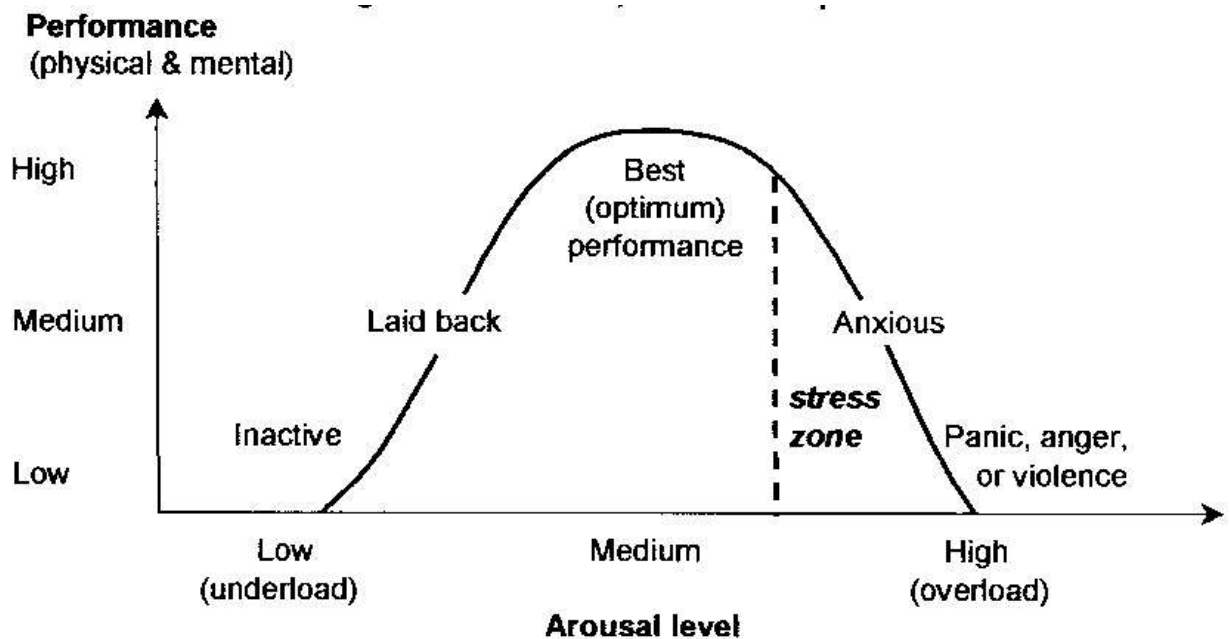


# Staying Well under Pressure

## How Stress Affects the Body

Stress is cumulative. High levels of stress over a period of time will push an individual onto the far side of the stress curve and affect their ability to deal with complex or difficult tasks. Performance will progressively diminish. Health will be compromised.



## Signs of Stress

### Physiological (your body)

- Racing heart beat/pulsing blood
- Tensed muscles
- Elevated levels of stress hormones - cortisol, adrenalin
- Hypertension/headaches
- Diarrhoea/constipation/frequent urination
- Loss of appetite
- Shortness of breath
- Burping. Indigestion or gas pains
- A burning sensation in your chest
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Ringing in your ears
- Grinding your teeth
- Hives or skin rashes
- Nausea/vomiting

### Behavioural (what other people see)

- Carelessness
- Under/over eating
- Aggressive/argumentative
- Increased smoking/ starting smoking
- Withdrawal
- Agitation
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Listlessness
- Hostility
- Accident prone
- Nervous laughter
- Compulsive behaviour
- Impatience

### Cognitive/Perceptual

- Forgetful/preoccupied
- Errors in judging distance/space
- Diminished or exaggerated fantasy life
- Reduced creativity
- Lack of concentration
- Diminished productivity
- Lack of attention to detail
- Orientation to the past
- Diminished reaction time
- Disorganisation of thought
- Negative self esteem
- Diminished sense of life
- Lack of control / need for too much control
- Negative evaluation of experiences

### Emotional

- Tearful / depressed
- Impatient
- Frightened
- Moody / highs and lows
- Feeling of loss / grief
- Anger / short tempered
- Irritable

## Stress Management Strategies

### Learn to say "No"

- You have the right to say "no". The other person has the right to ask.
- You deny your own importance if you say "yes" when you really mean "no".
- Saying "no" does not imply that you are rejecting the other person.
- If you don't want to, or have decided not to, you should say this is the case, and not just say "I can't" or "not able to".
- You may choose to offer reasons, but don't make excuses.
- Saying "no" is a skill. It is something that you can improve on.
- Saying "no" and not feeling guilty can be a habit which helps you grow as a person.
- Don't be overly apologetic.
- When you say "no" you will have more time and energy to "yes" to the things you really want.

### Manage your own resilience

- Slow down, breathe and move more slowly
- Stretch - to reduce muscle tension - do regular exercise
- Chunk your work - one task at a time rather than too much multi-tasking
- Minimise interruptions - turn off your mobile for a period of time
- Take regular breaks - to be and stay refreshed
- Cross-train - mix your activities from high intensity to less taxing work
- Schedule treats - have something reliably pleasant to look forward to each week

- Ensure you know what your real problem is - heavy drinking, gambling, obsessional behaviour need professional help.

### **Proactively manage the future**

- Listen to the early warning signs
- Look after yourself - be proactive / preventative
- Manage your own stress
- Call your Employee Assistance Programme provider

Source: *David Winsborough on Resilience Training*