THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Social and
Political Science

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICE + SKILLS + EMPLOYABILITY

WELLBEING HUB

STRESS MANAGEMENT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO YOUR EXPERIENCE OF STRESS AND MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Laura Malik
Wellbeing Adviser
Counsellor & Psychotherapist MBACP

SESSION ETIQUETTE

- Please have your cameras on if you are comfortable
- Please keep your microphones muted until asked to participate
- If your camera is on, please ensure appropriate dress
- Please be respectful of others if they are contributing to discussion
- Abusive or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated and you will be verbally asked to stop and subsequently removed from the workshop if you continue

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

1. Define stress
2. Understand the purpose of stress
3. Explore techniques for coping with stress

WHAT IS STRESS?

- Take a moment to identify what 'stress' means to you…

Panic

Anger

Nervous

Sweating

Heart Racing

Speechless

STRESS DEFINED

- **Stress:** When *demands* exceed our *abilities* to cope.
- **Stressor:** A specific problem, issue, challenge, personal conflict.
- **Stress Reaction:** Your *response* to a given stressor.

Common Stressors:

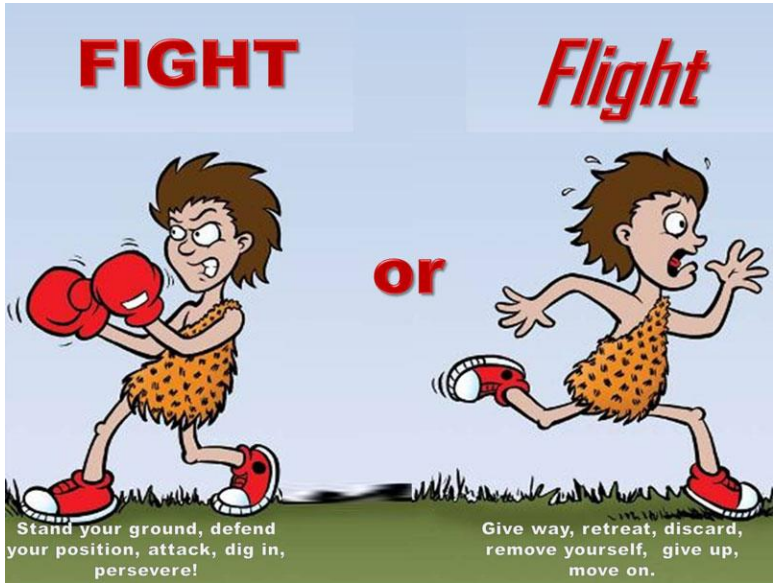
- Finances
- Personal expectations
- Expectations of others
- Partner/Family/Children
- Job/Placement
- Feeling out of control
- Social Media
- Assessments



INITIAL RESPONSE TO STRESSORS

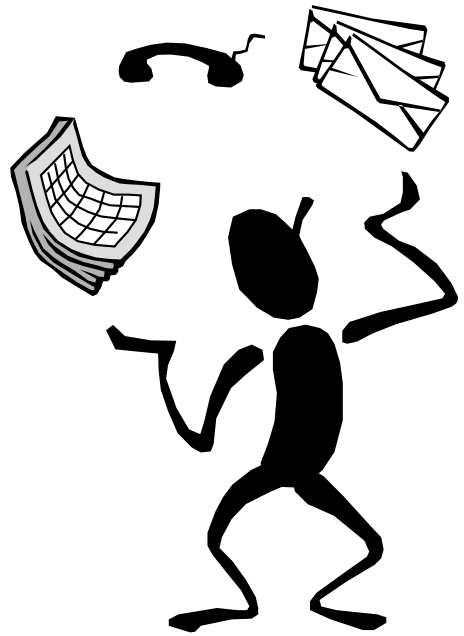
FIGHT OR FLIGHT

- **Fight:** When the body remains in the situation and attempts to defend itself by fighting against the perceived threat.
- **Flight:** When the body flees the perceived threat.
- **When can it be helpful?**



Can Stress/Pressure be Useful?

How do you think stress/pressure could be useful in everyday life?



Can Stress/Pressure be Useful?

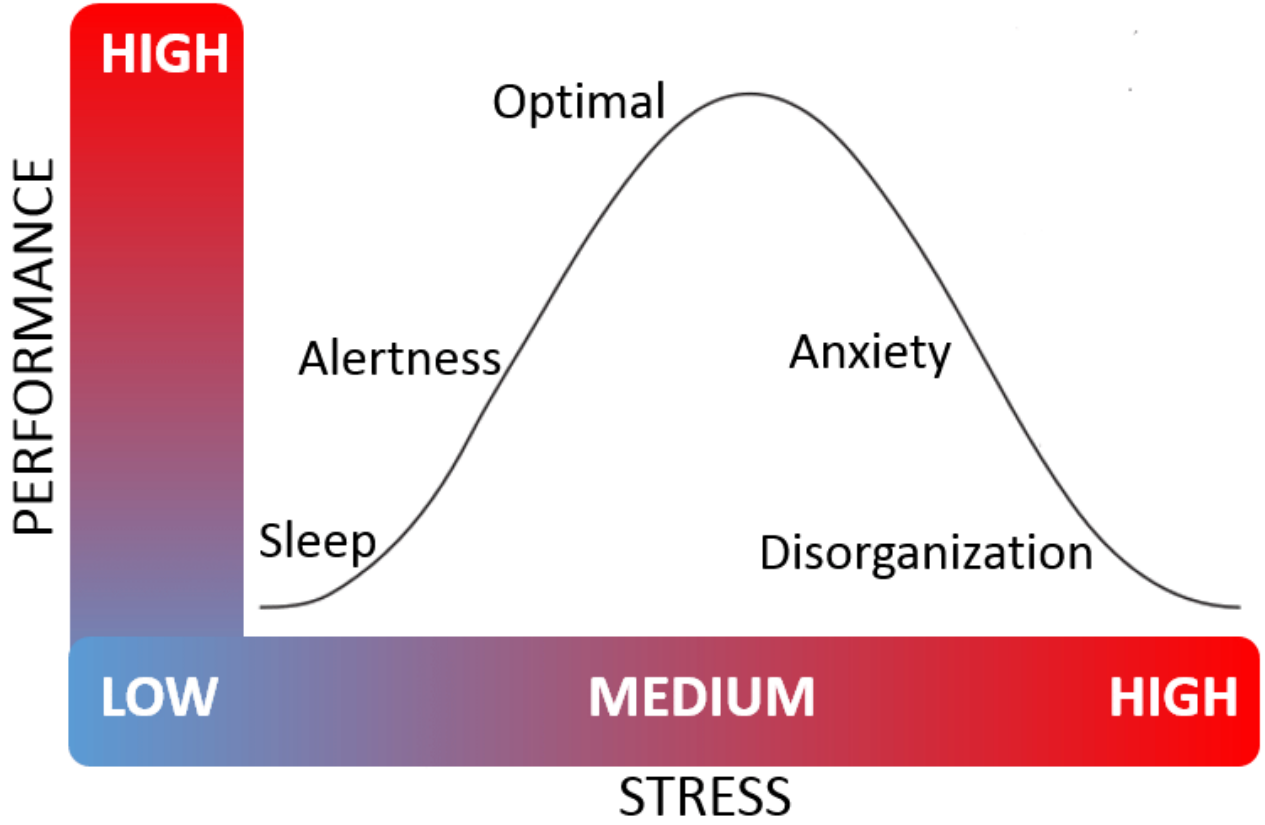
- **Eustress** can be a positive force that improves our performance

Examples:

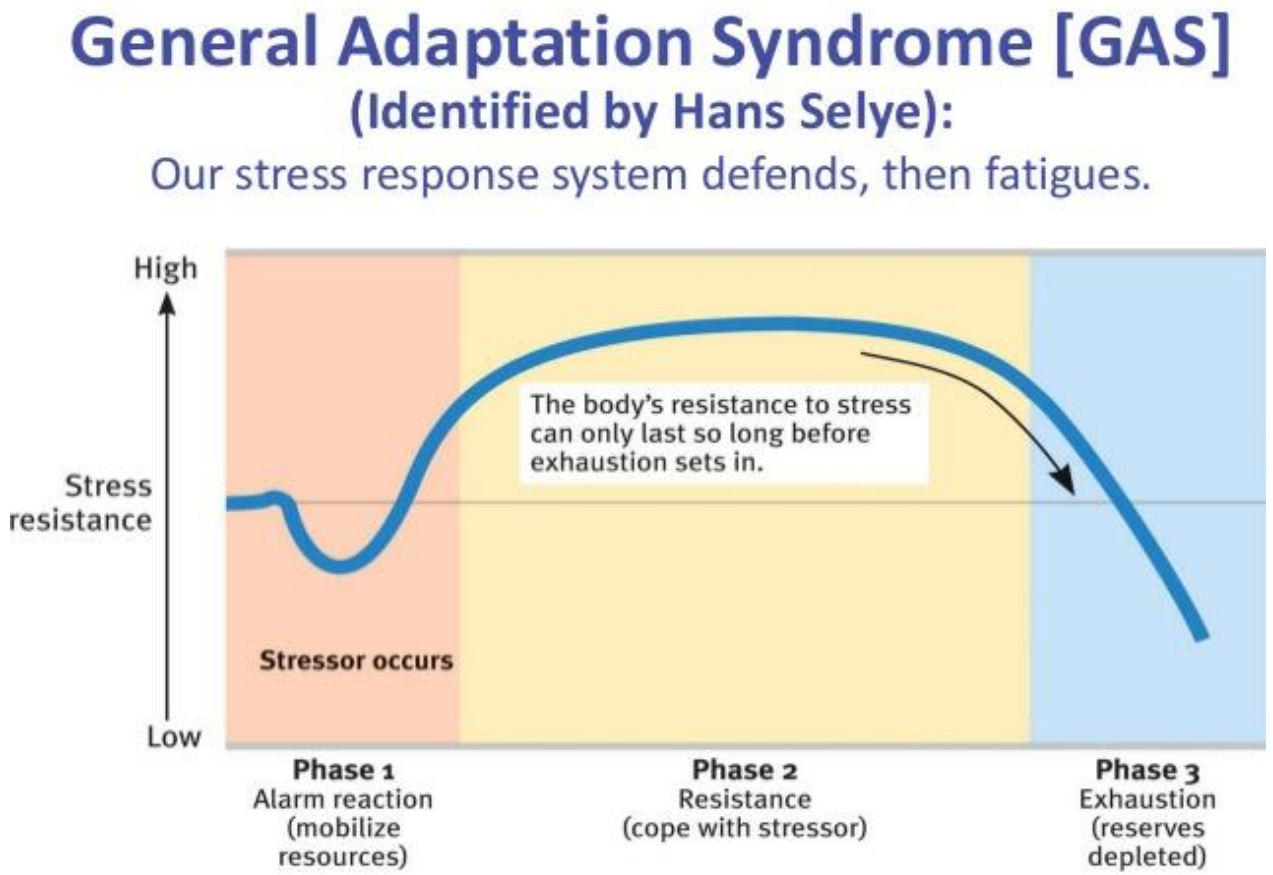
- Crossing a busy road
- Sitting an exam
- Completing a Viva



THE 'STRESS-PERFORMANCE' RELATIONSHIP



EFFECTS OF LONG TERM EXCESSIVE STRESS



Brainstorm

- What are some of the common **physical** signs of excessive presume/stress?

- What are some of the common **mental** signs of excessive pressure/stress?

Physical Effects

- Increased heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Sweaty palms
- Tightness of chest
- Headaches
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea / Vomiting
- Sleep Disturbances
- Fatigue
- Dryness of mouth/throat
- Increased muscle tension
- Trembling/twitching
- Shallow breathing

Mental Effects

- Irritable
- Angry outbursts
- Hostile
- Depression
- Anxiousness
- Lack of interest
- Critical of others
- Insomnia
- Reduced self-esteem
- Impatient
- Withdrawal
- Reduced motivation
- More pessimistic
- Narrowed focus
- Nightmares
- Tendency to cry

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH STRESS?

Open Discussion:

In the past how have you been able to deal with excessive stress?

It's all about stress management

Unhelpful Ways

- Bottle up feelings
- Working longer hours
- Not delegating
- Passive behaviours
- Poor work-life balance
- Perfectionism
- Normalising Unhealthy Behaviours
- Procrastination/Avoidance
- Not taking breaks
- Not talking about it
- Neglecting personal interests
- Substance misuse
- Minimising Impact
- Ignoring Personal Needs

Helpful Ways

- Understand more about stress
  - **Identify your major stressors**

- Adopt a systematic problem solving approach
  - **Define your problem specifically**
  - **Tackle it one stage at a time**

- Recognise and accept your own feelings
  - **Openly express your feelings with others**

COPING WITH STRESS

Develop new behavioural skills:

- Be assertive – communicate your needs
- Proactive planning to beat procrastination
- Time management
- Accept imperfection
- SMART Goals
- Practice rational thinking
- Be aware of 'thinking traps'



COPING WITH STRESS

Social Support

- Ask for help and accept it
- Develop good relationships



Maintain a healthy lifestyle

- Regular physical exercise
- Healthy diet

Make time to relax and enjoy yourself

KEEPING CALM

Other techniques for calming down:

- Relaxation strategies
- Listening to calming music
- Deep breathing
- Gentle, rhythmic movement
- Calming visualisation
- Thought control (stay positive)



RELAXATION EXERCISES

Muscle to Mind relaxation strategies

- Breathing exercises
- Progressive Muscular Relaxation
- Imagery techniques
- Meditation

LETTING GO OF THE TENSION

Relaxation is a skill that has to be learned

- General guidelines:
  - Decide on a regular time to practice
  - Choose somewhere quiet
  - Avoid practicing after eating, or if you are hungry

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Sample breathing techniques

- Try and breathe through your nose, drawing the breath in by using your stomach muscles (pushing your belly out)
- Then breathe out through your mouth
- Try and breath slowly and regularly



Rythmic Breathing

- Take a deep breath and count to 5
- Hold the breath for a count of 5
- Let go of the breath to a count of 5
- Hold the state for a count of 5
- Repeat



Benson's Relaxation

- Continue diaphragmatic breathing
- When breathing out, silently recite the word 'relax'
- Continue silently reciting 'relax' each time you exhale
- Continue this breathing until symptoms have subsided.



Other Breathing Strategies

Sighing with exhalation:

- Hold your breath for 10 seconds. Exhale through your mouth with a slight sigh as you let go of the tension in the rib cage

1:2 Ratio:

- Take a deep, full breath and then exhale fully. Now breathe to a count of 4 on the inhalation and a count of 8 on the exhalation.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PR)

- PMR is a series of exercises that involve contracting a specific muscle group, holding that contraction and then relaxing.
- Progression from one muscle group to another.
- PMR teaches an awareness and sensitivity to what muscle tension feels like.
- PMR helps to reduce worry and anxiety and relieve physical symptoms induced by stress.

TYPES OF PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Active PMR:

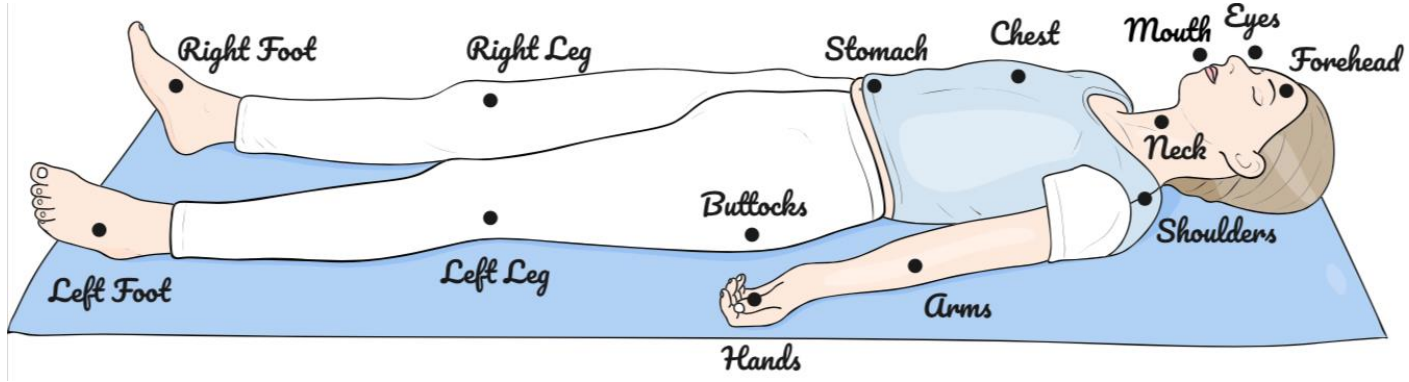
- Tensing muscle groups and then relaxing muscle groups in an ordered fashion.

Passive PMR:

- Relaxing muscle groups without first tensing them.

Practical PMR

- Choose a place that is quiet & free from interruptions
- Practice PMR either sitting or lying down
- Try it on your own….



MEDITATION

- Meditation helps teach a state of deep relaxation and facilitates concentration by disciplining the mind

- A **mantra** is a non-stimulating, meaningless, rhythmic sound of one or two syllables that a person regularly repeats while meditating (e.g. ohmmmm).



IMAGERY

- Imagery involves using your mind and all your senses to create a particular image in your mind.
- By controlling your breathing and visualising a soothing image a state of deep relaxation can occur.
- It can be done anywhere and anytime.
- All it takes is a couple of minutes.
- Now get comfortable, close your eyes and let's practice….



SUMMARY

- Stress can serve a useful function
- However, experiencing too much stress can be unhelpful and potentially damaging to our health.
- Dealing with stress:
  - Psychological pathway
    - (e.g. identifying and challenging thinking styles)
  - Physiological pathway
    - (e.g. breathing exercises, PMR, meditation, imagery etc).

NEED EXTRA HELP?

Here in SPS:

- Your Student Adviser
- Student Development Office

Other sources of University support:

- Student Wellbeing Service (your Student Adviser can make a referral for you)
- Student Counselling Service
- Disability & Learning Support Service
- Chaplaincy
- Self-help resources

THE UNIVERSITY WELLBEING SERVICE

What We Do

- **Promote** mental health and wellbeing for all students of the University
- **Provide proactive and reactive wellbeing support** for students who present with health and wellbeing challenges
- Focus on **prevention and early intervention,** as well as mental health promotion and mental health awareness (reducing stigma)
- **Liaise with specialist services** within and outside the University
- **Non-clinical, short to medium-term** input

Where We Are

- Wellbeing Advisors are based within the Schools
- The Service is based at Bristo Square, in the University Health Centre, 5th Floor



How You Can Access

- Reaching out to get support isn't always easy: you can reach out to us when you need it so we can help you build your support network
  - Online referral form available to anyone via the website: Student Wellbeing Service | The University of Edinburgh
  - Through your primary contact in the School

How we work:

- We support our students as a team, communicating with those services who are involved in your support network.
- We will agree on an action plan with you and support you to achieve your wellbeing goals
- If you are already working with a different wellbeing service (e.g. ResLife), we might not get involved

DISABILITY AND LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICE

- Pre-application visits
- Liaise over building adaptations
- Advise on technology and equipment
- Loan equipment as required
- Support students with temporary injuries
- Support and advise staff in supporting students.
- Discuss a student's support needs and produce Schedule of Reasonable Adjustments
- Circulate schedule to relevant staff
- Engage additional support as needed.

WELLBEING HUB

Questions?

WELLBEING HUB

Remember to sign up for our other wellbeing sessions!

- Monthly live mindfulness workshops
- Check out the Wellbeing Skills Hub
- Reach out: Ssps.student-development@ed.ac.uk

- Skills development workshops & training events
- 1-1 skills coaching
- Funding for research & student initiatives
- SPS Edinburgh Awards & Certificates

IMAGE CITATIONS

Athletes use stress to boost their wellbeing – here's how you can too (theconversation.com)

Top 5 Back to School Stressors and How to Bust Them (thirdage.com)

The "Fight or Flight" Response - Together Therapy (together-therapy.co.uk)

Frogger (Windows, 1997) Walkthrough – YouTube

1: Yerkes–Dodson law. Relationship between stress and performance. | Download Scientific Diagram (researchgate.net)

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) - Theory of Stress ~ Nursing Path

5 Unconventional (but Totally Effective) Ways to Beat... | The Muse

Social Support Networks • Alberni Clayoquot Health Network (achn.ca)

21 Easy Ways to Create a Calm Mind (Without Meditating) (tinybuddha.com)

Sarah Boughtwood | Auckland | ACC Reg | Pregnancy Osteopath (sarahboughtwoodosteopath.co.nz)

4K Vintage Film Head Countdown | Stock Video | Pond5

Daily Well Challenge #8: Breathe! | The Daily Well | Amherst College

Everything you need to know about progressive muscle relaxation to boost your well-being and optimize performance | HPRC (hprc-online.org)

Benefits of Meditation 101: How To Meditate In Less Time (daveasprey.com)