OVERWHELMED?

Have you ever been overwhelmed by all of the things life was throwing at you? Have you ever felt scared or anxious about something that might happen? Exercise is a brilliant way to take a step back and refocus our thoughts in a constructive way to help deescalate our thoughts and find a

WHAT CAN I DO?

YOGA

Yoga is an excellent form of exercise that allows us to focus on inner emotions whilst strengthening and stretching all the muscles in our body. Yoga has been found to create a long lasting increase in the production of brain chemicals that increase mood and reduce anxiety. The use of meditation in yoga practices also reduces the activity in our amygdala, thereby reducing emotional reactivity and increasing emotional stability.

You don't need pricey classes to get started—free sessions are easily accessible on webpages like YouTube and are accessible for beginners to absolute pros!

Examples:

Breathing exercise, sun salutation, power yoga, flexibility stretches, meditation

THE BRAIN

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN

WEIGHTS

WHAT? PREFRONTAL CORTEX
Good for: complex thinking, reasoning, multi-tasking, problem-solving

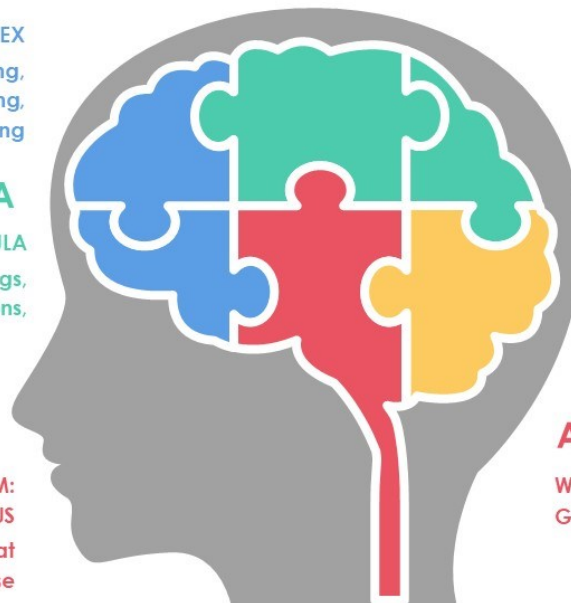
YOGA

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H.I.I.T.

WHAT? LIMBIC SYSTEM:
HYPOTHALAMUS
Good for: appetite regulation, threat response



SPORTS DRILLS

WHAT? PREFRONTAL CORTEX & BASAL GANGLIA
Good for: attention, task switching, inhibition

WHAT? PARIETAL LOBE
Good for: visual-spatial processing

WHAT? CEREBELLUM
Good for: attention

AEROBIC EXERCISE

WHAT? HIPPOCAMPUS
Good for: memory

EXERCISE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT FOR OUR BRAIN AS IT IS FOR OUR BODY

For maximum brain functioning it is recommended that we should engage in 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every week. This can be broken up to suit you, for example 30 minute bursts 5 days a week. As a rule thumb its best to get your body moving once a day, if it's a walk with a friend, a dance in the kitchen or a kick about after school.

WHAT ARE YOUR THREE FAVOURITE TYPES OF EXERCISE?

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----

BUILDING PERSONAL RESILIENCE

BREATH

Days without water, weeks without food but minutes without breath...

MASSAGE

Relaxation and removing tension



HYDRATION

How do you know if you are hydrated? Check the colour of your urine!

TALK TO SOMEONE

A problem shared is a problem halved.

MUSIC

Distraction and relaxation

EAT WELL

Sustainable energy equips us for being better able to manage stress. If you are putting junk food in your body you are putting it under more stress.

RELAXATION

Music, meditation, guided relaxation, yoga, etc.



BUILDING PERSONAL RESILIENCE

HOLIDAY

Use your leave to take breaks and holidays to rest and restore.



SLEEP

Introduce a sleep routine – think of preparing a child for sleep...

EXERCISE

When we get stressed our body is preparing for a physical response. Any kind of physical activity burns off the stress hormones (adrenaline and cortisol). It also releases feel good hormones like serotonin and endorphins

HOBBIES

Activities outside of school and home can be a great way to break up the week and alleviate stress

BREAKS

Taking regular breaks throughout the day resets the system and has been proven to enhance our productivity



EAT FOR WELLBEING NOT FOR STRESS

ASSESS YOUR DIET		
DO YOU HAVE A HEALTHY BALANCED DIET?	Y	N
DO YOU EAT REGULAR MEALS (AT LEAST THREE A DAY)?	Y	N
DO YOU EAT BREAKFAST (WITHIN AN HOUR OF WAKING UP)?	Y	N
DO YOU EAT FIVE PORTIONS OF VEGETABLES PER DAY?	Y	N
DO YOU EAT RED MEAT LESS THAN TWICE PER WEEK?	Y	N
DO YOU EAT TAKEAWAY FOOD LESS THAN ONCE PER WEEK?	Y	N
DO YOU EAT FRESH, HOME-PREPARED MEALS MORE THAN PRE-PREPARED READY MEALS?	Y	N
ARE THE MAJORITY OF YOUR MEALS PREPARED WITHOUT A MICROWAVE?	Y	N
TOTAL		

MY PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

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

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

Enter your commitments to log your actions and progress

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Hub of Hope

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

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

Beyond Shame/Beyond Stigma

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

Shout

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

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

Remember: It's YOUR Bridge!

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



MY ACTION PLAN — 30 DAY CHALLENGE

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

WRITE DOWN A PLAN WITH 3 POINTS OF ACTION—THIS IS ABOUT LIFESTYLE BALANCE – WHAT DO YOU AIM TO ACHIEVE OVER THE NEXT 30 DAYS AS A RESULT OF THIS WORKSHOP?

Action Point 1 (Self-Maintenance: to sustain yourself)

Action Point 2 (Self-Development: to educate or challenge yourself)

Action Point 3 (Fun: to relax and enjoy yourself)

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

How and how often will you stay in touch?

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK AT THE END OF THE 30 DAYS

ABOUT THE STRESS MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

The Stress Management Society exists to create a happier, healthier and more resilient world through our passionate approach to reducing stress, improving mental health and promoting wellbeing.

A catalyst for transformation, we provide expertise to individuals and organisations to diagnose and assess their current situation, develop a strategic action plan and maintain an effective culture of wellbeing through continuous improvement.

Over the last 20 years The Stress Management Society has worked with a diverse mix of individuals, teams and organisations across the world who have been inspired by our energy and commitment.

Our bold and straight-talking approach enables us to cut through stigma and uncover the root causes and effects to tailor solutions for the most effective results.

Our work brings improvement to physical and mental health, relationships, performance, productivity, resilience, creativity, morale and the ability to cope with change and adversity.

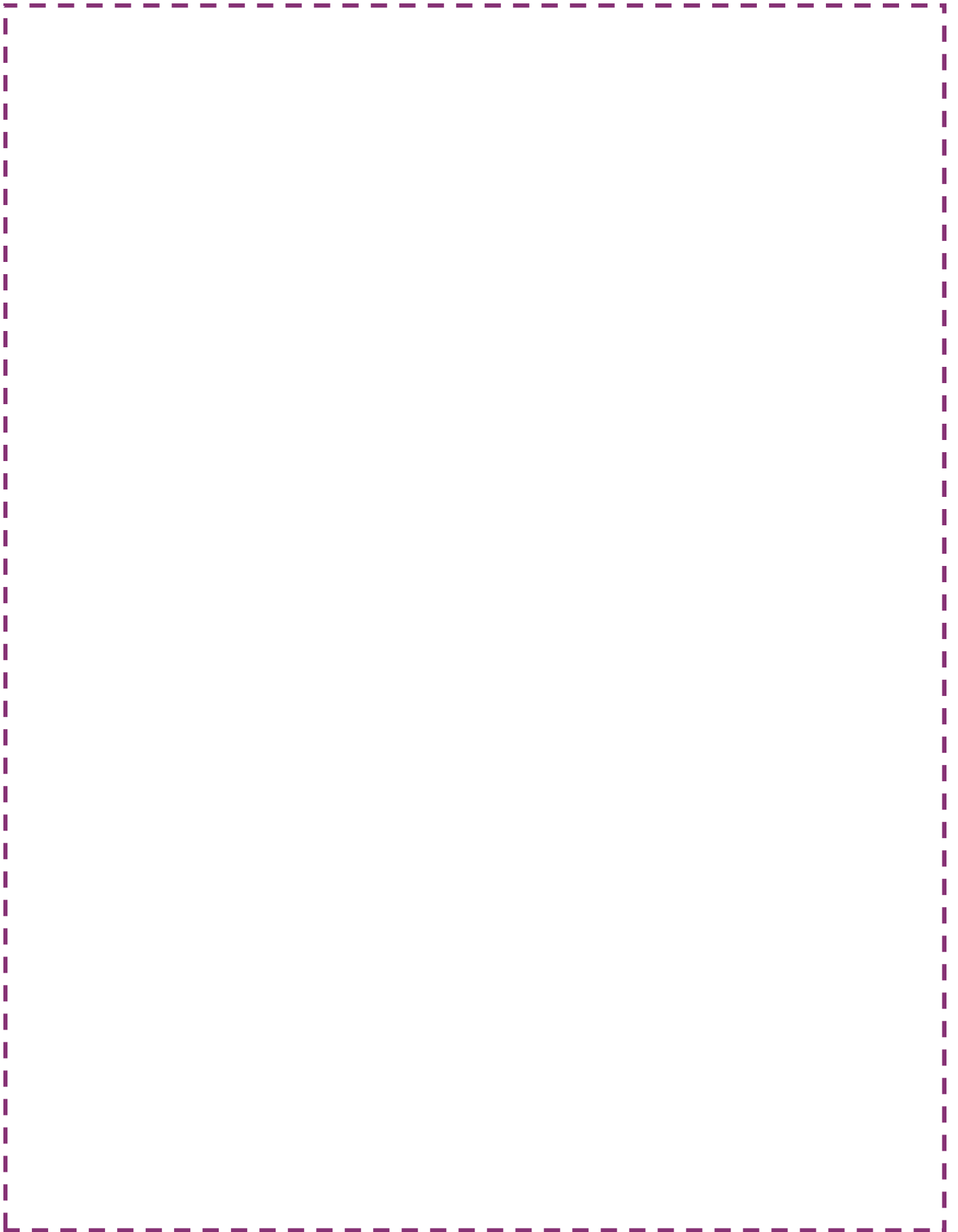
The Stress Management Society are committed to changing lives and a proportion of our commercial revenue helps to fund the work we do with social causes.

For more information or to book a workshop or a coaching session see www.wellbeing.work call 0203 142 8650 or email info@stress.org.uk

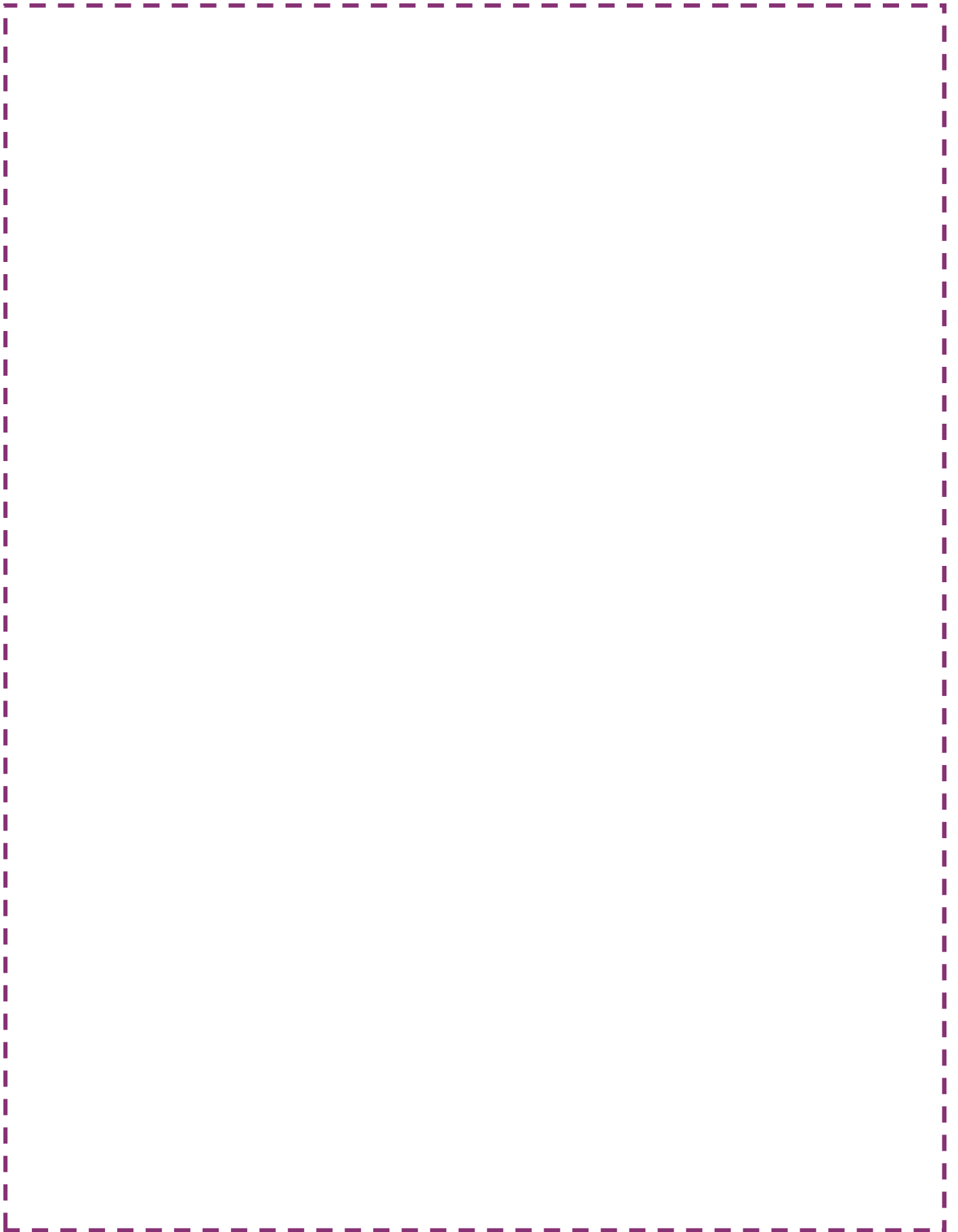
If you want to promote wellbeing in your company using branded stress management products, go to www.stress.org.uk



NOTES



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.

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

We have supported many organisations, including:

