



**When the pressure builds and starts to get too much we often exhibit a wide variety of symptoms – mental, physical and behavioural. This list is by no means comprehensive, but it should enable you to map out your own stress response and help you to understand that of others.**

**You might find it helpful to use it as a checklist**

**Physical symptoms include:**

- Altered sleep patterns
- Tiredness & lethargy
- Breathlessness
- Dizziness & light-headedness
- Indigestion / heartburn
- Nausea
- Bowel disturbances (diarrhoea, constipation)
- Headaches
- Muscle tension & pain
- Nervous tics

**Mental symptoms include:**

- Anxiety & apprehension
- Preoccupation with trivial issues
- Inability to prioritise
- Coping difficulties
- Mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of failure
- Lack of self-worth
- Feelings of isolation

**Altered appearance**

- Neglecting our appearance
- Looking miserable
- Looking tired
- Looking nervous
- Hunched shoulders
- Tired walk
- Less smiling, joking and laughing
- Looking agitated

**Altered habits**

- Disturbed eating
- More:
  - Alcohol
  - Caffeine
  - Smoking
  - Absenteeism
  - Tardiness (lateness)
  - Accidents
  - Taking work home



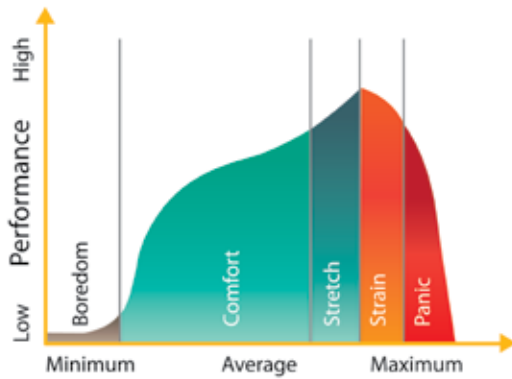
## Altered habits

- Less
  - Holidays
  - Quality home time

## Altered behaviour

- Irritable and argumentative
- Less sociable
- Less friendly
- Memory problems
- Poor decision making
- Hypercritical and/or inflexible
- Over-reaction
- Loss of interest
- Poor performance
- Excess multi-tasking
- Start new; never finish old
- Who cares attitude

## Where are you on the pressure curve?



Once you are aware of how you respond to high levels of pressure you will be able to recognise the warning signs when you enter the stretch, strain or panic zones, and this will enable you to take corrective action.

If you are at the limits of the stretch zone and about to tip into the strain zone, what can you do to escape to the comfort zone so that you can refresh yourself and regroup before going back into the stretch zone?

It might help you to think back to stressful situations you have experienced in the past and remember what your response was then.

