International Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing

Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS

SKILLS SESSION:

H.O.P.E. MODEL

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WELCOME

Stress is part of life — it's how we respond to it that matters.

In today's fast-paced world, pressure is everywhere: demanding deadlines, shifting expectations, and constant change. A manageable level of stress can drive performance. But when stress becomes persistent and overwhelming, it can have serious consequences for our health, focus, and productivity.

According to the CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work 2023 report, stress is the leading cause of long-term absence in the workplace. Meanwhile, the ONS reports that 1 in 6 working-age adults experience symptoms of anxiety or depression at any given time.

The total cost of poor mental health globally is estimated to be $1 trillion each year according to UN health experts.

We know now that stress is not just a feeling — it affects the entire body. It's linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, digestive issues, insomnia, anxiety, burnout, and even weakened immunity. If left unmanaged, the toll is both personal and professional.

This programme is designed to help you build resilience, boost self-awareness, and take back control.

You'll learn to spot the signs of unhelpful stress, manage pressure more effectively, and respond in ways that protect your wellbeing and performance.

Whether you're leading a team, juggling multiple priorities, or simply trying to stay on top of daily demands, the tools in this programme will help you find balance — so you can not just cope, but thrive.

Welcome Aboard

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H.O.P.E. MODEL

The HOPE Model is a framework designed to help people and organisations build resilience, wellbeing, and a more positive outlook in the face of challenges.

Through Holding space, Owning our choices, Protecting our peace, and Embracing togetherness, the model reminds us that strength is not the absence of struggle — it is how we show up, for ourselves and for others, despite it.

By providing practical tools for turning setbacks into stepping stones for growth, the model reminds us that no matter how difficult things may feel, there is always a pathway forward – and with the right mindset and environment, hope can be cultivated and sustained.

Key Aspects of the H.O.P.E Model:

- Acceptance of reality – Strength begins with recognising when something is difficult instead of denying or minimising it.
- Agency in adversity – Even when circumstances feel overwhelming, we always retain the ability to choose our focus, actions, and responses.
- Boundaries as protection – Safeguarding your mental and emotional wellbeing is not selfish; it's essential for resilience.
- The power of connection – Support networks, shared experiences, and community foster healing and collective strength.

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H.O.P.E MODEL

Example in Scenario:

Amy is feeling overwhelmed at work. Deadlines are piling up, her inbox is overflowing, and she feels like she's letting everyone down.

1. Hold Space

Instead of pushing down the stress, Amy pauses and admits to herself: "This is a lot, and it's okay to feel heavy." Acknowledging her struggle brings relief and stops her from spiralling into guilt.

2. Own Your Choices

She recognises she can't control the workload completely, but she can decide to tackle one priority at a time, turn off unnecessary notifications, and ask for clarity from her manager.

3. Protect Your Peace

Amy sets boundaries by limiting after-hours emails, stepping away from her desk for a mindful lunch, and avoiding conversations that fuel negativity. This creates space for calm amidst the chaos.

4. Embrace Togetherness

Instead of isolating, Amy reaches out to a trusted colleague to share how she feels. Their encouragement reminds her she's not alone, and together they brainstorm a plan to share tasks more effectively.

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HOLD SPACE

KEY SKILLS:

- Listen fully – Be present without rushing to fix or judge.
- Validate – Acknowledge and normalise the struggle.
- Show compassion – Offer empathy, patience, and calm presence.

Holding space is about creating room for honesty, vulnerability, and emotion — without trying to change or control it. It means showing up with presence, acceptance, and compassion so that you (or someone else) feel safe enough to acknowledge the struggle. In a world that often pushes us to "keep going" or "stay strong," holding space is the gentle reminder that it's okay to pause and simply be with what is.

Core Components of Holding Space:

1.Presence

Holding space begins with being fully present. This means putting aside distractions and giving your full attention, whether to yourself or someone else. Presence communicates "you matter" and creates a safe foundation for openness.

2. Acceptance

At its heart, holding space is about allowing whatever feelings arise without judgment. It's recognising that struggle is part of the human experience and that it doesn't need to be fixed or explained away to be valid.

3. Compassion

The most powerful element is approaching the moment with kindness. Compassion softens the weight of struggle, reminding us that we are not defined by our challenges but worthy of care and understanding within them.

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What Not to Do When Holding Space:

- Don't attempt to fix – Jumping in with solutions can make someone feel dismissed rather than supported. Be there to provide a shoulder and ear and listen empathetically.

- Don't judge or minimise – Saying things like "it's not that bad" or "others have it worse" shuts down openness.

- Don't make it about you – Shifting the focus to your own story or feelings can unintentionally take away from theirs.

- Don't force a response, instead, encourage it– Let people open up in their own time; pressure can create more stress.

- Don't get distracted – Checking your phone, glancing at emails, or seeming distant signals that you're not fully present.

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HOLDING SPACE IN PRACTICE

Step 1 – Name the weight

Below, write down something that feels heavy for you right now. Don't overthink it — just a word, sentence, or phrase that captures it.

Step 2 – Hold it with acceptance

Underneath, write: "It's okay that I feel this." Pause for a moment and notice how it feels to allow, rather than resist, the struggle.

Step 3 – Offer compassion

Write a kind response to yourself, as you would to a friend in the same situation. For example: "You're doing your best" or "This doesn't define you."

Step 4 – Reflect

Ask yourself: What shifted in me when I acknowledged instead of avoided this struggle?

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OWN YOUR CHOICES

KEY SKILLS:

- Discernment – The ability to separate what's within your control from what isn't.
- Intentional decision-making – Choosing actions that align with your values and priorities.
- Accountability – Taking responsibility for your choices without slipping into blame or excuses.

Owning your choices is about recognising the power you have, even in difficult situations. While you can't control everything around you, you can decide how to respond, where to focus your energy, and what aligns with your values. Taking ownership turns uncertainty into empowerment.

Core Components of Owning Your Choices:

1.Clarity

Owning your choices begins with getting clear on what matters most to you. When your decisions are guided by your values and priorities, you move with intention rather than reaction. Clarity brings direction even when life feels chaotic.

2. Responsibility

Owning your choices begins with getting clear on what matters most to you. When your decisions are guided by your values and priorities, you move with intention rather than reaction. Clarity brings direction even when life feels chaotic.

3. Empowerment

Owning your choices begins with getting clear on what matters most to you. When your decisions are guided by your values and priorities, you move with intention rather than reaction. Clarity brings direction even when life feels chaotic.

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What Not to Do When Owning Your Choices:

- Don't avoid decisions – Putting things off or waiting for others to decide for you only adds to stress.
- Don't blame others or circumstances – Shifting responsibility takes away your power to create change.
- Don't act on autopilot – Making choices without reflection can lead you away from your values.
- Don't ignore consequences – Pretending decisions have no impact can create bigger challenges later.
- Don't confuse control with perfection – Trying to control everything sets unrealistic expectations and leads to frustration.

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OWNING YOUR CHOICES IN PRACTICE

Step 1 – Identify a situation

Write down something in your life right now that feels uncertain, frustrating, or out of control.

Step 2 – Separate the circles

Draw two columns: one titled "What I can control" and the other "What I cannot control." Fill them in honestly.

Step 3 – Choose your focus

From the "What I can control" column, circle one action you can take today that aligns with your values.

Step 4 – Commit with intention

Write a short statement beginning with "I choose to…" (e.g., "I choose to set clearer boundaries around my time").

Step 5 – Reflect

Ask yourself: How does it feel to step into ownership instead of giving away my power?

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PROTECT YOUR PEACE

KEY SKILLS:

- Boundaries – Know when to say "no" and create space from draining influences.
- Restoration – Actively recharge through rest, reflection, or replenishing activities.
- Discernment of input – Consciously choose what you allow into your mental and emotional space.

Protecting your peace is about creating and maintaining mental and emotional space that supports your wellbeing. It means setting boundaries, choosing what you engage with, and making time for rest and renewal so you can navigate life with calm and clarity.

Core Components of Protect Your Pecae

1.Detachment

Protecting your peace often means stepping back from situations, people, or information that drain your energy. Detachment doesn't mean ignoring responsibilities or emotions; it's about creating a healthy distance so you can respond with clarity instead of reactivity.

2. Mindful Presence

Being fully aware of your thoughts and emotions helps you notice when external pressures or negativity start to seep in. Mindful presence allows you to stay grounded, recognise triggers, and choose responses that preserve your inner calm.

3. Self-Care Prioritisation

Actively engaging in practices that restore and nurture you is essential for long-term peace. Whether through rest, hobbies, reflection, or physical activity, prioritising self-care replenishes your energy and strengthens resilience.

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What Not to Do When Protecting Your Peace

- Don't overextend yourself – Saying "yes" to everything drains your energy and leaves no space for renewal.
- Don't engage with constant negativity – Excessive exposure to bad news, gossip, or toxic conversations disrupts inner calm.
- Don't neglect self-care – Skipping rest, reflection, or rejuvenating activities weakens your resilience.
- Don't suppress emotions – Ignoring feelings doesn't protect peace; it often creates tension that builds over time.
- Don't blur boundaries – Allowing others to consistently overstep can erode your sense of safety and wellbeing.

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PROTECTING YOUR PEACE IN PRACTICE

Step 1 – Identify stressors

On a blank page, write down the people, situations, or habits that consistently drain your energy or create tension.

Step 2 – Set boundaries

Next to each stressor, jot down one clear action you can take to create distance or limit its impact (e.g., muting notifications, saying "no," taking breaks).

Step 3 – Choose restorative practices

List at least three activities that recharge you — it could be walking, journaling, meditating, or anything that nurtures your wellbeing. Commit to doing one today.

Step 4 – Filter input

Write down one source of information or conversation you will limit or avoid this week because it negatively affects your peace.

Step 5 – Reflect

Ask yourself: How do I feel after identifying stressors and taking steps to protect my peace? Leave space to capture your insights and any shifts in energy or clarity.

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EMBRACE TOGETHERNESS

KEY SKILLS:

- Connection – Actively reaching out and fostering genuine relationships with others.
- Empathy – Understanding and feeling with others, appreciating their perspectives and emotions.
- Collaboration – Working together, sharing support, and building collective strength through teamwork.

Embracing togetherness is about recognising the power of community and connection. By reaching out, showing empathy, and collaborating with others, we create support networks that foster resilience, healing, and shared strength. Together, challenges feel lighter and successes become more meaningful.

Core Components of Embrace Togetherness

1.Mutual Support

Offering help and encouragement while also being open to receiving it creates a balanced exchange of care. When we support others, we strengthen trust and deepen connections. Being willing to receive support in turn reminds us that vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness.

2. Shared Accountability

Taking responsibility together for outcomes, actions, and commitments fosters reliability and trust within a group. When everyone owns their part, challenges feel more manageable and successes are more meaningful, reinforcing a sense of collective responsibility.

3. Celebrating Others

Recognising and valuing the achievements, strengths, and contributions of those around us nurtures positivity and belonging. Celebrations, both big and small, reinforce connection, motivate continued effort, and remind us that we thrive best when we lift each other up.

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What Not to Do When Embracing Togetherness

- Don't isolate yourself – Withdrawing from others removes opportunities for support and shared perspective.
- Don't dismiss others' feelings – Ignoring or invalidating someone's experience can damage trust and connection.
- Don't dominate interactions – Taking over conversations or decisions prevents genuine collaboration and mutual support.
- Don't rely solely on others – Expecting others to fix your struggles can create imbalance and strain relationships.
- Don't avoid vulnerability – Hiding your true feelings blocks authentic connection and mutual understanding.

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EMBRACING TOGETHERNESS IN PRACTICE

Step 1 – Identify your network

Write down the people you feel connected to or could reach out to for support — colleagues, friends, family, or community members.

Step 2 – Reach out intentionally

Choose one person from your list and send a message, make a call, or schedule a brief catch-up. Your goal is simply to connect, not solve problems.

Step 3 – Offer and receive support

Reflect on ways you can support them and be open to receiving support in return. Jot down one small action you could take today to help or encourage them.

Step 4 – Celebrate the connection

Write a note of appreciation, acknowledgement, or encouragement to someone in your circle. Notice how taking this step strengthens your sense of community.

Step 5 – Reflect

Ask yourself: How did reaching out, giving, or receiving support make me feel? Leave space to capture your thoughts and insights.

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H.O.P.E. EXERCISE

Jane, a team leader in a small town in South Africa, is feeling stressed. Her company is going through changes, deadlines are tight, and some team members are struggling with low morale. Jane feels torn between supporting her team and keeping projects on track.

Your task: Using the HOPE model, write down how Jane could respond in each step.

H – Hold Space

How could Jane acknowledge her own and her team's feelings without judgment?
Your answer: _____

O – Own Your Choices

What choices can Jane make in this situation that are within her control?
Your answer: _____

P – Protect Your Peace

What boundaries or self-care actions could Jane take to maintain her energy and wellbeing?
Your answer: _____

E – Embrace Togetherness

How could Jane reach out, support, or collaborate with her team to strengthen connection and resilience?
Your answer: _____

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INTEGRATING THE H.O.P.E. MODEL INTO YOUR ROLE AS MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION

As a qualified Mental Health Champion, you already have the skills and confidence to notice when colleagues may be struggling, to start supportive conversations, and to guide people towards appropriate resources. This skills update is about deepening that capacity through the H.O.P.E. model — a practical, human-centred framework designed to strengthen resilience and wellbeing.

The H.O.P.E. model is not a replacement for your existing training, but a way to enrich it. By Holding Space, Owning Your Choices, Protecting Your Peace, and Embracing Togetherness, you bring clarity, compassion, and structure to your role. It equips you to show up with authenticity and to navigate even the most sensitive situations with confidence.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The world is full of diversity, opportunity, and challenge. Many colleagues are navigating stressors linked to rapid change, social pressures, and uncertainty. The H.O.P.E. model offers a powerful response: it helps people pause, take ownership, safeguard their energy, and lean on community — all essential ingredients for resilience in today's world of work.

How to integrate H.O.P.E. into your practice:

- Anchor it in the four principles: Use Hold Space to listen fully, Own Your Choices to empower others, Protect Your Peace to model boundaries, and Embrace Togetherness to build connection.
- Apply it in real time: Whether in a corridor conversation, a team meeting, or a confidential check-in, use the model as a guide for how to respond.
- Model it for others: Let your own behaviour demonstrate H.O.P.E. — by setting boundaries, asking for support, and celebrating community, you inspire colleagues to do the same.
- Reflect regularly: Ask yourself, How am I living H.O.P.E.? Which part of the model do I use most, and which could I practise more?

By weaving the H.O.P.E. model into your daily work, you not only strengthen your impact as a Champion, you also contribute to a culture at Mars where every associate feels valued, supported, and able to thrive.
Thank you for continuing this journey — for investing in your own growth and in the wellbeing of others. Together, we are building a healthier, more resilient future.

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SIGNPOST & SUPPORT

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WORKPLACE RESOURCES

- UHC Medical Members: On-demand access is available for self-help tools to support stress management and emotional wellness.
- Self Care: Personalised self-care resources include mood tracking, meditations, and a roadmap to build life skills and manage mental health at no cost.
- EAP: UHC members can receive three free counselling sessions per incident per year for work, family, and personal challenges, available 24/7.

FOR CALIFORNIANS:

- Self Care: California participants have access to tools for self-care, daily mood tracking, and a personalised roadmap to enhance well-being.
- EAP: Californians also qualify for three free counselling sessions annually, covering stress, legal, and substance-related issues.

AUSTRALIA

- Free, confidential counselling services through EASA Employee Assistance.
- Call 0407 111 003 or make an appointment on the “EASA EAP” app.
- Dedicated counsellors are also available

NEW ZEALAND

- Free, confidential counselling services in partnership with Raise Mental Health.
- Call 0800 735 343 or visit Raise Mental Health.
- More information is available

Go to www.stress.org.uk/avettahandbooks to download the resources deck

NOTES

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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 improve relationships, performance, productivity, creativity, morale, recruitment and retention by creating a resilient workforce and equipping them to cope with change and adversity.

For more information or to book a workshop or a free no-obligation consultation, see www.wellbeing.work or call 0203 142 8659 or email info@stress.org.uk

If you would like more information about stress and how to manage it, visit www.stress.org.uk

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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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We have supported many organisations, including:

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