International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

Excelling Under Pressure

mace

DRAGADOS

For further information, please contact

International Wellbeing Insights — 0203 142 8650

support@stress.org.uk

International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

Contents

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

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.

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

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.

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

IS 'STRESS' GOOD OR BAD? THE PERFORMANCE ZONE

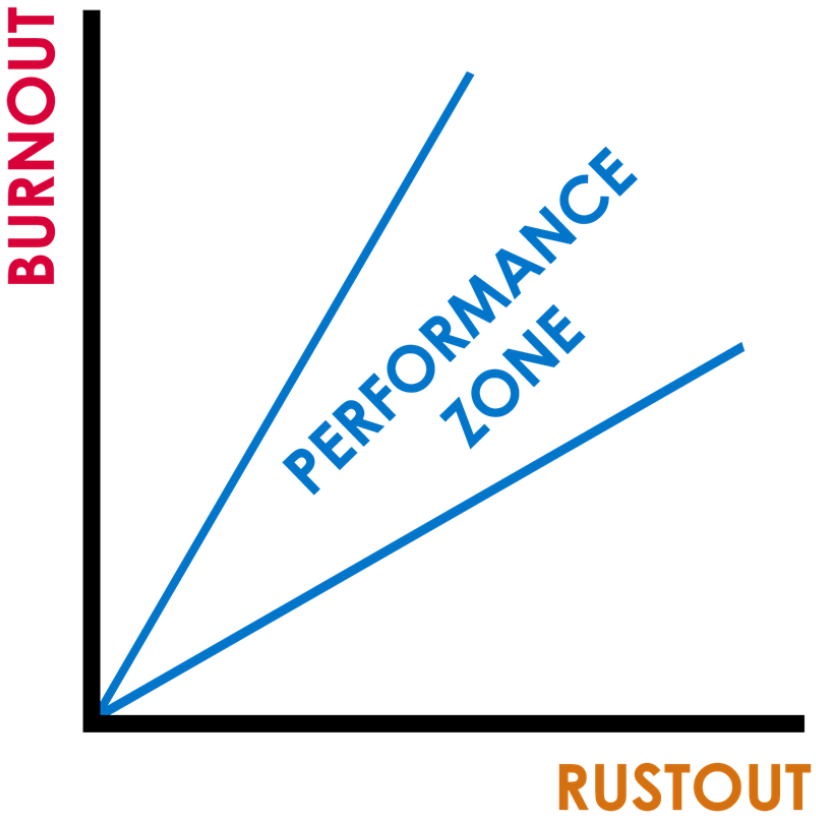
Manageable levels of stress are not a problem, a stress-free environment is not the ultimate goal - we need pressure in our lives in order to perform. The issue is long stages of inactivity causing distress from stagnation or prolonged exposure to high levels without a rest or reset period.

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.



© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

STRESS EVALUATION EXERCISE

International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

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? (How you think)

C. Emotionally? (How you feel)

---

4. How often does it affect you?

---

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

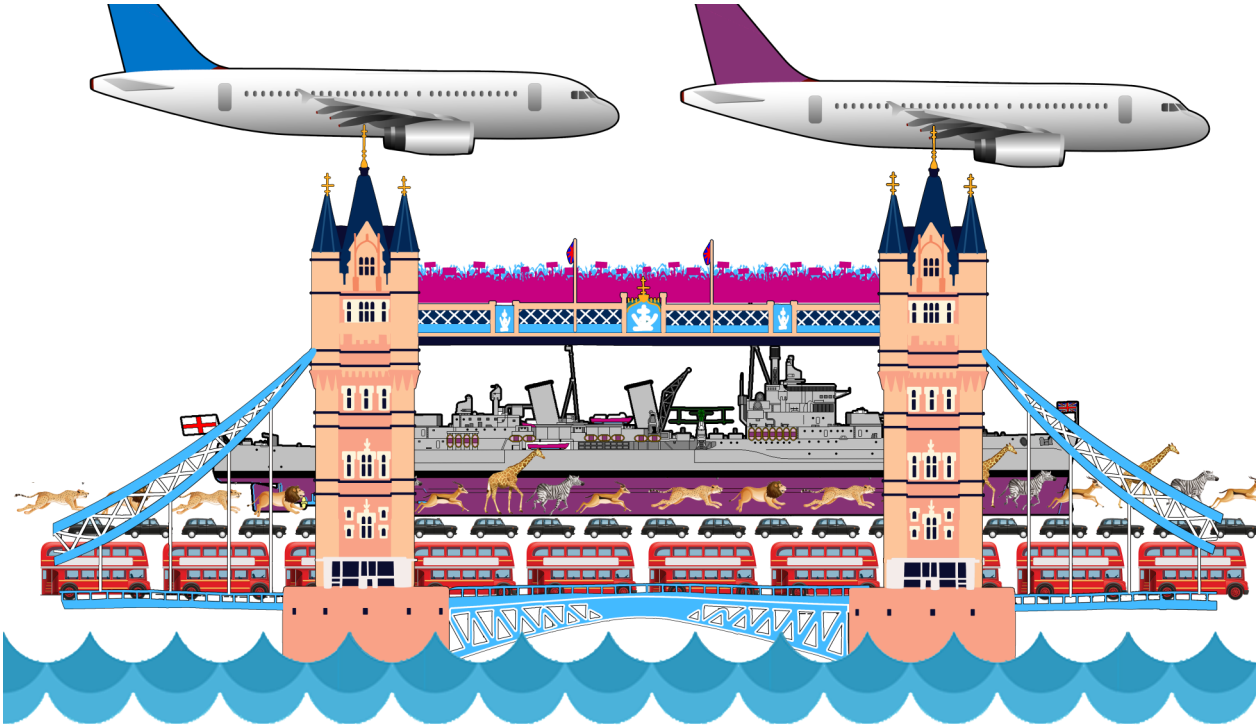
---

6. How could you deal with it instead? What could you do differently?

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

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."

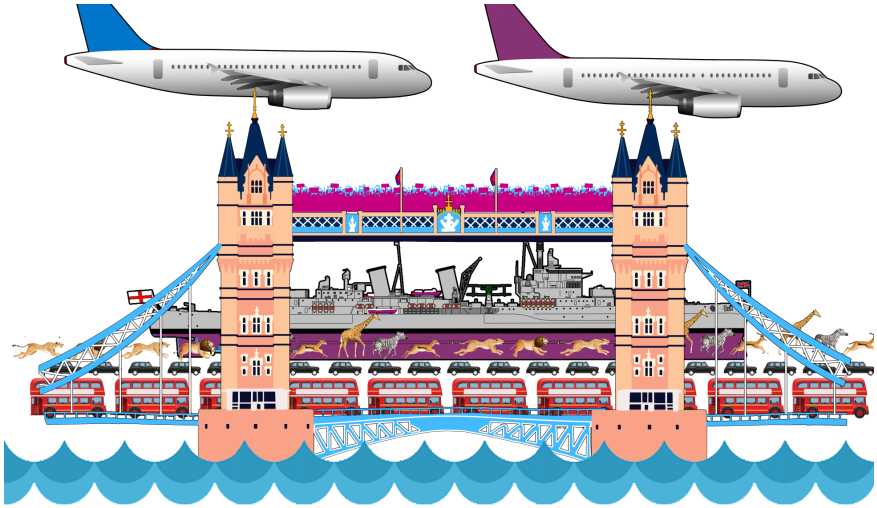
The International Wellbeing Insights uses 'The Bridge' analogy to approach the topic of mental health, wellbeing and stress. When a Bridge is carrying too much weight, it will eventually collapse. It is possible to see the warning signs before this happens, 'The Bridge' would bow, buckle and creak.

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.

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

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 YOUR BRIDGE.**

---

2. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS THAT YOU DISPLAY WHEN YOUR BRIDGE IS BOWING AND BUCKLING.

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

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.

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

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).

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

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

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

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

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.

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

THE FIVE DAILY ESSENTIALS

WATER

AT LEAST 2 LITRES PER DAY

SLEEP

RESET, RESTORE AND REPAIR

OUTDOORS & EXERCISE

GET OUTDOORS, GET SOME LIGHT

PEOPLE

HEALTHY CONNECTIONS MAKE HEALTHY MIND, BODY & SOUL

DIET

EATING CLEAN FEELS CLEAN

WATER

WATER INTAKE AFFECTS OUR BODY, MOOD AND COGNITIVE FUNCTION. YOU SHOULD BE DRINKING ENOUGH WHERE YOU DON'T EVER FEEL THIRSTY.

OUTDOORS AND EXERCISE

SUNLIGHT IN YOUR EYES AS SOON AS YOU CAN AFTER WAKING UP LEADS TO ELEVATED MOOD, IMMUNE FUNCTION AND FOCUS ALL DAY AND BETTER SLEEP AT NIGHT.

DIET

A DIET THAT IS PACKED WITH NATURAL FRESH PRODUCE HELPS TO LOWER THE RISK OF MANY CHRONIC DISORDERS LIKE CANCER, OBESITY, CARDIOVASCULAR PROBLEMS AND DIABETES. EATING CLEAN FEELS CLEAN.

PEOPLE

WE ARE A HERD SPECIES. SOME OF LIKE TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HERD, SOME ON THE OUTSKIRTS, WHILST SOME OF US PREFER TO KNOW IT'S THERE IF WE NEED IT!

SLEEP

SLEEP HAS MASSIVE BENEFITS ON OUR PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH. WE RESTORE, REPAIR, AND PROCESS DURING SLEEP.

Source; Andrew Huberman PhD

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

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?

WATER

I drink enough to keep my mind and body sharp

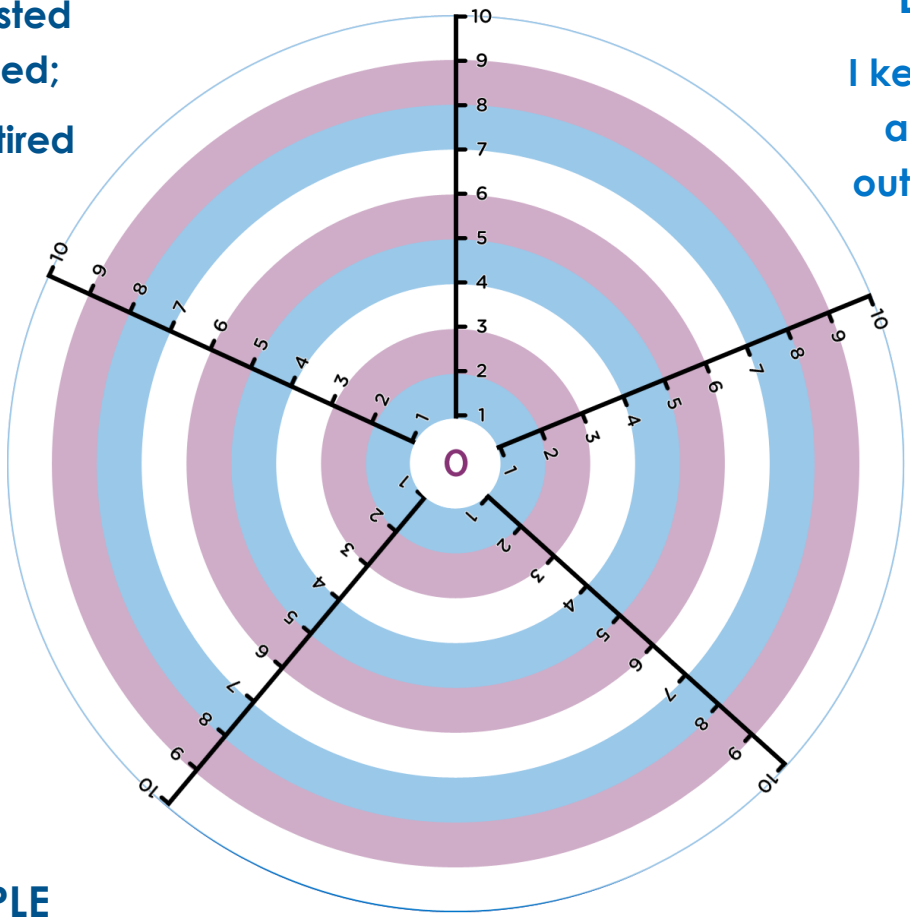
SLEEP

I am fully rested and refreshed;

I rarely feel tired

OUTDOORS & EXERCISE

I keep my body active: I am outside for long periods



PEOPLE

I keep connected to a variety of friends and family that I can rely on and who can rely on me

DIET

I keep my body fed well with lots of fresh food

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

SUPPORT RESOURCES

CONTACT CLAIRE

To be guided to the correct support resource for your organisation,

email: **claire.douglas@macedragados.com**

SAMARITANS

The Samaritans 24-hour service.

Call: **116 123**

Email: **jo@samaritans.org**

C.A.L.M.: CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY

Free and confidential helpline and webchat – 5.00pm-midnight, 7 days a week

Call: **0800 58 58 58**

Webchat: www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WELLBEING INSIGHTS

Big ideas, inspiring stories, robust ethics and strong principles and a values driven approach have been at the heart of our organisation since our inception.

We believe that wellbeing isn't just a perk—it's the foundation of a thriving, high-performing, and sustainable workplace. Our mission is simple but powerful: to empower organisations and individuals to take control of their wellbeing, creating cultures where people don't just survive but truly thrive. We've been at the forefront of workplace wellbeing since 2003, helping organisations worldwide build happier, healthier, and more resilient teams. But we're not here to tick boxes or promote one-off initiatives—we're here to drive meaningful, lasting change.

Our mission is to maximise physical, mental, emotional and social health as well as improving relationships, performance, productivity, creativity, morale, recruitment & retention by creating a resilient workforce and equipping them to cope with change and adversity.

For more information visit
www.wellbeing.work and www.stress.org.uk.

call 0203 142 8659 or email info@stress.org.uk

© International Wellbeing Insights LTD 2025
Tel 020 3142 8650; Web www.wellbeing.work Email support@stress.org.uk;
Reproduction in any form without the written consent is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

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

Visit Us On:
www.stress.org.uk
www.wellbeing.work

We have supported many organisations, *including:*

Hilton · NHS · SMBC · Allianz · Shell · Garrett Advancing Motion · Google · PHILIPS · DRAGADOS · L&Q · Hackney · Santander · DHL · HM Treasury · England