

Managing Pressure

## Managing Pressure Positively



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Managing Pressure

During the session we will explore:

- The relationship between stress and pressure
- General and personal triggers of stress
- Practical tools to manage stress
- A self-care action plan

Familiarise yourself with the menu bar controls:

- Mute/unmute audio
- Turn video on/off
- Reactions – thumbs up



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### In the chat box

In relation to stress/pressure:

- One thing that's going well
- Your biggest current challenge.

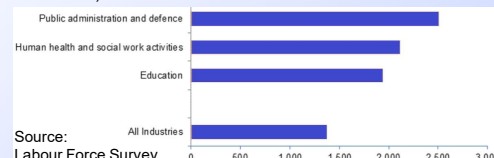
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Why is this important?

- 600,000+ workers affected by stress/depression/anxiety
- 12.8 million working days lost in UK in 2019
- Rates increasing over last 8 years
- Public Admin, Health & Social work and Education



Source: Labour Force Survey 2019


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### Amongst students?

- 21.5% had a mental health diagnosis: Depression (10.2%) and Anxiety (8.4%) Disorders
- 87.7% struggled with feelings of anxiety, 42.8% often or always worried
- 50% have thoughts of self-harm
- 44.7% use drugs and alcohol to cope
- 33.9% experienced a serious psychological issue needing professional help.



Source: Insight Network 2019

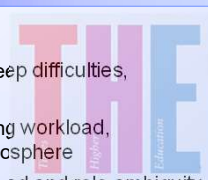
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### Amongst Academics?

- 55% struggled with depression, sleep difficulties, cognitive impairment
- 40% had considered leaving – citing workload, lack of collegiality & cut-throat atmosphere
- Unsettled by role creep, role overload and role ambiguity
- Frustrated with "illegitimate and unnecessary tasks"
- 50% required to carry out tasks they deem "unreasonable" or "made little sense".



Sources: Times Higher Ed  
YouGov 2019


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Right now?


- Frustrations of lockdown
- Concern for health or safety
- Concern for others
- Shopping and meal-planning
- Juggling – competition between roles
- Living with or without people at close quarters
- Uncertainty around work
  - Teaching online
  - Supporting students – exams
  - Ongoing research...



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Worrying doesn't take away tomorrow's troubles,  
it takes away today's peace

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**In the breakout room**

- Introduce yourselves
- What are you most hoping to get from this session?

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What is stress?


What we call "stress" is the physiology of the "fight – flight - freeze" response.

Usually has a specific focus or trigger.

The purpose of this response is to move us quickly...



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**Managing Pressure**

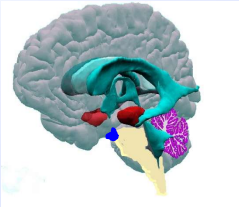
What is stress?

Cerebral cortex & amygdala

Hypothalamus

Pituitary gland

Adrenal gland



Stress hormones – adrenaline and cortisol

Both physical dangers and perceived threats lead to stress hormones circulating in the bloodstream.

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What is stress?

Health and Safety Executive definition:

"Stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.

It arises when they worry they cannot cope."

By it's very nature stress is individual to the person

Something stressful for one person may be fun, exciting or invigorating for another.

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What is stress?

Stress and "pressure" - the same or different?

Imagine I ask you to hold a glass of water...



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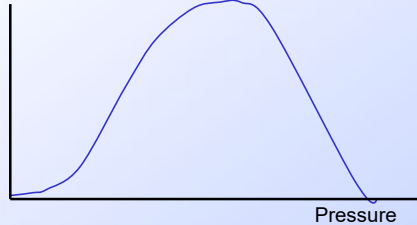
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What is stress?

Do you tend to like external pressure?

Performance



Pressure

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What are possible sources of stress?

**Physical environment:** noise, temperature, dust, pollution...

**Physiology:** physical change (puberty or menopause), illness, lack of sleep, nutrition, aging, exercise...

**Social environment:** deadlines, job stress, "difficult" people, financial problems, relationships, family, bereavement...

**Personal beliefs:** your interpretation of the danger, difficulty or pain in the situation...

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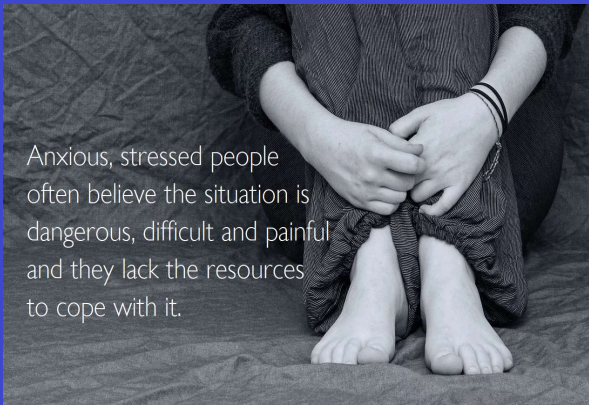
Anxious, stressed people often believe the situation is dangerous, difficult and painful and they lack the resources to cope with it



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Anxious, stressed people often believe the situation is dangerous, difficult and painful and they lack the resources to cope with it.



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Prolonged exposure to stress results in...?

What have you heard, read or experienced as possible long term consequences of exposure to stress?

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Fear and other emotions are designed to have a message for us, to prepare us to take action

We might experience fear or anxiety when:

- "reality" turns out different to our expectations
- we fear we lack resources
- we feel we cannot cope/have no control

 What is the positive intent of the message?

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"Any idiot can face a crisis.  
It's this day-to-day living that wears you out." (Anton Chekov)

|                    |                      |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Misplacing keys    | Arguments            | Traffic jams         |
| Time pressures     | Office Politics      | Gossip               |
| Lack of sleep      | Bureaucracy          | Job dissatisfaction  |
| Waiting            | Loneliness           | Queuing              |
| Relatives/children | Inconsiderate people | Difficult neighbours |
| Car breakdown      | Meal Preparation     | Shopping...          |

- Personal health and safety – selves and family
- Work/research – thesis/papers/deadlines
- Security, funding and timelines

 What are my sources of stress?

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How do you recognise your stress?

Are there "tell-tale" clues?

What does stress do to you?

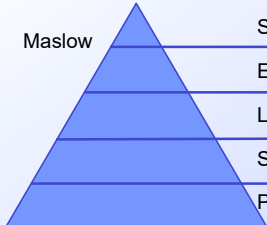
How do you know it's time to take a break?

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We often feel stress when our needs are not met  
A need – without this we are not OK  
Basic needs include food, water, shelter, sleep...



|        |                                      |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Maslow | Self-actualisation: purpose, meaning |
|        | Esteem: respect, acknowledgement     |
|        | Love and Belonging: relationships    |
|        | Safety: shelter, security, safety    |
|        | Physiological: food, water, sleep    |

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We often feel stress when our needs are not met  
What other needs do you have?

- Physiological – Psychological – Relationship – Spiritual...

Getting needs met moves you from grumpy to OK...

What, specifically, are your needs?

- Exercise – walking, running, gym, dance
- Company – friends – family - partner
- Solitude – time alone - meditation
- Stimulation – learning – growth...

 What do you need in order to be OK?

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**In the breakout room**


- What are your current needs?
- What needs are not being met?

Getting needs met moves you from grumpy to OK...

- What do you need to put in place to be OK?

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Tactics for coping with stress


"Good" or bad events can contribute to stress...  
but it's what we do to cope that matters!

Stress resistant personalities:

- have a sense of purpose and direction in their lives
- commitment to work, hobbies, social life & families
- see challenge as positive rather than as a threat.

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What do people do to relieve stress?

What things can you do?

*Learn to relax*

Take up a hobby    *Learn to say no*    Be assertive

Learn yoga    Be more realistic    Listen to music


*Talk with friends*    Go for a walk    Be more active

Focus on what can be done    Ask for help    Take more breaks

Better time management    Talk with Supervisor

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Building resilience...


We may not be able to change or avoid external sources of stress, but we can learn to bounce back!

Simple and effective elements:

- Access to resources – personal & professional
- Sleep – you'll probably need more than you think!
- Exercise
- Support network – personal & professional.

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Building resilience...

1) Find something you can control or influence

Please, don't be a control freak but find something simple, satisfying and meaningful for you...


- complete a task, tidy your room, make a cup of tea - try to avoid controlling other people!

What can you control?

- Your schedule – when you eat, work, play
- Your meals– what you cook/eat
- What you choose to do or focus on
- When you read social media/news...

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Building resilience...

2) Focus on something good – be grateful


We easily see things that are not working and overlook the good stuff

Remind yourself about the bits that do work:

- I have running water and a roof over my head
- I have a job/food/family/health
- at least the internet works, the garden looks nice, the dog still loves me!

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Building resilience...

2) Focus on something good – be grateful

Helpful reframes

I can't go into work -

- I am safer at home, I don't have to travel
- I do have skills, a project, my income...

The house is a mess -

- I have a house and people to share it with, better than being alone...

The kids won't leave me alone -

- I have kids who love and trust me, need me.

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Building resilience...

3) Challenge negative thoughts

When we "catastrophise" we tend to

- blame ourselves
- assume the worst
- assume it will last forever and affect everything

Really??!!! Are you sure that's absolutely true?

What else contributed?

How bad is it?

What have you learned?

What can you do to make things better?

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In any situation, you make the meaning:

One of Many™

How have you created meaning in a situation?

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Building resilience...

4) Reach out to others

When times are tough, we may isolate ourselves...

- Reach out to others
  - who is in your community – personal/professional?
  - Can you schedule regular/as needed meetings?
- Ask for help – what would help, what do you need?
- Share the work – don't try to do everything yourself!
- Share your story (as much/little detail as you wish).

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Building resilience...

5) Schedule time to "worry properly" – limit stressors

- Make an appointment with yourself and at the appointed time, worry! Feel free, indulge yourself but only for a short appointment!
- If reading news or social media is causing stress – limit your access or reading times
- When your time is up, stop and get on with the rest of your life/work.

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**In the breakout room**

What will help build your resilience?

What version of this would help you?

1. Taking control or using influence
2. Focus on the good – gratitude
3. Challenging negative thoughts
4. Reach out to others
5. Schedule time to worry – limit access to stressors

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Building resilience...

6) Choose your focus

Don't allow yourself to "wallow" in worry

– choose to engage fully in something different.

Focus on a task, on being grateful, being at rest...

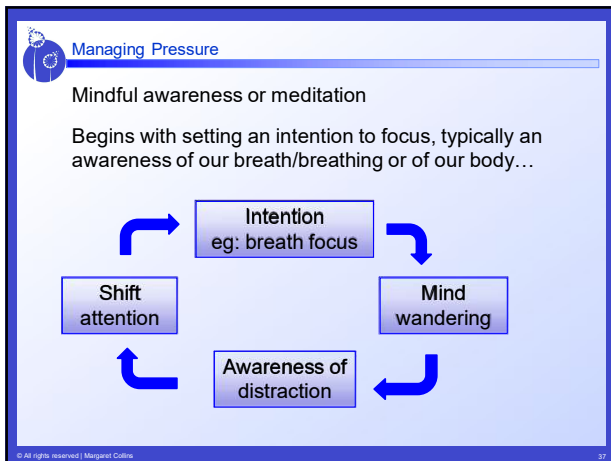
When you notice you're thinking about "it" again, simply remember to return your focus once more to your chosen activity

Will a mindfulness practice work for you?

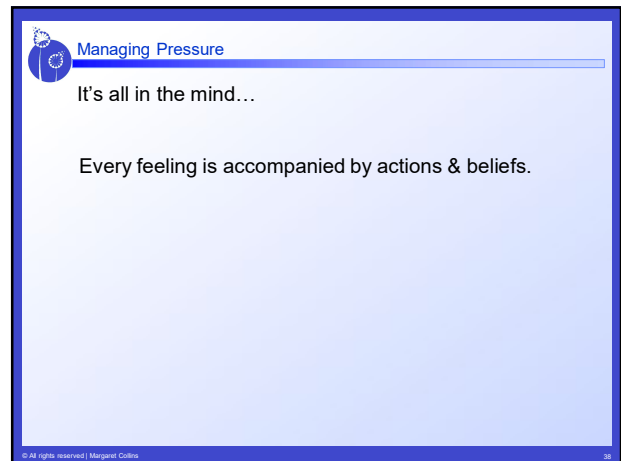
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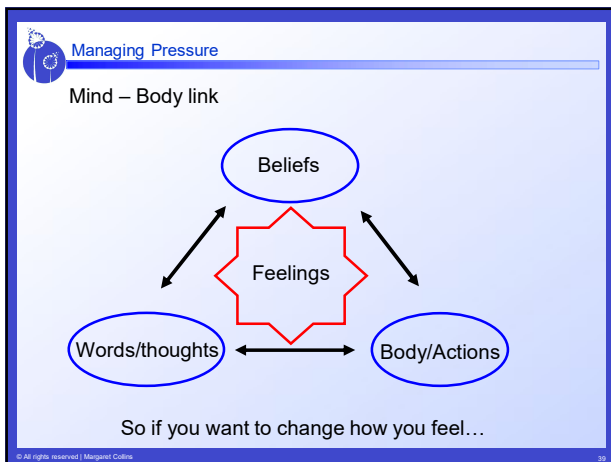




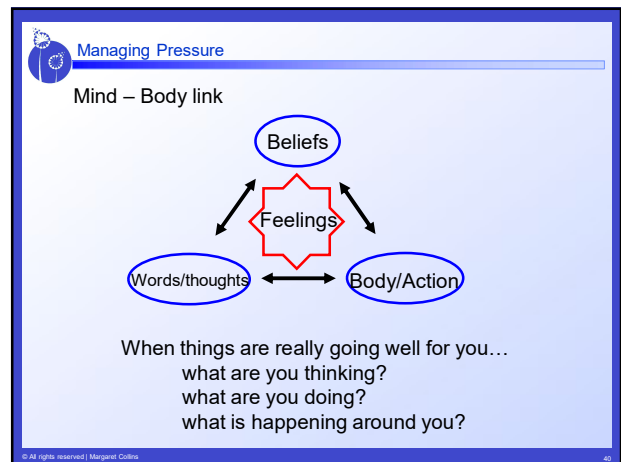
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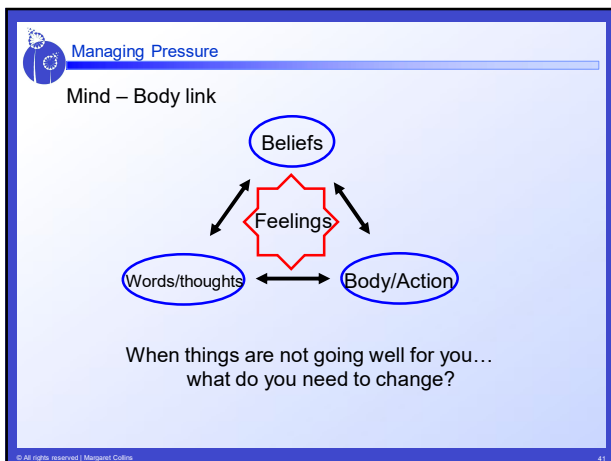
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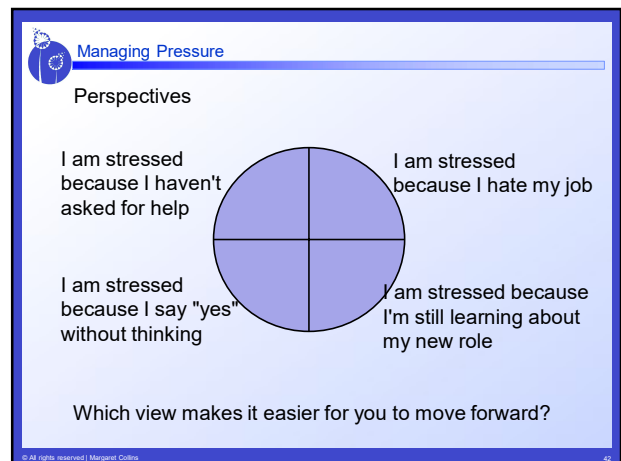
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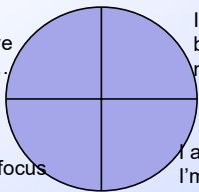
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**Perspectives**



I am stressed because I believe this is "forever"...

I am stressed because I can't do my research/work

I am stressed because I don't focus on a single task

I am stressed because I'm reading too much social media/news

Which view makes it easier for you to take action?

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**Facts or feelings?**

When you feel overwhelmed or stressed, write down the sentences that describe it for you

Then ask, which are facts, which are feelings?

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**Facts or feelings?**

**Facts**

I work 10 hours and spend little time with family/friends

I spend most of my spare time doing things for others

I delegate very little.

**Feelings**

Powerlessness, anxiety, overwork, isolation.

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**Facts or feelings?**

What can you do about the facts?

What would you like to do about the feelings?

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**A different way to look at stress**

Dr Kelly McGonigal – health psychologist...

National survey, 30,000 adults in the USA asked:

- How much stress have you experienced in the last year?
- Do you believe that stress is bad for your health?
- Who died over 8 years from national death records...

43% increased risk of dying –

- If you had a lot of stress in the last year AND
- If you believed that stress was bad for you

183,000 adults died from the belief that stress is bad for you!

[https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en)

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**If that is correct...**

- Heart disease (596,339)
- Cancer (575,313)
- Respiratory diseases (143,382)
- Cerebrovascular diseases (128,931)
- Accidents (122,777)
- Alzheimer's disease (84,691)
- Diabetes (73,282)
- Influenza (53,667)
- Nephritis (45,731)
- Suicide (38,285)
- Septicemia (35,539)
- Liver disease (33,539)
- Hypertension (27,477)
- Parkinson's disease (23,107)
- Pneumonia (18,999)

**Stress beliefs (20,231)**

20,231 deaths a year from the belief that stress is bad for you!

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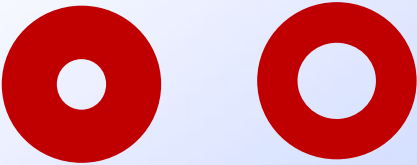
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You can change your beliefs about stress

Normally, during a stressful event your breathing rate and pulse rate increase, blood is pumped to your muscles, arteries constrict...



If you believe that stress is preparing you for the challenge your physical response changes...

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An additional stress hormone...

In addition to adrenaline and cortisol - Oxytocin

What do you know about oxytocin?

"The love hormone":

- Improves mother-child bonding
- Supports in-group affiliation and social bonding
- Increases trust
- Slows heart rate and repairs cardiac muscle...

Your stress response has an in-built antidote!

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A different way to look at stress

National survey, 30,000 adults in the USA asked:

- How much stress have you experienced in the last year
- How much time have you spent helping friends, neighbours or community?
- Who died over next 5 years from national death records

30% increased risk of dying for every major stressful life event  
Except for people who cared for others – zero increased risk

Caring created resilience!

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Knowing what we have discussed...

- Stress is personal
- Our reactions/beliefs make stress better or worse
- Meeting our needs reduces our stress
- We can change the way we feel
- We can choose different actions in & out of work...

My Self-Care Action Plan is...



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During the session we will explore:

- The relationship between stress and pressure
- General and personal triggers of stress
- Practical tools to manage stress
- A self-care action plan.

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If you think you can or you think you can't,  
you're probably right!

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