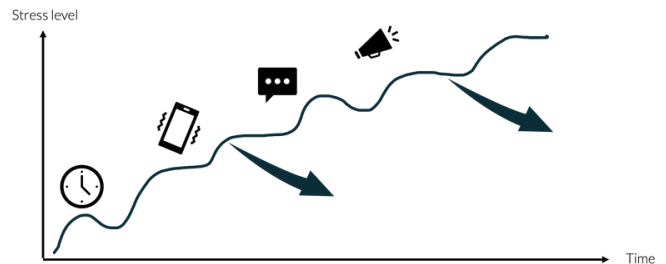


Stress Management - Advice

Understanding the stress response

Stress is part of life and we are generally well-equipped to deal with periods of heightened stress (e.g., giving an important presentation or working against a deadline) if they alternate with periods of calm. However, in academia, we might often find ourselves in a situation where many small stressors add up throughout the day, leaving us in a high-stress state at the end of the day without periods of calm in-between.



Reflection question:

What adds to your stress level?



First-aid techniques to lower your stress level

The stress reaction is a fight-or-flight response and therefore ideally first needs to be regulated at the physical level, using techniques such as:

- Breathing exercises (to lower respiratory and heart rate)
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Movement (e.g., brisk walk or exercise)
- Meditation and mindfulness exercises



Additional strategies for managing stress

Stress management occurs at three levels:

1. External: To manage external stressors (such as high workload or deadlines), we can use strategies such as delegating, prioritizing and setting boundaries (such as saying 'no' or clarifying expectations and timelines, e.g., "I can spend 30 minutes on this tomorrow.")
2. Internal: To manage internal stressors (such as our own perfectionism or self-doubt), we need to identify our inner saboteurs and when we recognize they are active, we can use a small mindful moment to pause and choose our intentional action (instead of acting on auto-pilot). Example: Recognizing our perfectionist and using a "good enough? - checklist" to assess if our work is good enough already.
3. Resources: The more resources we have, the better we can manage stress. This includes taking enough small breaks, using relaxation techniques and engaging in self-care (which is different from self-soothing).

Stress Management - Action Plan

To be more aware of my current stress level, I will:



Example: set a timer twice a day to check my stress level on a scale from 1-5.



When my stress level is rising, my first aid response is:



To manage my stress better on all levels, here is my action plan:

External level:

Internal level:

Resources:



Healthy Boundaries - Advice

Different Preferences

Segregator

Integrator

Some of us prefer a clear separation between work and private life (segregators), while others enjoy having the freedom to switch back and forth between them as needed (integrators). Being more aware of our personal preference allows us to find rituals of transition and structures that works for us and enable us to be more present in each domain.

Segregators typically benefit from strategies that help them avoid overlap, such as using separate calendars, emails and phones (for work and private matters), having separate spaces (working from the office vs being at home), and communicating clearly to others when they are available and when they are off.

Integrators typically have less of a need for this kind of separation but they benefit from identifying their own rules that allow them to also switch off from work (such as no work-related things on Sundays or past a certain time in the evening).

Being aware of the range of preferences can also help us stick to what works for us while accepting that other people might do this differently, such as sticking to one's rule to not check or respond to emails past work hours, even if others send emails in the late evening or on the weekend.

Reminder: Regardless of our preferences, we all need time to unplug and switch off from work.



Reflection questions:

- If you could choose freely, what would your preference be? Do you prefer a clear separation between work and private life or do you enjoy the freedom to mix the two as needed?
- What helps you to transition into work mode?
- And what helps you to transition into private life at the end of the work day or during weekends or holidays?

Healthy Boundaries - Action Plan

My preference:

[A horizontal grey rounded bar for writing a preference]

Segregator

Integrator

Ideas on how to start my day well and get into work mode ...



Ideas on how to switch off and unwind at the end of the day ...



Ideas for self-care in daily life ...

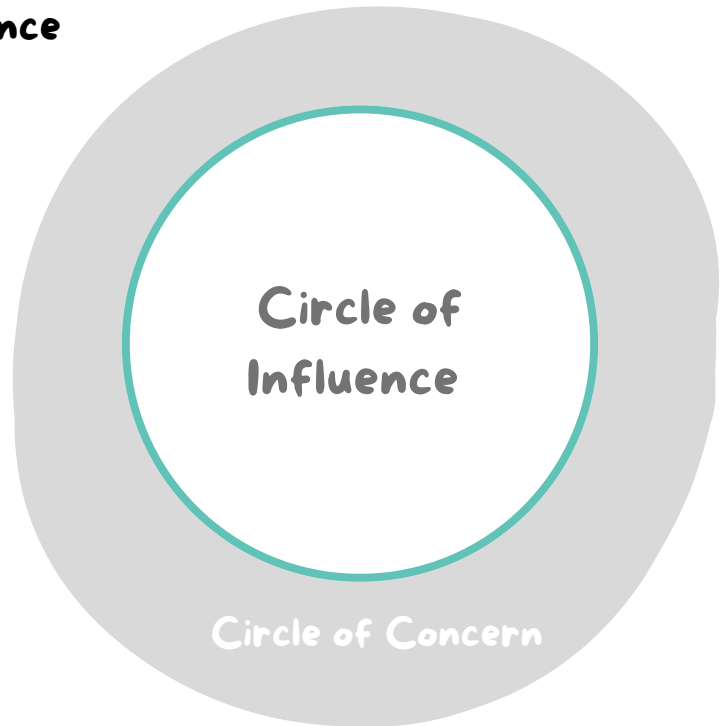
3 Well-Being Habits

Focus on your circle of influence

We often experience things that concern us but that we cannot influence. While it is important to acknowledge those, it is equally crucial to shift one's attention and energy to the things we can influence - our circle of influence. Doing so helps improve our sense of agency and our well-being.

Examples of what we can influence include:

- Our mindset and attitude
- Our behavior
- The boundaries we draw



Practice gratitude

Gratitude is a powerful emotion that can help us be more aware of the resources and good things we have in our lives, especially in times of hardship, challenge, or crisis. Research has demonstrated the positive effects of gratitude on our health and well-being and shown that small gratitude practices can already be beneficial for us.

To benefit from the power of gratitude, you can build a daily habit, such as writing down 1 thing you are grateful for each day, and keeping those in a jar or notebook to refer back to when needed.



Create moments of joy

Moments of joy can help us balance our emotions, especially in demanding or challenging times. To create small moments of joy every day, make a list of at least 5 things that bring you joy and that you can easily do within a few minutes, such as listening to your favorite



happy song, doing something you enjoy, watching a funny video, doing something nice for others, or having a good time with others (e.g., take that short break with a colleague to enjoy a coffee or snack or a bit of sun).