

Stress in a Nutshell

and the connection to Leadership

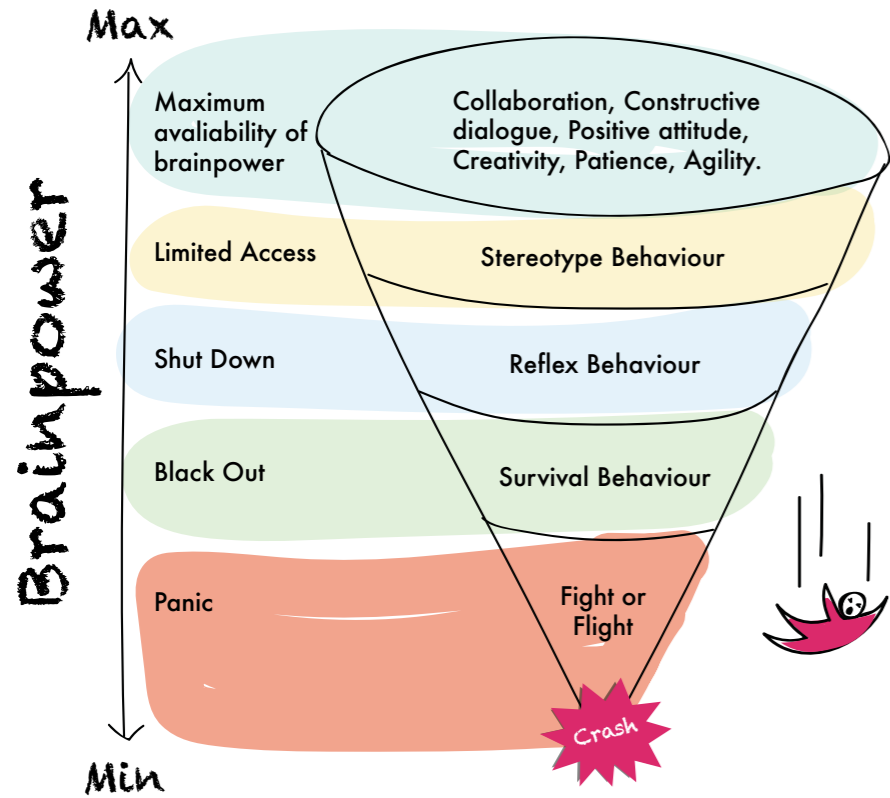


Facts of Stress

Stress blocks the pathways in the brain that need to be open for effective action, decision-making, and learning. The stress response cannot be tamed or trained.

The reaction is automatic and not under the control of the will. It is the managers and leaders job to create an environment that removes stress to enable people to use their brainpower to innovate, learn and be agile.

Reaction to Stress



The Stress Cone

Stress is the body's reaction to demands of various kinds. It is an adaptation and defense mechanism that is initially positive as it prepares us to fight or flight, but harmful if it becomes too strong or long-lasting.

A way to visualize how stress affect the access to our brain is the Stress Cone, which schematically shows the relationship between stress and access to the intellect.

↑ 359%

Increased sick leave due to stress

Sick leave due to stress has increased with 359% between 2010-2017. Source: Försäkringskassan, Swedish administrative authority for social insurance

The Cause of Stress

Stressors

Stress reactions occur in everyone as soon as we feel threatened for any reason. It does not need to be of a physical nature, but can also be experienced threats to, for example, reputation, role in the group or self-esteem.

Stressed individuals, that form teams, can lead to stressed organizations.

External stress

- Pressure of time
- Workload
- Low support
- Official statements
- Conflicts
- Policies and directives
- Relationship problems
- Suppression techniques



Internal stress

- Difficult decisions
- Pressure to perform
- Insecurity in my role
- Loneliness in my role
- Disappointments
- Difficult priorities
- Perceived expectations
- Conflicts between my different roles

Behaviours under Stress

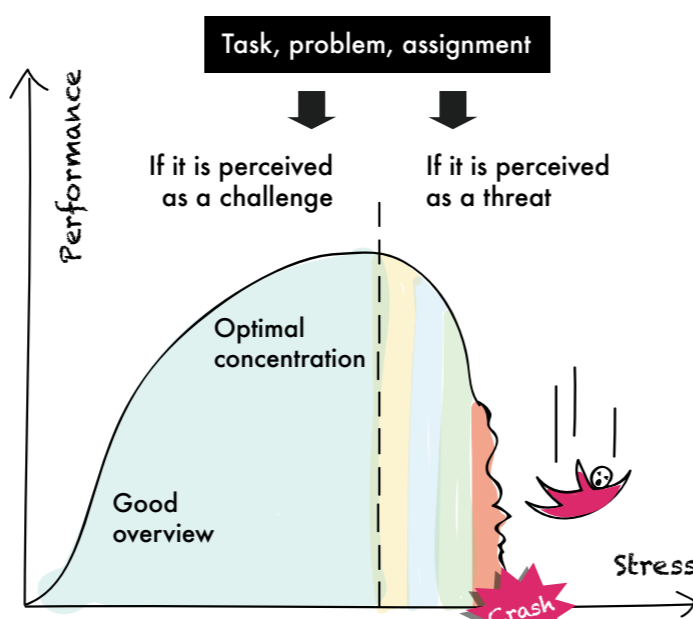
- Generalize based on a small amount of data
 - Have difficulties in reviewing and evaluating information
 - Receive information passively and not actively seek information that can go against your opinion
 - Draw hasty conclusions
 - Not delegate or accept the help of others
 - Overestimate or underestimate problems
 - Lose perspective and have difficulty to see the situation from different points of view
 - Become operational and lose the overview
 - Think about what happened instead of accepting and thinking ahead
 - Try to do many things at once, multitasking
 - Lose perspective of time - prioritize the wrong things and focus on something other than the main goal
 - Give complex or unclear tasks and assignments to others
- Stress reactions also include emotions, such as discomfort, fear, anxiety, anger, shame, and guilt.

The Compassionate Mind

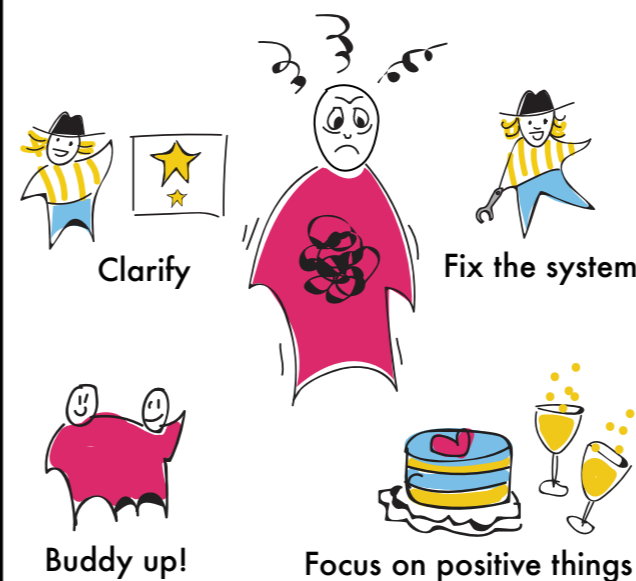


The Stress Curve

If the task or situation is perceived as a threat, the individual moves down in the stress cone - which means less access to the intellect, and it has an accelerating effect. You have maximum capability high up in the cone and not over the top in the



Manage Stress



- Remove the stressors or reduce their effect by temporarily remove stressors. "It's a tough deadline, so first take a coffee and relax"
- Thinking; Good enough for now and safe enough to try
- Help each other; "Take it easy, I'll help you if needed"
- Get a buddy at work
- Take great care of everyone's opportunities to feel success and attention. Focus on positive things
- Seek information to clarify the situation, look into the structures and try to understand what causes the stress
- Reflect together with others about what has happened, is happening and can happen to learn and create action readiness
- Work for an open, objective and friendly climate. If you are a leader, it is of the utmost importance to be "standing on the same side" of the problem and not to be a problem
- Dare to make necessary decisions early to get them out of the way