Stress-vulnerability model
(ZUBIN & SPRING, 1977)

The stress-vulnerability model describes how stress impacts on mental health. The model proposes that each of us is endowed with a genetic predisposition to stress. This intrinsic vulnerability interacts with psychosocial stressors and results in a disruption to wellbeing and mental health.
Capacity to handle stress

Imagine that your capacity to handle stress is like a bucket. Your genetics, social background, and past experience shape:

• How the bucket is formed.
• The capacity of the bucket.
• What weaknesses the bucket has.

The more vulnerable the person = the smaller / shallower the bucket.
Stressful events

Stressful life events can be imagined as water filling your bucket. Your bucket only has so much capacity before the water will overflow and you will show signs of stress.

- Poor performance/extreme expectation
- Substance use
- Physical injury
- Relationship difficulties
- Moving away from home
- Training commitments
- Genetic vulnerability
Coping strategies

Imagine taps on the side of your bucket. These represent your coping strategies and they help lower the level of stress in your bucket.

Good coping = tap working well and stress can be released.

Poor coping = tap not working and stress builds up to the point where the bucket overflows and you become symptomatic.
Emotion focused coping strategies

Strategies that you employ to decrease the negative emotions you experience. These strategies are useful when you have limited control to change the source of the problem.

Examples of emotion focused coping strategies include:

- Relaxation techniques.
- Connecting to your social network.
- Actively engaging in your life outside of the problem.
Task / problem focused coping strategies

Strategies that you employ to change the source of the problem. These strategies are useful when you have a level of influence over the situation.

Examples of task / problem focused coping strategies include:

- Learning problem solving skills to manage projects better.
- Formulating a healthy eating plan.
- Acquiring conflict management skills.
Unhelpful coping strategies

Imagine that you have attached a hose to one of your taps and redirected the water back into your bucket. Recycling the water happens when you use coping skills that provide short term relief but cause you more trouble in the long term such as:

• Avoiding the problem.
• Using alcohol and other drugs.
Protective factors

Protective factors assist you to turn the taps on and lower your stress level.

Protective factors make you resilient to stress and include:

• Taking steps to reduce symptoms.

• Building personal or professional support networks.

• Learning new and better coping strategies.
Manage stress and maintain a buffer zone

Your buffer zone is the space between your stress level and your overflow point. Manage rising stress with coping strategies and protective factors to increase your buffer zone and prevent an overflow.

Remember, recovery is NOT negotiable
Stressors
Major life events

Deaths and separation
Relocation
Divorce
Missing key life events
Marriages
Births
Stressors

Work demands

Work commitments
Training demands
Performance / production timetables and deadlines
Touring
Shift work including long and late hours in production
Grant deadlines
A colleague's behaviour, especially if they have a power relationship with you
Stressors
Performance related

Performance
Production week
Auditions
Post career identity
Contract termination
Extreme expectation
Poor performance
Stressors
Effort

Matching your effort to the task requirements is an important component of high levels of performance.

You will place yourself under stress if you:

• Use excessive intensity and / or duration of physical and / or mental effort.

• Use insufficient intensity and / or duration of physical and / or mental effort.

• Are overworked and under resourced – including overworking the body in physical performance.
CIRCUIT WEST
Stressors
Emotional demands

Relationship difficulties
Family commitments
Financial stress
Responsibilities
Worries
Conflicts
Stressors
Environment

Living arrangements
Noise
Safety of environment - including physical and psychological safety
Demanding environments
Hazardous environments
Stressors

Personal characteristics

Age
Sleep loss / disturbed circadian rhythms
Lack of support
Substance abuse
Poor nutrition
Perfectionism
Anxiety
Overall fitness
Health level
Stressors
Physical

Neuromuscular injury
Limb injury
Illness - chronic and acute
Feeling good

It’s not normal to feel happy all the time, but it is possible to take actions to feel satisfied with yourself and your life much of the time.

SUIT COMPILED BY THREE SPIRES PERFORMANCE CONSULTING

WWW.THREESPIRESPC.COM
Flourishing
(SELIGMAN, 2011)

Flourishing is a term used to describe a time in life when things are going well.

The acronym perma can be used to remember five factors that may bring on a sense of flourishing.

Positive emotions
Engagement
Relationships
Meaning
Accomplishments
Positive emotions

A balanced life is likely to have a wide range of emotions.

When flourishing you tend to experience more positive emotions because you:

• Are doing things that help make you happy or aligned with your personal values.

• Don’t get bogged down by events that aren’t going your way.
Creating positive states I

There are several ways you can create a positive emotion.

One of the best is to find and show gratitude for something.

Think of something someone has done for you recently and take the time to write them a thank you note.

Creating positive states II

Giving is a good way of feeling good about yourself.

Do something for someone else even if they haven’t asked for it, particularly if you know they could use the help. Even if it is as simple as getting them a coffee when they don’t seem to have time to stop.
Engagement

Engagement is about finding or creating tasks that hold your attention.

Some tasks will hold your attention naturally but for others try:

• Turning them into games by challenging yourself to see how much / many you can do in a certain time, and then try to beat it.

• Finding someone to work with you on the task.

• Combining the task with something you enjoy.

• Taking the task to a new location.
Relationships

Finding and creating good relationships is critical to our wellbeing.

Take time each day to have a conversation with someone and when doing so, make sure you listen to their story and share your own.
Meaning

Meaning and purpose in what we do helps us feel connected to the world around us.

Believing that what we are doing is important and linked to a bigger picture is good for us.

If you are not sure why you are doing a task try to understand its connection to:

• The company’s mission and purpose.
• Your values.
• The desired outcome.
• The process being undertaken.
• Your own learning and experience.
Accomplishment

Feeling like we are getting somewhere tends to make us feel good.

We don’t always have to feel like we have finished something, but it helps to recognise progress.

Keep a record of all that you have done in a day to balance the list of tasks on your to do list.
Social Network

Your social network is one of your most important protective factors.
Cultivate personal relationships

Build intimate relationships with other people. Make time to see people outside of work. Develop relationships face to face through activities such as book clubs and volunteer work.
Stay in touch

Be mindful of withdrawing socially. Find ways to remain connected to your social network especially when you cannot be physically present such as:

- Letters.
- Phone calls.
- Email.
- Social media.
- Video conferencing.
Build a professional network and support network

Engage with mentors, networking events, upskilling, and secondments.

Invest in a network of support in which you can call on others in times of need and reciprocate when others need support.
Self-compassion for wellness

Self-compassion is a skill you can strengthen through practice and one of the strongest predictors of mental health and wellness. Self-compassion helps you learn how to best care for yourself through both the good and the bad.
Mindfulness
Common humanity
Kindness

When being self-compassionate you will:

- **Mindfully** accept.
- Understand the common **humanity** that your feelings and experiences are not entirely unique.
- Commit to **kindness**, to yourself in the moment, and to reducing future moments of suffering.
The imposters

Imposters get in the way of self-compassion and can include:

• Self-indulgence.
• Self-punishment.
• Self-pity.
• Passivity.
• Egotism.
Self-acceptance and soothing self-talk

Accept what you experience in your body and mind. This practice is about being aware, not about whether a feeling or thought is right or wrong.

Your inner critic is usually loudest in times of stress.

Practice:

• Employing compassionate and soothing self-talk.

• Daily positive affirmations.

• Contemplating joy from inside yourself rather than seeking happiness externally.
Engaging in a body scan trains awareness and curiosity to the sensations in your body. It alternates between a wide and narrow focus of attention on different parts of your body and your body as a whole.

The body scan is a powerful technique to:

• Contact your body.
• Cultivate moment to moment awareness.
• Reduce stress.
Active recovery

Optimal physical and mental recovery includes both passive and active recovery.

During passive recovery you completely rest.

Active recovery involves low to moderate intensity activity that gets the blood flowing to reduce residual fatigue in the muscles.

Active recovery can include:

• Walking or hiking tailored to your current fitness level.
• Swimming to engage the muscular and cardiovascular system without adding pressure on joints.
• Yoga or tai chi to build mobility through a safe range of motion.
• Cycling for aerobic capacity.
• Light weight lifting that is restorative.
• Self-myofascial release using a foam roller or spikey ball to massage your muscles.
Grounding techniques for staying present and calm

Grounding techniques are a set of tools used to assist you to stay in the present moment during episodes of intense anxiety or overwhelming emotions.

Grounding techniques help bring you back into the here and now in a safe way.

The more present you are, the calmer and safer you will feel.
Grounding

Grounding involves:

• Bringing your awareness to some aspect of the physical world or the psychological world within you.

• Focusing on the present rather than the past or future.

• Paying attention mindfully rather than drifting into autopilot.
Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention that entails intentionally being aware of the present moment with flexibility, openness, and curiosity. It is accepting things just as they are, without judgment.

Mindfulness:

• Is an awareness process not a thinking process.

• Involves an attitude of openness and curiosity even if the moment is difficult or painful.

• Involves flexibility of attention in which you are able to consciously direct, broaden, or focus your attention.
Mindful attention

Mindful attention that observes thoughts, feelings, and sensations as constantly in flux, results in a sense of calmness. You can then:

• Take in the fullness of the given moment.
• Be more responsive to yourself and your environment.
• Be less reflexive in your actions.
Stay present

People find it very hard to stay present even though life happens in the here and now. Contacting the present moment lies at the heart of all mindfulness.

In a moment of stress, access the present moment through your five senses.

See 5 things
Hear 4 things
Touch 3 things
Smell 2 things
Taste 1 thing
Breathing and mind-body practices

Focusing on your breath for one full minute trains your attention and begins to change your brain.

Practicing breathing:

• Helps calm your body and mind.

• Allows you to take in more air and reduce symptoms of stress in order to perform.

• Decreases your flight or fight response and increases your rest and digest response.

Mind-body practices that focus on the body as a whole, such as yoga and tai chi, can also develop mindfulness.
Transitions and warm up / cool down

Have clear switches to move from one domain of your life to another.

For example, breathe in and out three times as you say to yourself:

Exhale "I am leaving …"

Inhale "I am going to …"

The body also requires a period of time to make the transition into and out of rehearsals and performances. Warm up and cool down to reduce physical and mental stress.
Visualisation

Imagery has a stronger impact on emotions than words and thinking.

Imagery can involve:

• Recalling a peaceful and pleasant scene.
• Imagining yourself coping well.
• Creating the feeling of control in your life.
• Visualising success.
• Mastery of performance.
Goal setting

Research clearly shows that goal setting facilitates achievement of personal growth and peak performance.
Reality check
Short and long-term goals

Establish both short and long-term goals. This has a number of the benefits including:

• Helping you to focus on what is important.
• Providing motivation.
• Generating a real sense of personal satisfaction upon achievement.
• Giving purpose.
• Developing resilience to persist when the going gets tough.
• Developing strategies and tactics to achieve your goal.
Types of goals

There are three types of goals. **Outcome goals**, **performance goals**, and **process goals**.

Separating goals helps organise your thought process and allows you to focus on what you want to accomplish. Use:

- **Outcome** goals to narrow your focus and draw motivation.
- **Performance** goals to keep you on track for your outcomes.
- **Process** goals for actually getting better.
Outcome goals

An outcome goal is the big picture and often beyond your control.

An outcome goal compares one performance to another and might be about:

• The final show being the best.
• Winning an award.
• Making the most successful performance of the year.
Performance goals

Performance goals are the building blocks to help you reach your outcome goals and improve your performance. You have some control over performance goals.

For example, to make the most successful performance of the year you need to:

• Sell 100% of your box office.
• Have wide reaching community engagement.
• Develop a strong theatrical dramaturgy.
• Secure a world-renowned director.
Process goals

Process goals are completely under your control. They are the actions that need to be taken to reach the performance target.

For example, in order to make the most successful performance of the year, by selling 100% of your box office, you need to:

• Make phone calls.
• Place ads.
• Use social media twice per day.
• Get interviews with print media.
• Develop eye catching marketing.
• Generate buzz.
Importance ranking

The three different goal types are not all equally powerful in their effect on performance.

**Process goals** are the most important.

**Performance goals** are second in helping performance.

**Outcome goals** are essential, but least important compared with the other two.
Deriving goals I

Outcome Goals → Performance Goals → Process Goals

Your outcome goal should get you excited.

The performance goals should be measurable (even if you don’t measure them).

The process goals are about the behaviours you are going to take.

Continued on Deriving goals II
Deriving goals II

Continued from Deriving goals I

If your outcome goal was to create a performance that increases an audience’s understanding of connection with place in migrant populations.

Then your performance goals may be:

• Create five different migrant stories with characters varying across country of origin, time of migration, age, gender, and family unit.

• All stories to include emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects.

• Translate stories into live performances with movement and text.

• Recruit exemplar performers.

Continued on Deriving goals III
Deriving goals III

Continued from *Deriving goals II*

The **process goals** you decide on may be:

- Interview 30 migrants.
- Hold auditions to identify new performers with high potential.
- Spend 1 week drafting the script.
- Arrange an initial 2-day workshop to bring the performers and the migrants together to develop content with the draft script.
- Work from 9 – 5, five days a week for 6 weeks.
- Present a work in progress showing each fortnight and seek feedback on the narrative and artistic content of each performed story.
Achieving goals I

Process Goals → Performance Goals → Outcome Goals

Evaluate your goals in reverse order to the way you set them.

Decide if you have taken all the process actions you said you needed to, in order to achieve the performance targets.

If you did not take the process actions you should not expect to achieve the performance goals or the outcome goal. Consequently, you need to determine if the processes you thought were needed were correct, or if you have a block to taking the required action.

If you took all the process actions you identified but did not hit the performance goals, then you need to rethink your processes to see what was missing.

Continued on Achieving goals II
Achieving goals II

Continued from Achieving goals I

If you did the processes and hit the performance goals but did not get the outcome, then you need to revisit the performance goals to see if they were set at the right level and if there was anything you overlooked.

Remember, the outcome is the thing you wanted, it is the thing that is driving the process, so there should not often be a case for changing the outcome.

Continued on Achieving goals III
Achieving goals III

Continued from Achieving goals II

In the example in deriving goals, if you did not put the hours in (work 9 - 5) or do enough research (interview 30 migrants) then you should not expect to be able to create the performance goal of five different migrant stories.

If you did all the processes but did not end up with 5 stories with the variation required, then you might realise that your process goal regarding interviewing was not specific enough. You needed to interview 30 migrants and include 10 different countries of origin and have at least 3 people in each decade of life from 10 – 80 years of age.

If you hit all the performance goals but the audience feedback was that they did not experienced increase understanding, then it might mean that your performance goals focussed too much on creating the performance and not enough on increasing understanding.
S.M.A.R.T.E.R

Make your goal **SMARTER**:

**S**pecific - make them as detailed and precise as possible.

**M**easurable – have a method by which you can quantify your current position and determine the amount of improvement you want.

**A**ccepted - goals need to be shared and negotiated with all others involved.

**R**ealistic – goals need to be realistic yet challenging.

**T**ime phased - set a date for when the goal is to be achieved.

**E**xciting – ensure the goal motivates.

**R**ecorded – record the goal and any progress towards it.
Visual Communication

Efficient and effective communication and improved ability to influence is vital.

A Wharton Research Centre study has shown that the retention rate of verbal only presentations is approximately 10%. If you only give information verbally you often need to repeat the message. However, when you combine visual messages with verbal communication, you increase the retention rate to nearly 50%.

SUIT COMPILED BY DALMAU CONSULTING PTY LTD
WWW.DALMAU.COM
Go visual

*Go visual* is the most important non-verbal tool you can use to be an effective communicator. To go visual is to display your information visually as well as verbally to the people with whom you are communicating.

Go visual by:

- Displaying information on a computer screen.
- Drawing a diagram on a whiteboard.
- Taking notes on paper.
- Using programs such as PowerPoint to sketch diagrams.
- Moving your hands and fingers as “marker” points.
Go visual for faster processing, less ambiguity, and better retention

Our brains process visual images thousands of times faster than text.

Visual communication allows for clearer communication that is less open to interpretation.

Incorporating visual information into verbal presentation increases retention many fold.
Go visual for more control of group attention and for individual autonomy

Having one visible agenda (rather than individual copies of agendas on paper) allows you, through gesture and body movement, to get attention and have more control over the group to keep the meeting on track.

If someone wants to recap information, or if they were not paying attention, they can ‘catch-up’ on the message by seeing it written visually.
Go visual to reduce volatility and emotional responses

When there is information to convey that may result in an emotional reaction, having the information visible provides the person with a degree of psychological safety.

Keeping your own eyes on the visually displayed information, and directing the listener’s eyes to the visual information, helps make the issue objective rather than personal.
Go visual to equalise power

Displaying information visually equalises the power relationship between the parties and objectifies the information, so both parties are responding to the information and not each other.
Breathing and communication

Breathing is fundamental to communication. Breathing allows you to communicate through speech, to enhance your communication skills, and to influence others enormously. There are breathing skills that you can learn, practice, and deliberately use to improve your communication.

SUIT COMPILED BY DALMAU CONSULTING PTY LTD
WWW.DALMAU.COM
Breathe to reduce anxiety

When communicating issues that may cause a strong emotional response, becoming more conscious and deliberate about your breathing, reduces anxiety in both yourself and the listener.

Slowing and deepening your breathing helps you:

• To manage your own feelings.
• To manage your own anxiety.
• To have a positive influence on those who listen to you.
Breathe to think clearly

It is normal as you go to deliver your message for your level of activation to increase – heart rate increases, muscle groups turn on, your chest tightens, and your breathing becomes more shallow.

The consequence is that it becomes more difficult to think clearly as less oxygen is reaching your brain.

Take some deep breaths. Clear thinking will significantly assist your communication.
Breathe to begin

Consciously take a few deep breaths before you begin and continue to breathe low in your diaphragm.

Deep breathing will help manage the potentially debilitating side effects to communication of increased activation or anxiety.
Breathing and voice tone

You naturally have a lower tone and smoother (rather than jerkier, ums and errs) delivery when you are breathing low and regularly.

A lower tone and smoother delivery has a ‘calming’ influence on listeners.

Breathing to influence others

People unconsciously mirror the non-verbal aspects of others. This extends to breathing. If you breathe low your listeners will more naturally breath low in response.
Conflict resolution

It is common for people to be conflict adverse and to believe conflict will result in poor outcomes. Having a conflict resolution process in place helps.
Conflict outcomes

Conflict resolution outcomes are best:

- **Resolved quickly** rather than being allowed to escalate through inaction.
- **Fair** to all relevant parties with all sides of the story taken into account.
- Handled **confidentially** to minimise impact on others.
- **Transparent** so as to be clear to everyone.
Step 1 - Get clarity on the conflict

Agree on what the disagreement is.
Obtain as much information as possible on each side’s point of view and be certain everyone understands the issues.
Step 2 - Establish a common goal

Discuss what each side would like to achieve as the desired outcome to the conflict.

Find commonality as a starting point for a shared outcome.
CIRCUIT WEST
Step 3 - Work towards a common goal

All sides work together to discuss ways that they can meet the common goal.

Explore win-win solutions. Resolving conflict means finding a solution that does something for both sides, so be ready to communicate openly about the options.
Step 4 - Determine the barriers to the common goal

The two sides acknowledge what has brought them into the conflict and talk about what problems may prevent a resolution.

It is important to use this opportunity to get to the root cause to ensure this conflict will not come up again.
Step 5 - Acknowledge the agreed upon solution

Once both sides have acknowledged a win-win situation they need to own their responsibility in the resolution of the conflict and express aloud what they have agreed to. Use phrases such as:

- I agree to…
- I acknowledge that I have responsibility for…
Crisis Coping

Crisis occurs as part of the unpredictability of life. A crisis is created by an event which temporarily overwhelms a person’s coping resources.

It is a person’s reaction to an event, rather than the event itself, that defines the experience as a crisis.

Be prepared for crisis - Keep up to date with mental health first aid and first aid.
Crisis level

**Extreme**
Seek immediate help call 000 or Lifeline 13 11 14.

**Low**
Use your coping strategies and identify support.

**Crisis over**
Remain prepared and keep revising and using your coping strategies and protective factors.
What to look out for

During a crisis people tend to react in a number of ways. Recognise if you or someone close to you is experiencing changes in their:

- Emotional responses.
- Cognitive responses.
- Physical responses.
- Behavioural responses.
Recognise barriers to seeking help

There are many reasons why people do not seek the help they need. These may include:

• Stigma and embarrassment.
• Preference for self reliance.
• Problems recognising symptoms.
• Not knowing the pathways for help.
• Concerns about confidentiality.
• Negative attitudes to help-seeking.
Develop a referral network

Know where to refer and have contacts you trust:

• GP referral system.

• Have a list of professionals – mental and physical support.

• Support services such as Lifeline, Beyond Blue, Mensline, or Headspace.

• Local hospitals.

• Dedicated first aid officers.

• Know the people who can support you when you are struggling.
Talk and write

Talking to someone about the crisis can help you develop a new perspective on the event.

A journal of your thoughts and feelings can help you see the crisis more clearly and track changes in your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs over time.
Normal and everyday

Remind yourself that your responses are likely to be normal in the context of a crisis.

Re-establishing your everyday routines and habits can have a very comforting effect after a crisis.

Creating goals for yourself that generate a structure for returning to normal can give you a sense of direction and hope for the future.
Delay decisions

During a crisis your ability to think logically can be severely compromised. Delay making major decisions until the crisis is over.

Alcohol and drugs will further compromise your ability to make good choices, and since many drugs act on the central nervous system, they can also adversely affect your mood.
Control what you can

Identify those aspects of the crisis you have control of. Remember, you cannot control the event that created the crisis, but you do have control over your response to the crisis.

Set healthy boundaries in your relationships. You have the right to establish boundaries that feel safe and comfortable. This will give you a much better sense of control during and after the crisis.

Compartmentalise the crisis so that it does not affect all areas of your life.
Take time

Give yourself time to process what you have experienced through the crisis and take on a lighter workload.

Remember, your responses to the crisis are time limited, especially if you utilise coping strategies and build protective factors.
Use Humour

Humour can be an antidote to stress and help you better manage a crisis. Actively seek out:

• Humorous books, T.V. shows, and movies.
• Life situations that will bring humor into your day.
• Creative ways to get your daily fix of laughter.
Self-care

Self-care refers to time spent ensuring that your basic needs are met. If your basic needs are not being met you will find it much more difficult to deal with stress.
Sleep

During sleep our minds and bodies grow and repair.

One night of little sleep is unlikely to diminish performance the following day. However, accumulated fatigue from sleep disorders, sleep deprivation, and excessive daytime sleepiness, will start to have serious effects on your health.

Be aware of the how your sleep patterns are affected by:

• Lack of exercise.
• Watching / working in front of a screen into the night.
• Stimulants such as caffeine.
• Depressants such as alcohol.
Exercise program

Regular physical activity has important benefits for both physical and mental health. There are many recommendations for activity levels that include:

• Intensity of 80% to build up aerobic capacity and muscle strength.
• Regular exercise most days of the week.
• Reducing sedentary behaviour.
Nutrition and diet

Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for the body. What you eat will have an effect on your metabolism, health, performance, and resistance to disease.

Food is your fuel and will determine your:

- Energy levels.
- Strength.
- Stamina.
- Rate of recovery.
- Risk of injury.
- Mental processing and alertness.

If you want to follow a diet, the best advice for most people is a balanced diet according to the NHMRC.

If you have reason to need (allergy or intolerance) or want (losing or gaining weight) something different, then take the time to get professional advice from an accredited dietician.
Self-care pyramid

Practice self-care activities including investing in building coping strategies and protective factors.

Develop your own self-care pyramid.

*Monthly* - take time off, speak to a counselor / personal coach.

*Weekly* - cut down alcohol / other substances, use relaxation techniques.

*Daily* - Sleep well, self-soothe with music, use coping skills, practice gratitude.
Acknowledgements

This deck of cards has been compiled by Dr Shona Erskine www.shonaerskine.com

With the assistance of

Adrian Schonfeld www.threespirespc.com

Tim Dalmau www.dalmau.com

Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Design by Emily Shingleton www.thelittlepress.com.au