Managing Workload and Stress with Resilience



Antwerp Management School

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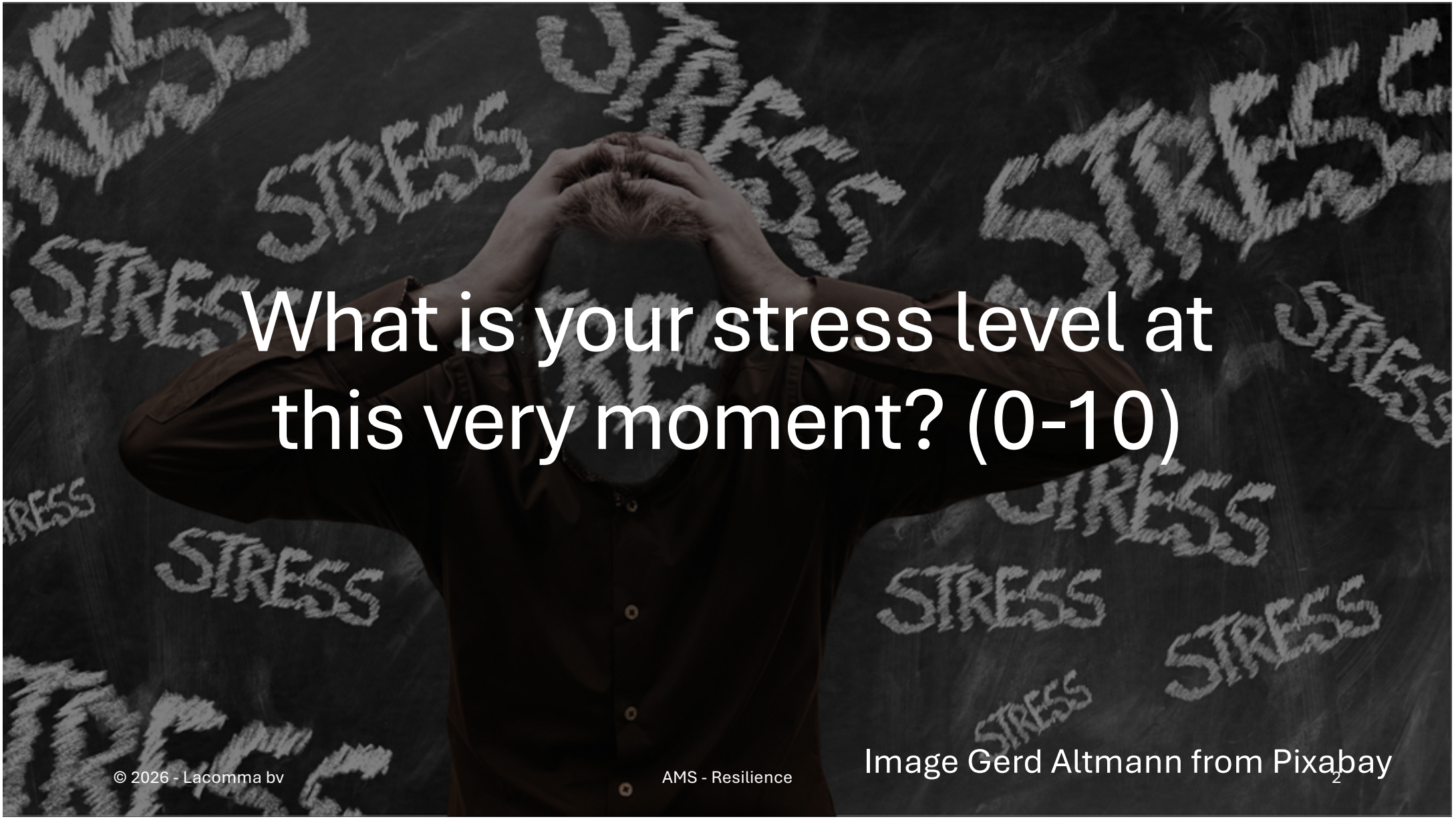

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3’ breathing space

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Objective

To provides participants with practical insights and techniques to help them manage stress, mental workload and recovery more effectively in a demanding work environment.

The focus is on:

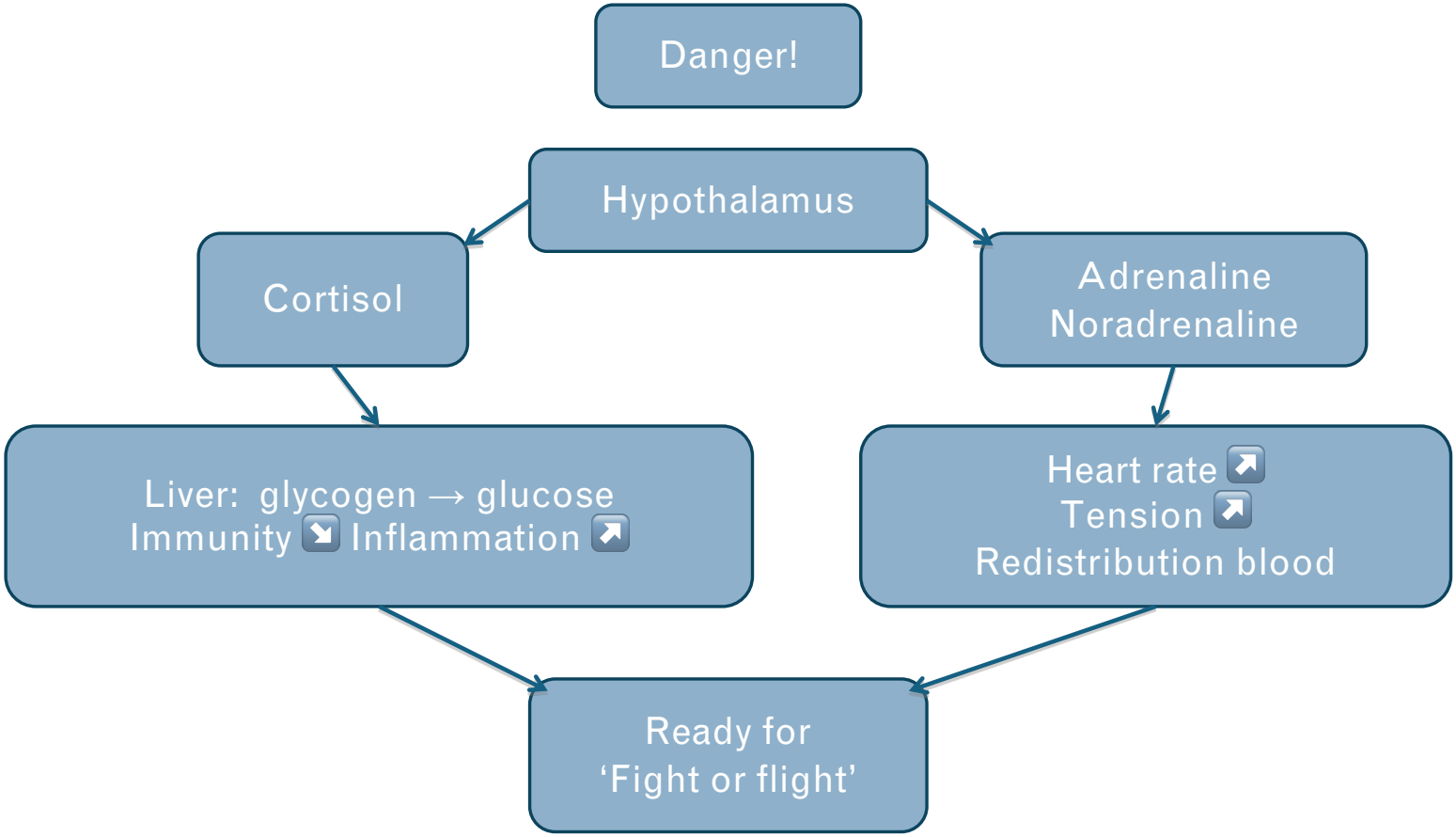
- recognising signs of stress
- gaining insight into personal energy drains and sources of energy
- practical stress management strategies
- small, achievable actions that can be immediately applied in day-to-day work

Programme

1. Understanding stress: the stress curve and recovery
2. The stress management model as a practical framework
    1. Working on your stressor
    2. Strenghtening your buffer and managing your stress response
    3. Working on your perception
3. Action plan

Understanding Stress: the Stress Curve and Recovery

What happens in the body?



Autonomic Nervous system

Sympathetic

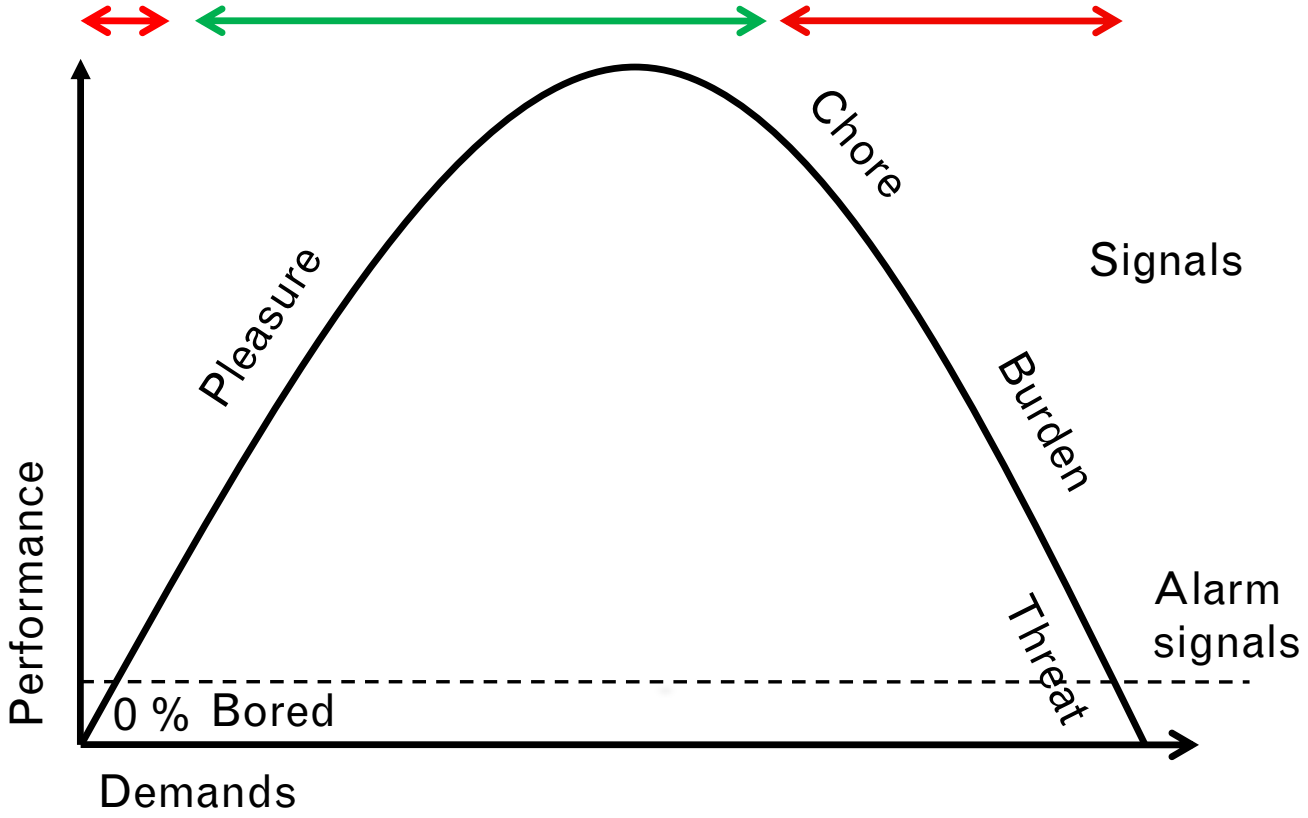
- Elevated activation level in the body (positive/negative)
- Fight or flight
- Adrenaline/noradrenaline
- Cortisol
- Body resources decrease
- Accelerator

Parasympathetic

- Recovery – calming down of the body
- Body resources increase
- Brake

Balance?!

Good stress – bad stress



Assessment current workload? (1-10) (16 votes)



How resilient do you think you are? (1-10)



Stress signals

STRESS SIGNALS				
Emotional	Physical -- internal	Physical -- motor	Intellectual	Behaviour
- Dissatisfaction	- Palpitations	- Agitation	- Skipping from one subject to another	- Smoking
- Irritability	- Chest pain	- Tension headache	- Absent-mindedness	- Eating more candy
- Insecurity	- Chest pressure	- Backache	- Forgetfulness	- Drinking coffee
- Suspicion	- Dizziness	- Stiffness	- Lack of inspiration	- Not wanting to go sleep
- Aggression	- Sweating	- Trembling	- Lack of interest	- Eating more or less
- Listlessness	- Losing/gaining weight	- Tics	- Tunnel vision	- Eating more unhealthy food
- Lack of motivation	- Shortness of breath	- Motor agitation	- Diminished concentration	- Using tranquilisers
- Lack of interest in sex	- Infections	- Aching muscles	- Day-dreaming	- Using sleeping pills
- Excitement	- Allergies	- Tension in the neck and shoulders	- Feeling of unreality	- Performing below capacity
- Agitation	- Frequent urination	- Fatigue, exhausted, low energy	- Less abstract thinking	- Aggressiveness
- Nervousness	- Flatulence	- Accidents	- Continuous fretting	- Impulsiveness
- Insomnia , oversleeping	- Headache, migraine	- Etc.	- Indecisiveness	- Do things quickly
- Feeling of unreality	- Tinnitus		- Leaving work unfinished	- Inhibition
- Feeling like crying	- Diarrhoea		- Worrying at night	- Social isolation
- Feeling of being a failure	- Indigestion		- Overthinking	- Drinking alcohol
- Lack of interest in other people	- Belches		- Losing the big picture	- Nail biting
- Feeling of anger	- Sweating without exertion		- Etc	- Crying
- Anxiety about future	- Gastrointestinal pain/problems			- Stealing
- Self-reproach	- Light-headedness			- Etc.
- Feeling of guilt	- Menstrual disorder			
- Feeling down	- Impotence, frigidity			
- Feeling more emotional	- Herpes,			
	- Etc.			

Based on Theo Compernolle. Stress. Friend and Foe!

Stress signals

- Unable to focus. Unable to deconnect. Unable to sleep. Unable to feel joy
- Trouble concentrating, no more focus
- Less efficient, feeling overwhelmed
- Worse sleep, more inward
- Shutting down, crying
- Heart palpitations, sweating, burning feeling in my cheecks, having stomach issues!
- Overrating, headache and sluggedness
- Eating more sweets, less exercise, socially less available

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Stress signals

- Restless
- Irritability
- Higher body temperature, accelerated heart rate
- Feeling tense. Superficial sleep
- Short breathing and pain in chest
- Bad sleep, stomach ache, less mental space for private/free time
- Chaos and hyperventilation
- Breathing high in the chest, bad sleeping, emotional

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Alarm signals

ALARM SIGNALS			
Emotional	Physical	Intellectual	Behaviour
Emotional instability	Chronic high blood pressure	Confusion	Alcoholism
Depression	Heart attack	Misjudgement	Absenteeism
Apathy	Gastric ulcer	Obsessions	Frequent accidents
Anxiety	Chronic hyperventilation	Inability to make decisions	Dangerous behaviour
Paranoia	Chronic fatigue		Taking stimulants
Feeling of exhaustion	Serious weight loss		Chronic cynicism
Frequent desperation	Serious weight gain		Vandalism
Depersonalisation			Stealing
Loss of self-confidence			Boycotting
Feeling of emptiness			

Based on Theo Compernolle. Stress. Friend and Foe!

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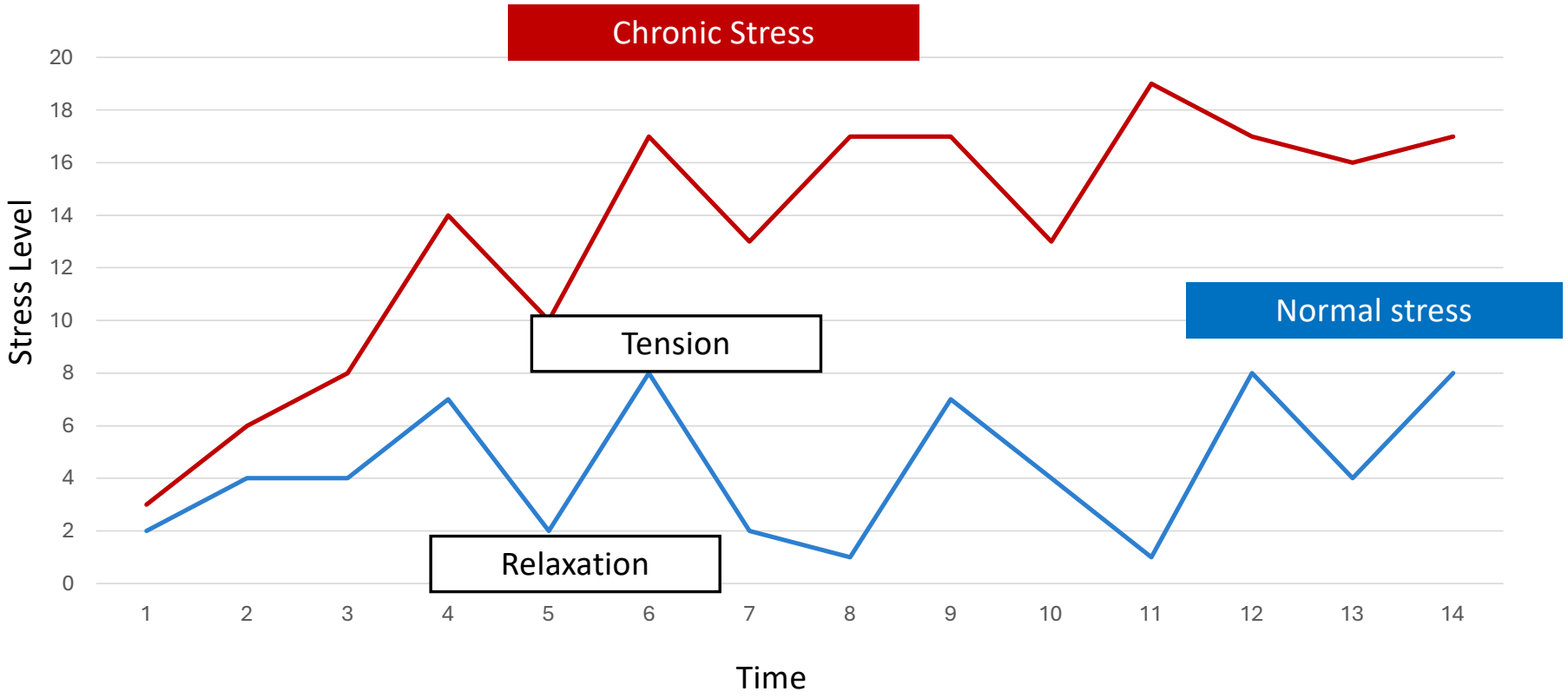
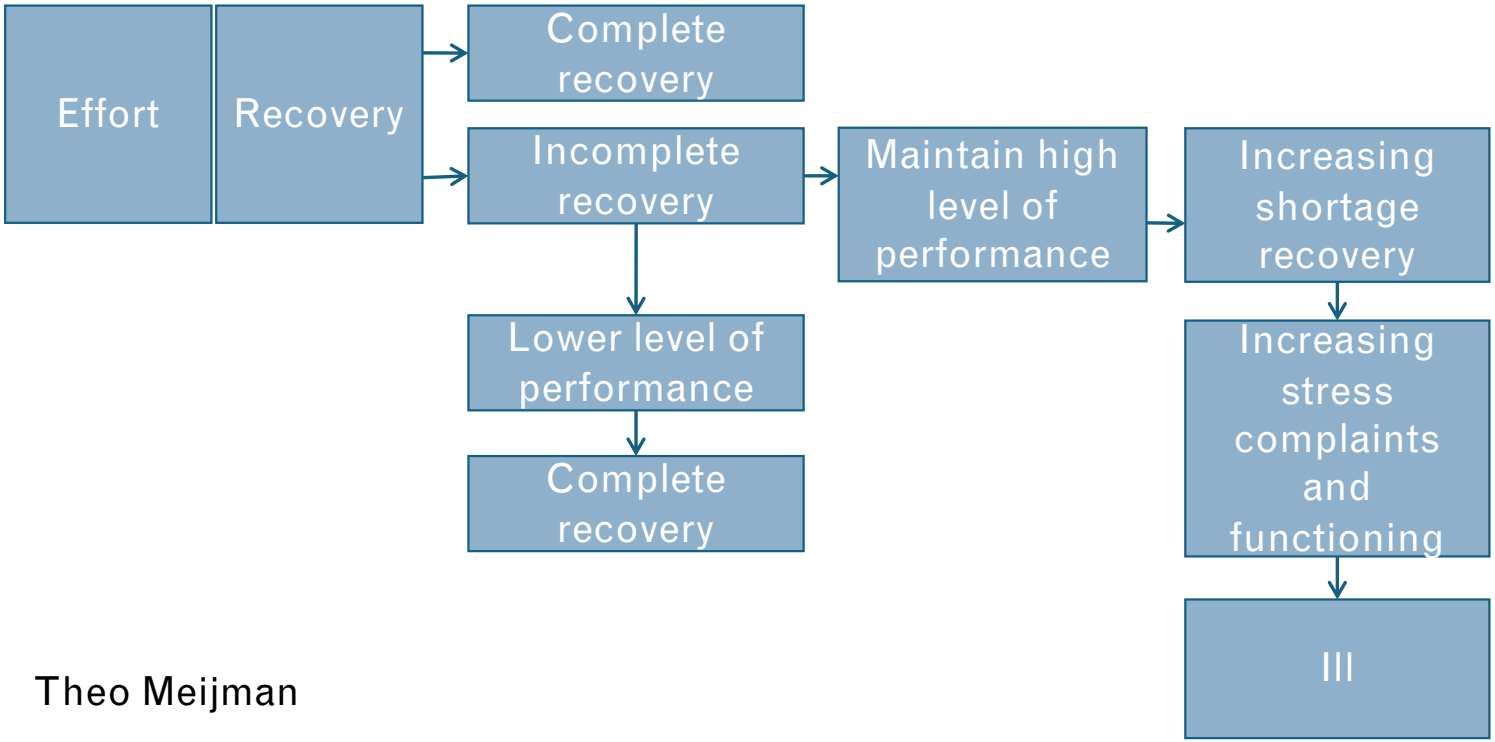
Chronic Stress



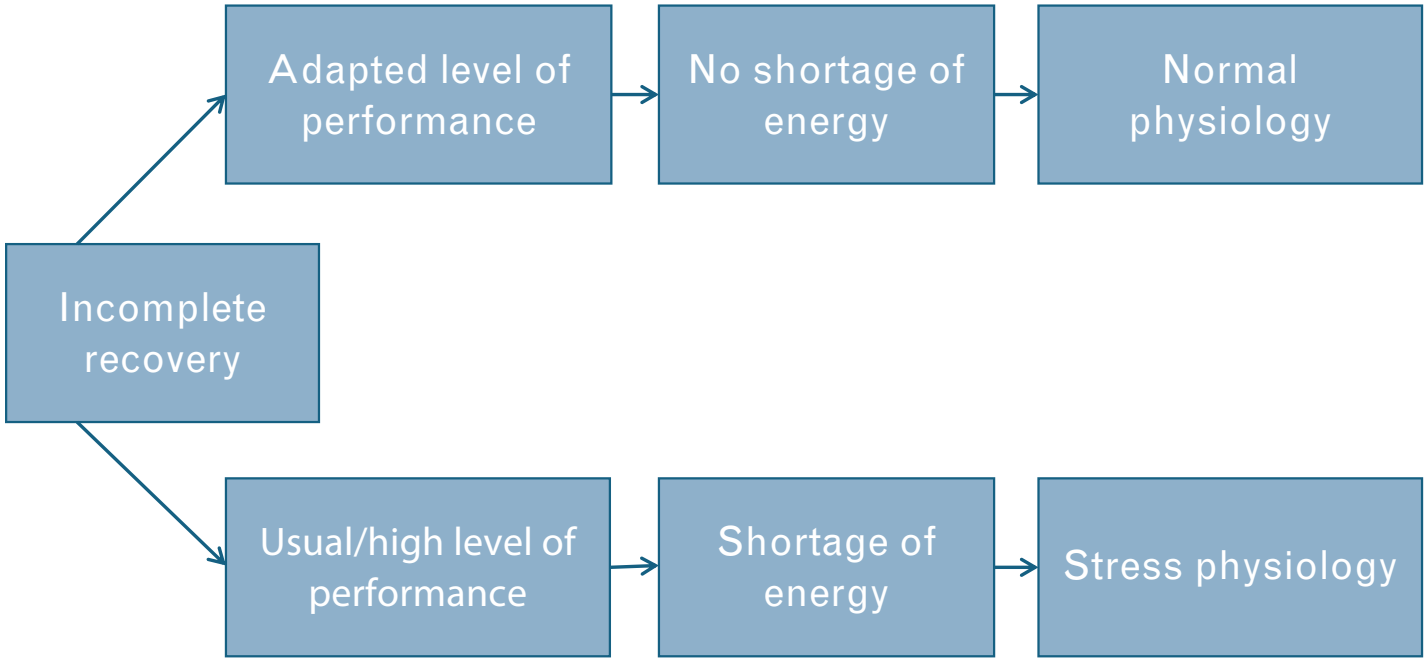
Effort – Recovery Model



Theo Meijman

Compensatory stress

(Activate stress system by compensating fatigue with activation)



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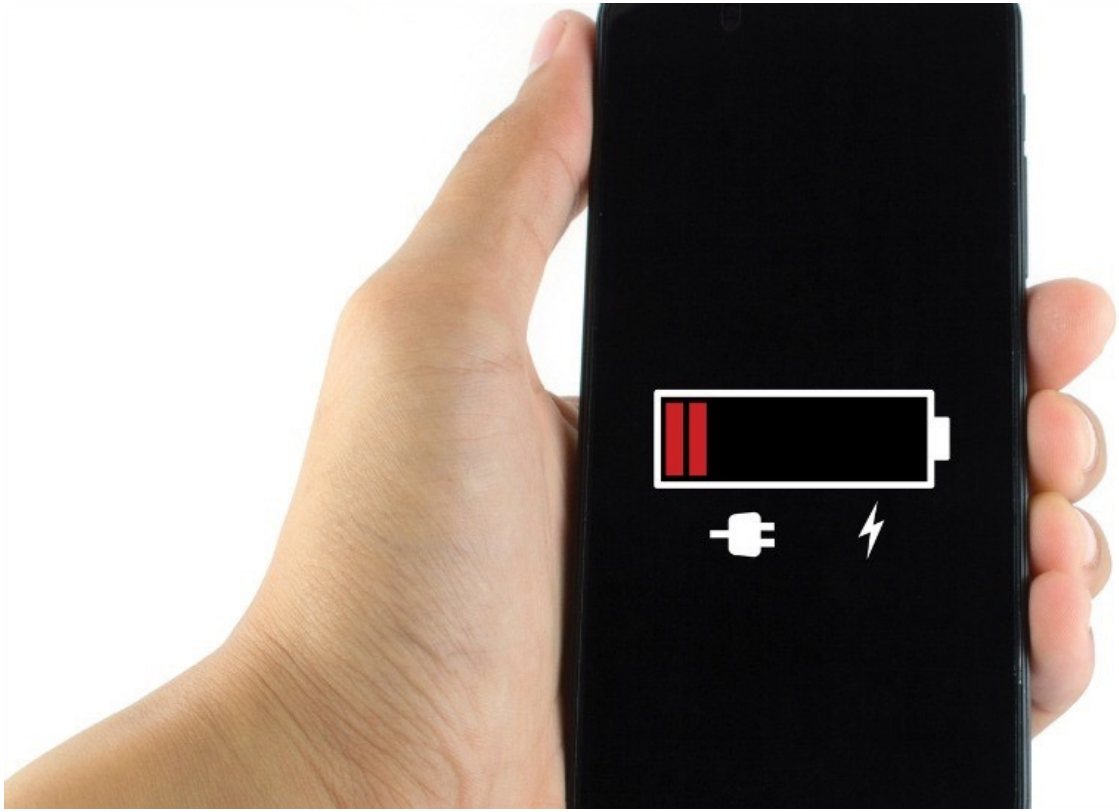
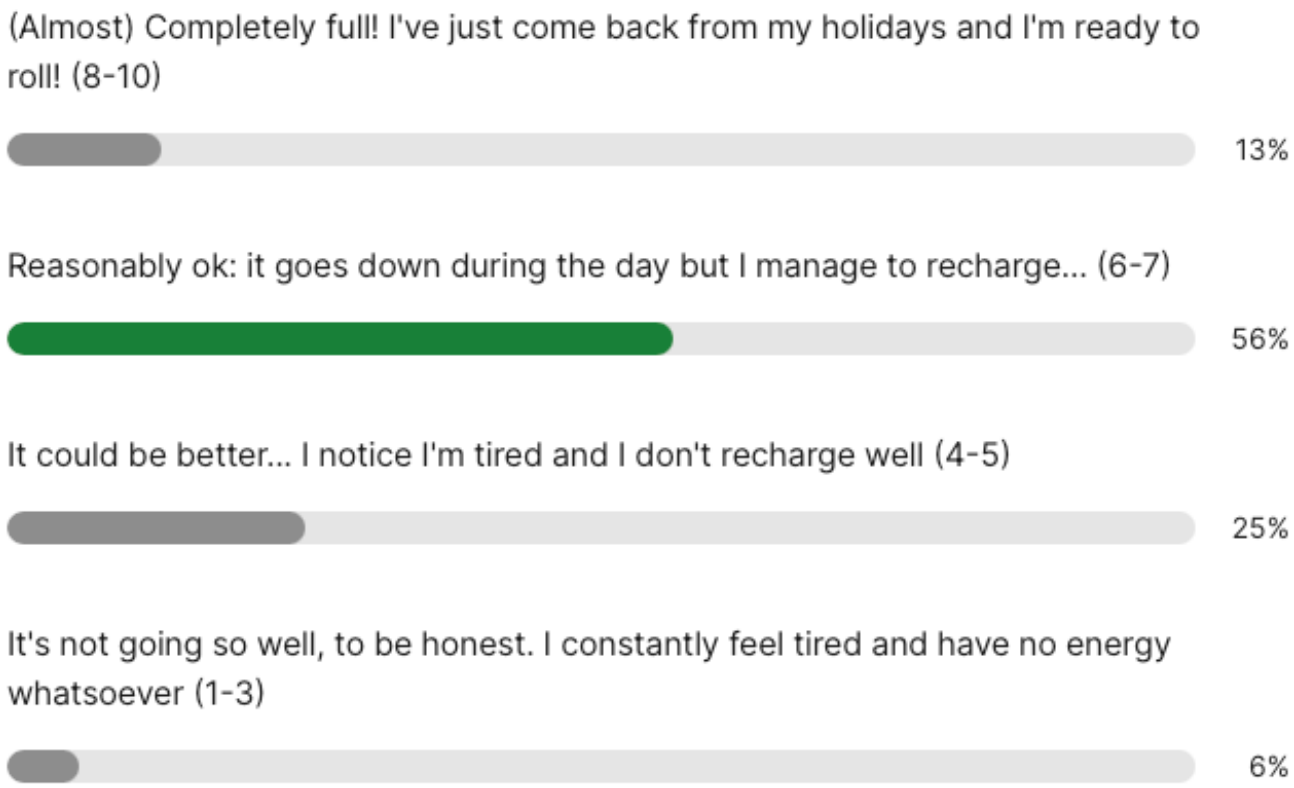
Compensatory stress



What does your battery look like at the moment?





The Stress Management Model as a Practical Framework

Stress Management



R

Stressors

Buffer

Perception
(subjective)

Stress
reaction

Working on your stressors (=energy leaks)

Your stressors – SLIDO (1)

- High workload (not problematic) but low level of what you can control
- Good advice but large distance (management not always aware of situation)
- Huge difference among colleagues (some room left, others under high pressure)
- Colleagues trying to shift responsibilities to other departments
- Constant interruptions (=can't focus on own tasks)
- Not getting feedback in time
- Lack of overall trust
- Sleep deprivation (baby waking up)
- Time pressure (2)
- Long commute
- New job = new topics to get into
- Perfectionism (4)
- Unsuitable systems
- Unclear or lack of procedures
- Private problems (2)
- Worrying what people might think about me

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Your stressors – SLIDO (2)

- Feeling of not having enough time for everything
- Coworker relations
- Chasing information / lack of info
- Worrying
- Not sleeping well
- Slow decision making
- Late requests
- Hard to work from home
- Unclarity
- Too many urgent tasks at once
- Private urgencies clashing with workload
- Uncooperative colleagues
- High standards
- Short deadlines
- (Very high) Workload (3) (need to work in weekends/at night)
- Responsibilities
- No structure in way of working and to do-list
- Worrying about making mistakes
- No buffer time in calendar
- Juggling multiple stakeholders relationships simultaneously
- Balancing quality of engagement with volume of outreach
- Combine full time job with several kids

“God, grant me the SERENITY
to accept the things I cannot change,
the COURAGE to change the things I can, and
the WISDOM to know the difference”

The serenity prayer
(Reinhold Niebuhr)

Byron Katie

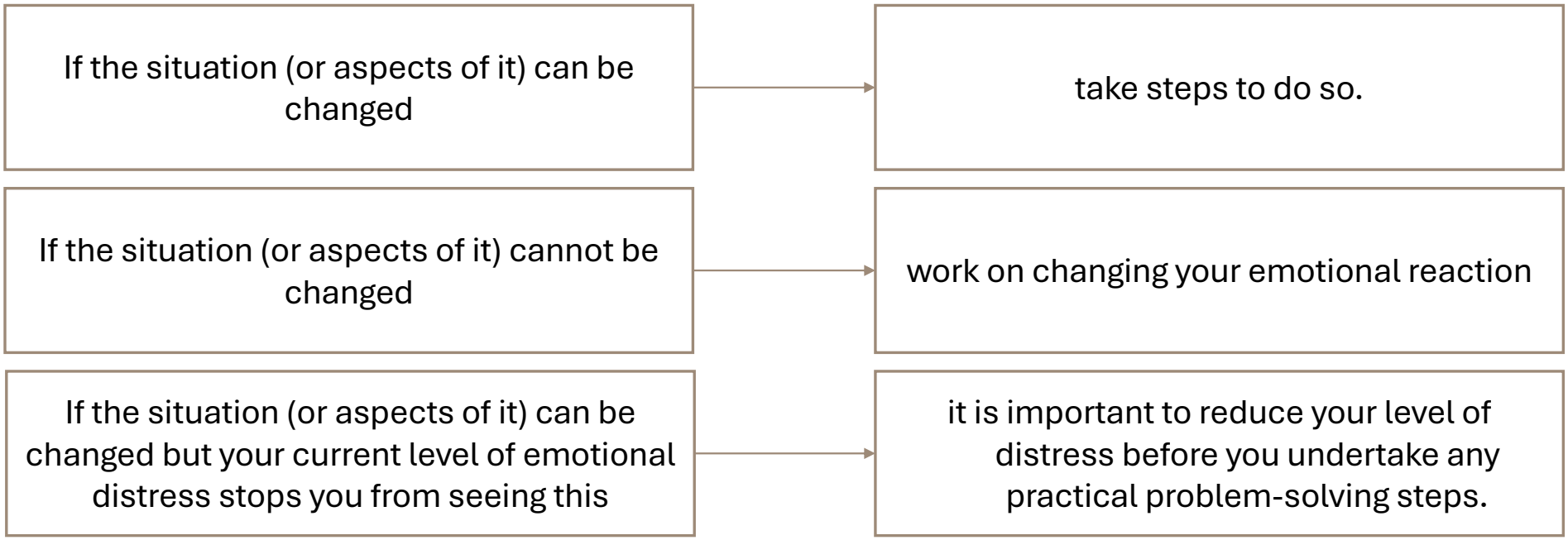
MY BUSINESS	YOUR BUSINESS	GOD'S BUSINESS
My own actions, behaviour, etc…	Other people's actions, behaviour, …	(or the 'world's business' – the weather, time, and everything else…

What is triggering the stress reaction?

Go back to your 3 stressors:

- **Individually:** have a look a closer look at them and put them in the different categories: my business, your business, God's business *(if you don't want to share your real ones, pick 3 from the list)*
- **In pairs:** share in which categories you put your 'energy leaks' and see whether or not you agree.

Best practices



(Michael Neenan in “Developing Resilience. A cognitive-behavioural approach”)



Let’s do an Experiment



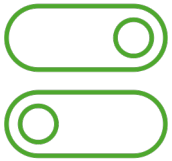
Types of multi-tasking

Real dual-tasking



Driving a car and talking only exists when a task has been **automated** and does not require cognitive control

Frequent sequential task switching



Interrupting ourselves to do A and then B): most of “multi-tasking”

Continual partial attention



Attention (surfing and listening to a lecture – half paying attention for fear of missing something). Continual inner **tension and restlessness.**





We are overloading our brain through multi-tasking...

‘Multi-tasking is ineffective and harmful’

- When multi-tasking, you need **20-40% more time** to complete a complex task.
- Multi-tasking **exhausts us**
  - Switching between topics and mental modes drains our energy and PFC functioning
  - Multi-tasking weakens our concentration and reduces our ability to inhibit responses
- Multi-tasking **reduces memory quality**: Our brain cannot process two streams of information in our short-term memory, and therefore also not into our long-term memory.
- Up to **40% more perceived stress and frustration**.
- Constant stimulus by e-mail may temporarily **reduce our IQ by up to 10 points.**
- Multi-tasking leads to **poorer decision making and creativity.**

Sources: Hamilton, R., Vohs, K. D., Sellier, A.-L., & Meyvis, T. (2011); Mark, G., Gudith, D., & Klocke, U. (n.d.); Ophir, E., Nass, C., & Wagner, A. D. (2009); Kc, S. D. (2011); Dean, D., & Webb, C. (2011, January)

The right to disconnect

- What does the right to disconnect mean to you?
- Do you feel like you have that right?
- What does it look like to you?
- How do you implement it yourself? How would you like to?
- Are there any consequences of this?



The big idea: let’s work on two fronts

Increase your right to disconnect to decrease the overload and therefore the **energy leaks**

AND

Create some time for **energy boosting activities**…

(= taking care of buffer!)

Some of our suggestions

- Clear transition to and from work hours
- Prioritization
- Protect productive working hours to keep things focused – make sure to take times of **deep work** into your schedule – agreement within team on productive work time
- Have a real lunch break (don't work behind computer)
- Have time away from the screen / your device
- Movement during the day
- CHOOSE not to multi-task (also not during meetings and trainings ;-D)
- Check mails x times during the day (NOT ALL DAY LONG)
- Meetings take 50' instead of 1 hour to have a short buffer (before walking from 1 to the other)

Working on your Buffer

Model 1

- Relaxation
- Improving our social network
- Physical activity
- Eating habits
- Sleeping habits
- Leisure management
- Clear personal priorities
- Time management
- Showing emotions
- Asserting ourselves

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Model 2

- Mental
- Emotional
- Social
- Physical
- Purpose

Model 2

MENTAL	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	PHYSICAL	PURPOSE
Being aware of your thoughts and beliefs and reframe Being able to deal with worrying To focus To switch off	Being aware of and being able to manage your emotions Understand what they want to tell you	Building and maintaining relationships Having/showing empathy Communicating Interacting with others	Care for our bodies: exercise, sleep, nutrition, …	Connecting to your values, purpose Be true to yourself Authenticity

Model 3: Awaris

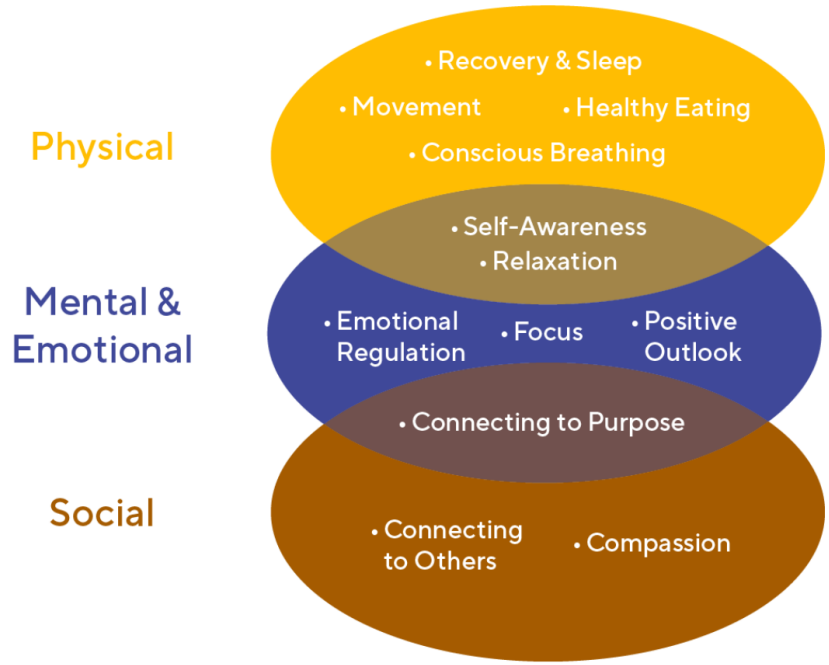

Fig. 2: Awaris identified 12 core resilience skills that can be grouped in three domains

Your strategies– SLIDO

- Try to work even harder – try to find some focus time at home
- Try to get things done
- Balance work/family/friends/me-time (3)
- Go for a walk
- Find support from a colleague
- Try to be mild for myself (stilll figuring this out in our new situation)
- Try to put things into perspective,
- Discuss the issues with colleagues to try to come to a suitable solution
- Use mantra: it's not all my fault/problem
- Sleep 8 hours a night (3) - go to bed early
- Not too much screen time
- Not being available all the time
- Reading
- Spend time with friends and partner/family (4)
- Watch a movie/play a game
- Think about big stuff
- Cyclng to work
- No work when I am home
- Being outside in the weekend
- Leave laptop off after work
- Sports
- Planning EVERYTHING (2) – put all thoughts and tasks on paper or in your agenda
- Planning well in advance
- Good registration in odoo for structure

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Recharging the battery

- ‘All batteries’ need recharging
- Relaxation is not (necessarily) the same as recharging
- Breathing exercises: different types?
- Small recharging moments during the day
- And…

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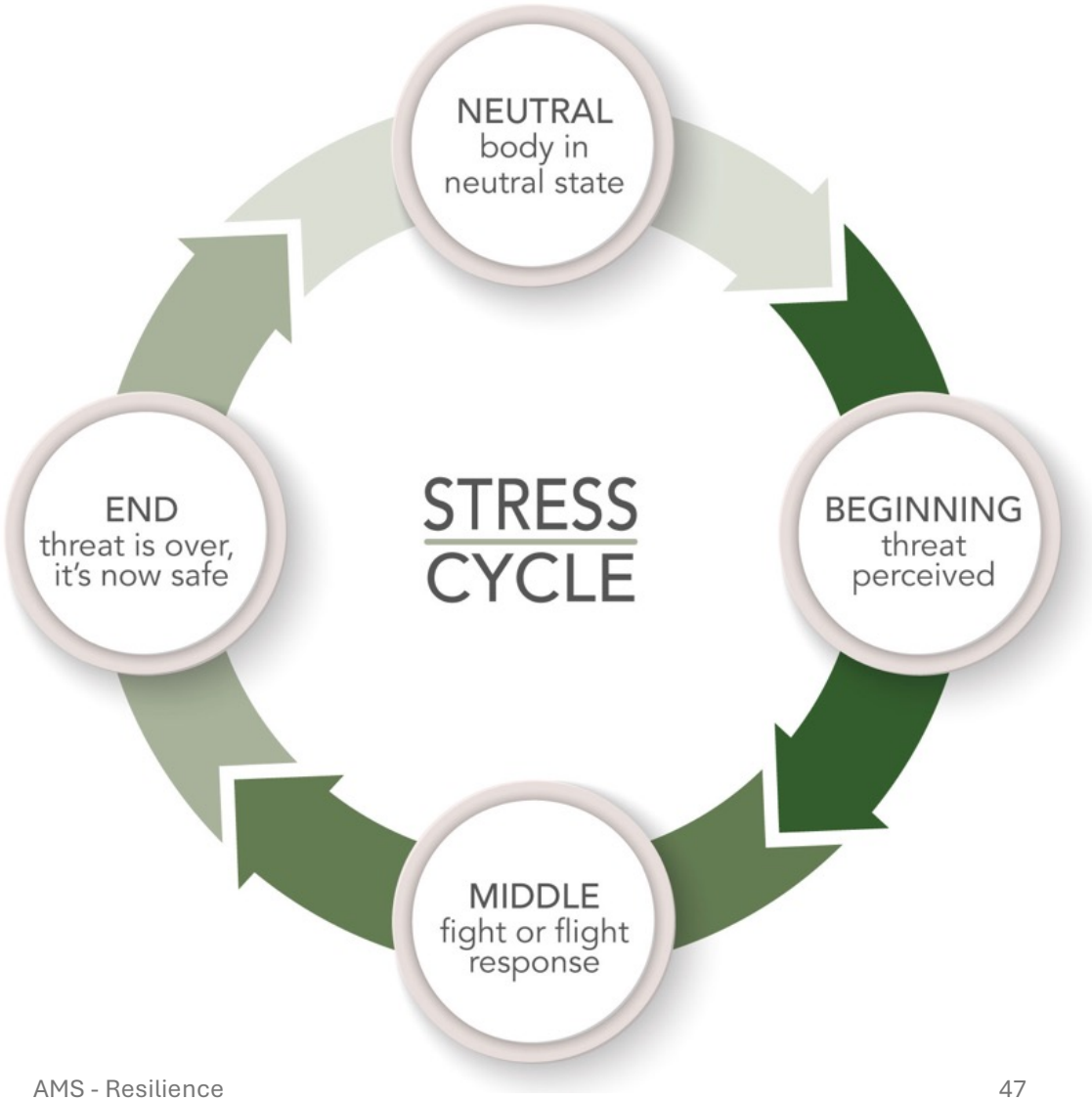
Finishing the stress cycle

The Stress Cycle



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Sometimes we get stuck...



- Removing the source of stress is NOT enough to end the stress cycle
- You need physical cues to communicate to your body that the danger is over
- If not, your body will get stuck in the activated mode and … it can make you sick

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How do you know if you've completed the cycle?

"It's like knowing when you're full after a meal.

You're body tells you and some people have an easier time recognizing it than others.

You might experience it as a shift in mood or mental state or a release of physical tension – you may breathe more deeply, and your thoughts may relax. Pay attention to how your feel, and when it happens, you'll know."

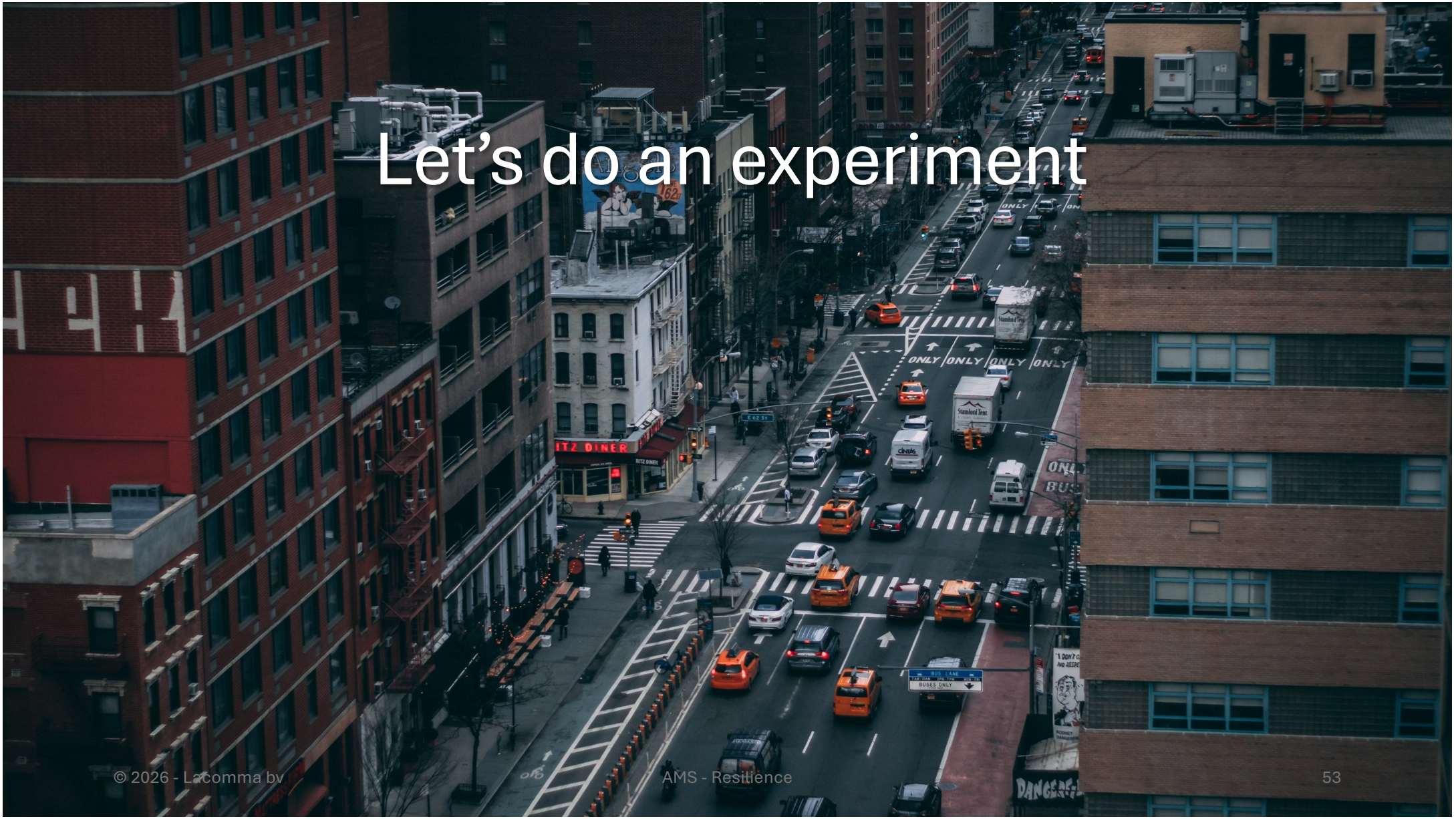
Emily & Amelia Nagoski – 'The Burnout Workbook' and 'Burnout. Solve your stress cycle'

OR... check your Firstbeat or Garmin...

Ways to complete the cycle

- Focused breathing
- Physical activity (if not an option: Progressive Muscle Relaxation)
- Cry/laugh
- Positive social interaction
- Expressing yourself creatively
- Engaging your imagination
- ...

Working on your perception


Let’s do an experiment
ITZ DINER
ONLY
BUS LANE
BUSES ONLY

What did you notice?

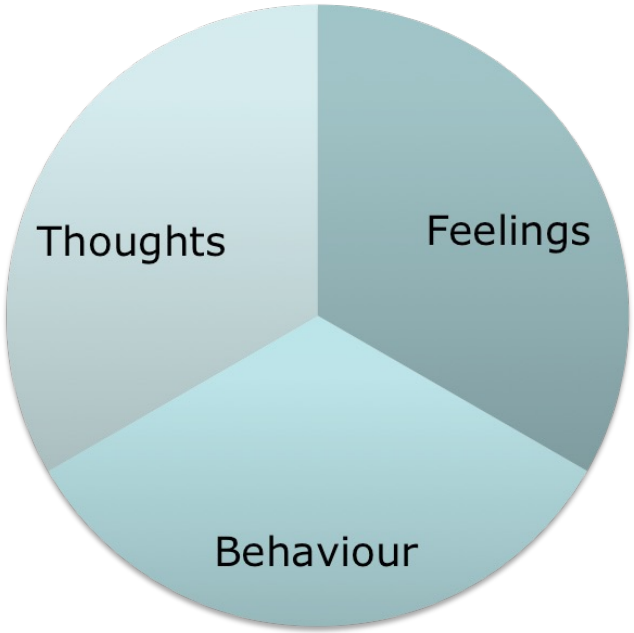
THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	SENSATIONS


SITUATION
+
INTERPRETATION
= EMOTION



“Don’t believe everything you think!”

The ‘Mercedes’ model



Cognitive restructuring

A: Situation that triggered the negative thoughts (careful: neutral observation (like a camera)	
B: Internal dialogue • … • … • …	D: Alternative internal dialogue
C: Consequence • Unwanted feeling • Unwanted behaviour (Stress: …/10)	E: Alternative consequence • Alternative/wanted feelings • Wanted behaviour (Stress: …/10)

Cognitive Restructuring: example

A: Situation that triggered the negative thoughts (careful: neutral observation (like a camera)) *I have to write a paper*	
B: Internal dialogue • *It has to be perfect* • *Nobody will like it* • *I don't have enough time*	D: Alternative internal dialogue • *I want to do my best* • *Some people might like it* • *I'll use my time well*
C: Consequence • Unwanted feeling: *anxious, stressed* • Unwanted behaviour: Can't sleep, heart palpitations, procrastination… (Stress: 8/10)	E: Alternative consequence • Alternative/wanted feelings: *excited* • Wanted behaviour: *Getting started, asking for help…* (Stress: 4/10)

Exercise **(OR with little time: group exercise)**

1. **Think:** Of a stressful situation you would like to explore
2. **Individually:** Do the cognitive restructuring exercise in your notes

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Exercise

In pairs:

1. Person A briefly explains Situation (A), Thoughts (B) and Consequences (C) and possible alternative approach

2. Person B ‘challenges’ the thoughts in (B) with own ideas and observations. Person can afterwards add new ideas to Alternative Inner Dialogue (D)



Missing in your 'toolbox'?

- (Recognition = strong relation between one's effort – performance - recognition)
- More tools to focus, structure work efficiently
- Letting go mentally, fully relaxing
- Need to better cope with things not being exactly like I want them to be (comparing too much to past)
- A hobby where I'm not a perfectionist
- The wisdom to trust
- Improve my communication skills during conflicts

Missing in your ‘toolbox’?

- Take some rest during the day
- Patience
- Putting things in perspective
- How to disconnect
- (Time)
- (Look elsewhere)


P3 L1 A1 N1

What would you like to put into practice?

1)

2)

3)

What do you need / would you like from the others to help you to achieve this?

HELP! I'm stressed!	Score: .... /10
Stressor:	Stress Signals:
Calm down: Use mindfulness – breathing - ... Remind yourself of what you're good at in challenging situations	
Continous/ongoing:	**Crisis management:**
• How can I take care of my buffer? • Keep on evaluating your battery • (3 main values? Plan it!)	• Whose business? Control? • Can I look at it differently? • How can I take extra care of my buffer?
	Deeper dive:
	• (Needs not met? Which one? 3 strategies?) • (Living according to my values?) • (Personality type) (Drivers)
Make sure to finish the stress cycle	

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