



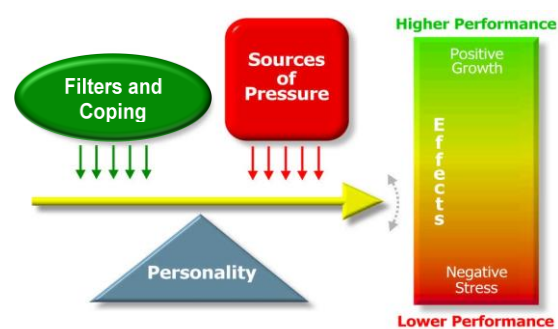
WELLBEING “HEALTHY HABITS”

DEMANDS AND PRESSURE



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In today's world, we are experiencing a period of change and growth, at a speed in which we may not have experienced before. Technology, transport and world affairs are driving this quickening period. It is sometimes referred to as a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Changing, Ambiguous) environment. Some of us enjoy and thrive during this period, for others it is a little more uncomfortable.

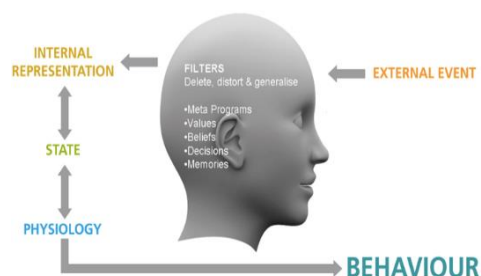


People tend to use pressure and stress as though they were interchangeable terms but they are not. Pressure, which is everywhere, is neutral – it is neither good nor bad.

One of the outcomes, when pressure is perceived to have exceeded our perceived ability to cope with it, is stress. This response is normal and has nothing to do with weakness. It is a survival mechanism and we still need it. It is however only one of the possible responses to pressure. The other key one is growth and development. When pressure starts to feel uncomfortable, we are programmed to respond to it and find new strategies to deal with it. This is how we grow and learn. Pressure acts as a catalyst for extending our range of coping skills.

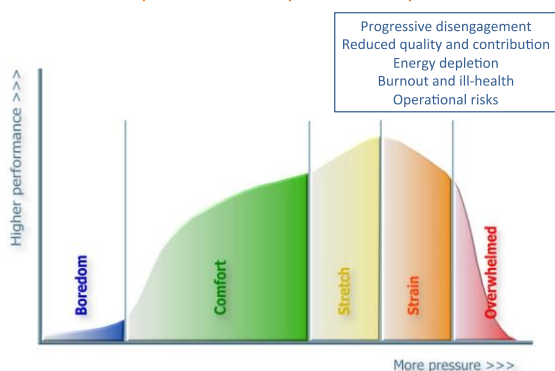
Whether you experience growth or stress from pressure, is dependent on the way you process and filter the experience of it. Our perception of the demands that we feel are made on us therefore plays a big part in shaping the outcomes we get as a result.

As the model to the right shows, we perceive external events through a series of filters that delete, distort or generalise what we see, to build a story about what is happening. This in turn affects how we respond to it. A great deal of the sources of pressure that we experience are outside of our direct control – but the way in which we think about them (and the actions that we take as a result) are very much within our control.



By developing more self-awareness about what you are telling yourself in situations when you feel pressured [your story] you can start to 'spot your state' and intentionally choose to use a different filter – challenge some of those internal stories and choose from a wider range of response options.

What is the impact of all that pressure on performance?



In the Pressure Performance Curve diagram, you can see that when we are in a state of Strain or Overwhelm, our performance dips. When we continuously tell ourselves a 'negative story' about our lives, our work, or what is happening to us, we are pushing ourselves into Strain, reducing our performance. We notice our performance dipping and so we then tell ourselves a worse internal story, placing ourselves under even more pressure and into an even worse state of Overwhelm – this is when we can 'burn out' with stress.

There is an old saying – 'change your story, change your life'. This is how you get back in control of the pressures you face. By changing your story, you change your emotional state (how you feel about what's going on), which means you could keep yourself out of Overwhelm and even out of Strain if you work at it enough.

A simple tip to try to help you stay in control, so that you have a better chance of being able to choose the right emotional and practical response in pressurised situations is 'Traffic Light Coping'.

This gets you into the right place to be able to choose a different internal story and behave differently.



- STOP** – notice your mental state and internal messaging
- CHANGE** your physical state
get up – walk around – move the major muscles
- GO** – Ask 'What's my story?' and then 'What's