

Stress Management & Productivity

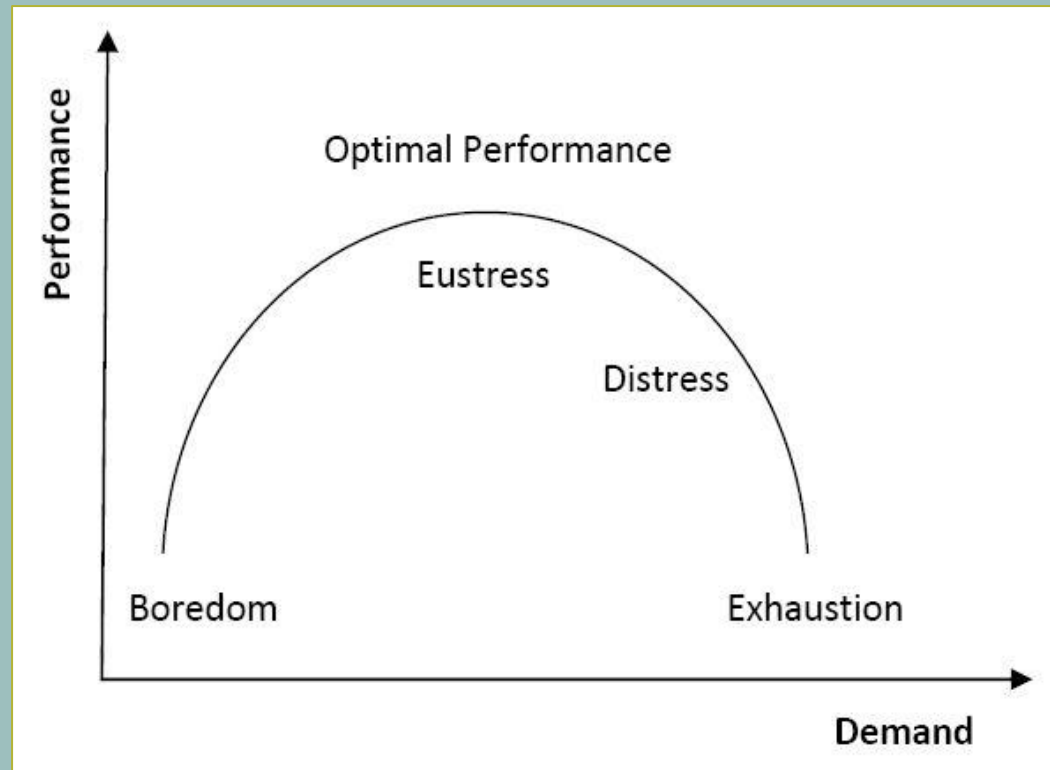
Stephani Jahn, PhD



**Where ya
going with
that load?**

Stress & Productivity: What's the connection?

- Optimal level of stress helps with productivity – not too high, not too low
- **Where are you on this curve?**



Tuning in

- How do you know when you are stressed?
- Which of these signs fit you?
 - **Physical** – tension/pain, shallow breathing, rapid heart, dizziness, susceptible to illness
 - **Cognitive** – forgetfulness, poor concentration, poor judgment/indecision, racing thoughts, negative thoughts
 - **Emotional** – anger, irritability, overwhelm, anxiety, depression, loneliness
 - **Behavioral** – eating more/less, sleeping too much/little, withdrawing from others, avoiding tasks, nervous habits (fidgeting), substance use
- How early can you notice your first signs of stress? ...and do you respond?



Why does this happen?

- Stress is a physical and cognitive response to stressors (often social, but which trigger physical survival mechanisms)
 - Body is ready to fight/flee/freeze/faint
 - Redirects mental resources to physical preservation
- Unfortunately not helpful when the stressor is a test or a text, not a tiger...



Two types of positive coping

- **Problem-solving**
 - Addresses the problem that produced the stress
- **Emotion-focused**
 - Addresses the negative feelings that come from stress
- Or, often with negative consequences: fight/flight/freeze/fawn/collapse (avoidance in general, & can also be signs of overloaded response system)
- **Which do you tend to do more under stress?**
 - Both problem-solving and emotion-focused coping are valuable and needed
 - What about avoidance/distraction? How can it play a positive role?



Responding with care

- **Emotion-focused:** Redirect the mind-body stress loop
 - Take five 5-count breaths (or 4-8-7), pay attention to the breathing
 - Visually orienting to the space around you, grounding physically
 - Stretch or take a walk, and focus on breathing and releasing tension
- **Problem-solving:** Prioritize a small task that might help you right now
 - Ask “what small thing can I do right now that will help me reduce my stress?” (be honest)
 - Ex: making yourself more physically comfortable (move, use bathroom, drink water)
 - Ex: doing the tiniest first step of a task that is weighing on you



When might one of these be useful for you to try?



Building resilience

- Resilience and recovery from stress are helped by "boring self care"
 - Rest & sleep
 - Nourishment
 - Activity/movement



- **What small change in each of these areas could you experiment with?**
- **Other small, concrete suggestions?**



Building resilience



- **Emotion-focused:**
 - Regular stress check-ins and responding
 - Developing safe relationships for sharing and support
 - **How do you know when you're with someone safe to talk about stresses?**
- **Problem-solving:** Practice planning and organization strategies
 - My favorites: Todoist or Asana mobile/web apps, bullet journaling, Google calendar
 - **What recommendations do others have?**



Refining your strategies

- Gradually incorporate new practices
 - Small, slow changes
 - One area at a time
- Think of it as 4 areas:

Short-term Emotion focused	Short-term Practical
Long-term Emotion focused	Long-term Practical

- Experiment with new practices and notice your response
 - How can you personalize the strategy more?
 - Notice gaps (stressful times) and identify needs – recognize challenges as a chance to improve



We'll get you back on your feet!



PHOTO © T.E. SIMALENGA

Questions?

Stephani Jahn, PhD

Licensed Mental Health Counselor,
National Certified Counselor

A Pathway to You LLC

counseling@apathwaytoyou.com

352-234-3150