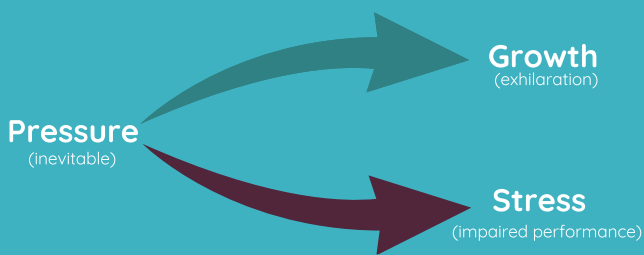


Pressures in life are inevitable, but we react to things that cause us pressure in two ways – they lead to personal growth if we believe we can manage them effectively, or they cause stress if we feel we cannot cope with them.



Stress arises from how you perceive a situation. If you see yourself as being unable to cope with the demands of a situation, then that situation becomes stressful. However, people view situations and their ability to cope with them differently, so what is stressful for one person is not necessarily stressful for another.

The diagram below demonstrates the relationship between pressure and performance; it reminds us that we need a certain amount of pressure in order to perform at our best.

Boredom - without stimulation and challenge we become bored and under-achieve.

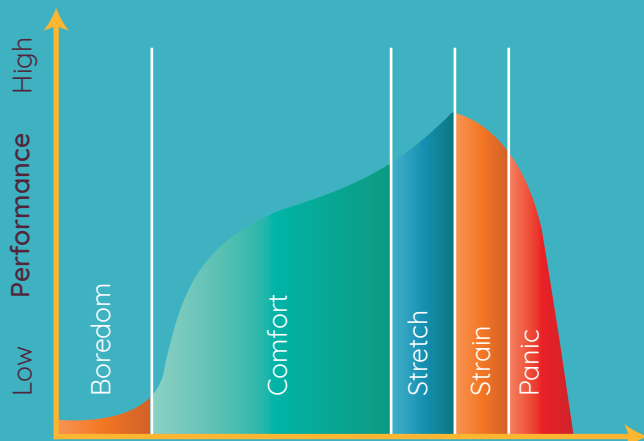
Comfort zone - with a little more pressure we enter a zone where we feel comfortable - not too little and not too much pressure - but when we are in the left hand side of this zone we are not being nearly as productive as we might be.

Stretch zone - this is where we perform at our best. However, we need to keep 'jumping back' into the comfort zone to refresh and regroup, because we can't stay in the stretch zone for too long without a release from the pressure, otherwise we slip into the strain zone.

Strain zone - the line between the stretch zone and the strain zone is a thin one, and once we enter the strain zone our performance starts to fall off. If we stretch ourselves for too long without a break eventually the pressure gets too high and we slip into the strain zone.

When we're in this zone we feel tired and fatigued, pressure turns into stress and we begin to experience difficulty concentrating, we become less creative and have lower intellectual performance.

Panic zone - (or overwhelmed zone) where we feel severely stressed and are at risk of serious health problems. The effects of pressure are quite considerable and we feel burnt out, exhausted and may even break down.



Managing pressure

Pressure affects us all; we cannot escape it. However, we can avoid most of the negative effects of pressure by working on how we respond to it.

Your ability to cope with and manage pressure is determined by your resilience. Your level of resilience reflects your ability to maintain and enhance your effectiveness in the midst of a fast-paced, high pressured and continuously changing environment. The more resilient you are, the more able you are to cope with life's pressures, and the more effective you become in managing issues.



A more resilient person is one who:

- Demonstrates confidence, adaptability and flexibility, even in a fast-paced, pressured and culturally diverse environment – mental well-being.
- Displays energy and stamina in meeting challenging goals – physical well-being.

A person is more mentally resilient if they:

- Are able to recognise the warning signs of too much pressure;
- Understand what they can control and what they can't control; and
- Are able to effectively employ mental coping strategies to deal with circumstances when the pressure gets too high.

A person is physically resilient if they have the energy and stamina to keep going, even when they are really under pressure. They tend to be:

- Physically active and fit;
- Sleep well;
- Eat well; and
- Pace themselves well.

Without physical resilience it can be very difficult to effectively employ your mental coping strategies, regardless of how mentally resilient you are. That's why you need to take a holistic approach to developing your resilience to pressure and stress - you need to develop your mental coping strategies and your overall physical health and fitness.

