

When things get stressful

Here are 7 common things that happen when things become stressful and difficult. These 7 things reduce our wellbeing and our ability to function.

Understanding what's happening helps to put you back in the drivers seat. I've given some ideas for each one.

1. **Constricting/Tightening/Rigidity** - We tighten up and hold on. We have decreasing emotional, mental, behavioural flexibility so it's more difficult to change and move forward. Our awareness and ability to respond narrows and our world constricts, usually around the thing that is stressing us.

Look at things that ease out the tension - relaxation, exercise, mindfulness, talking it out and journaling. Consciously broaden out your awareness

2. **Wound up/can't switch off/worry and anxiety.** - We are going at a fast pace inside and can't find the off button. We are trying to find some sort of completion, answer or resolution by going over things, but can't stop, even when it's not useful to continue.

Relaxation, exercise, things that contain the worry like setting aside a time to think about it, a ritual or image that helps you to consciously separate from work.

3. **Worn out, tired, 'thin', depleted** - our batteries are low or empty. No fuel in the tank. Our get up and go has got up and gone.

Nourishment that targets the need, rest, replenishment. Get in emotional and practical supports, Exercise, good diet and sleep.

4. **Thrown/fragmented/shattered/all over the place** - We are not centred or together. We lose our inner stability. We feel fragile.

Activities that help you ground and centre eg being out in nature, linking to your values, establishing a structure or plan, having a word or phrase that helps you steer through the situation.

5. **Caught up in the stress** – if there's no space between us and the stress it's hard to get a clear perspective on what's going on, and it's difficult to act. It's like the stress has taken hold of us.

Breathing, consciously focussing on the space between you and the stress,
Objectifying the stress, Being caring and compassionate to the part of you that is stressed

6. **Heaviness and pressure** – The stress feels like a burden or weight. You carry it around with you, or experience it as a pressure that's surrounding you.

Things that give emotional space, Breathing exercises, objectifying the pressure, caring for the part of you that feels the pressure.

7. **Blocked/Fog** – when you go to act you can't and it is if your thinking misses the target, or you lose focus. Something is in the road between what you and what you want, or something holds you back. A feeling of separation, it seems like something is between you and the world/life.

Journaling, identifying small next steps, things that connect you in to the world, speaking things through, creating a sense of safety for yourself.

In what ways do you experience stress? What have you found useful in those times?

Go well,

Peter