Mental health and the workplace: understanding where we are now and how to respond

Emma Mamo

Head of Workplace Wellbeing

mind.org.uk/work

mind

for better mental health

We're Mind, the mental health charity

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect

Current picture

The impact of COVID-19 on us all

- **Outbreak cuts across all areas of wellbeing** – physical, mental, social and financial

- **Impact on individuals –** different for everyone (most likely in multiple ways and at different times)

- **Impact on mental health** – health anxiety, uncertainty, isolation, limiting our access to the things that keep us well, bereavement, trauma

Headlines from our survey

60% of adults and 68% of young people said their mental health got worse during lockdown

Parents and BAME respondents were more affected by concerns about work

Women were disproportionately affected by coronavirus restrictions

People felt their issues were not serious enough to seek help

More people were drinking alcohol and eating too much/too little to cope

18-24 year olds used more negative coping strategies and are struggling to access support

Other key considerations

Issue	Concerns
Unequal impact	Some groups have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic
Caring responsibilities	People who have children have had additional burdens
Shielded group	Impact of stricter restrictions on their lives, isolation and health anxiety
Cultural differences	Mental health is not openly talked about in some communities
What happens next	Recovery/rebuilding phase – opportunity for a reset?

Other key events

- School results

- NHS on pause

- Murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter movement

- Brexit

- Transphobia, Government policy and media coverage

- Climate change

Supporting your people

Guiding principles

- **Wellbeing** – needs to be the priority, need to understand people's individual circumstances

- **Clarity –** priorities, policies, processes, focus on simplification

- **Community –** regular updates, two-way dialogue, social connection

- **Reflective** – take stock, 'test and learn', seek feedback

Wellness Action Plans

Our tool helps develop a tailored action plan for:

what keeps you well at work

triggers and early warning signs

impact of mental health problems on performance

steps you and your line manager could take

steps you can take yourself

Employees who are key workers

Issue	Solution
Exposure to COVID-19	Ensure adequate safety measures are in place and clearly communicated
Exposure to trauma	Ensure appropriate support is available
Challenging situations	Encourage peer support and debriefing
Impact on resilience	Encourage self-care – before, during and at the end of a shift
Burn-out	Manage staffing levels and have regular check-ins

Employees who are WFH

Issue	Solution
'Always on'	Support clear boundaries for the working day
'System overload'	Agree ways of working including systems and platforms to be used, manage email traffic
Access to support	Schedule regular check-ins
Burn-out	Clarity about priorities and offer flexibility especially for working parents
Isolation	Encourage social connection and peer support

Employees who have been furloughed

| Issue	Solution
Transition point	Provide reassurance where you can and keep people updated as you prepare to bring them back
Reintegration	Carry out wellbeing check-ins and develop return-to-work plans – routine, caring responsibilities
Impact on self-esteem	Be transparent about decision-making process and provide reassurance
Feelings of distrust, anger or anxiety	Repair the impact of any decisions or actions taken during lockdown through two-way dialogue
Financial concerns	Signpost to support available

Managing change

Guiding principles

- **Ensure wellbeing is a priority** – signpost to internal and external support

- **Demonstrate compassionate leadership** – adopt tailored support and approach for each employee. Ensure employees are appropriately aware of applicable policies and rights

- **Ensure clear communication** – needs to be correct, detailed and streamlined. Ensure the rationale for change is clearly articulated with respect to the reasons for change and what the future state needs to achieve

- **Listen (and respond)** – explore all options and counter-proposals

Taking care of your own mental health

Stress versus pressure
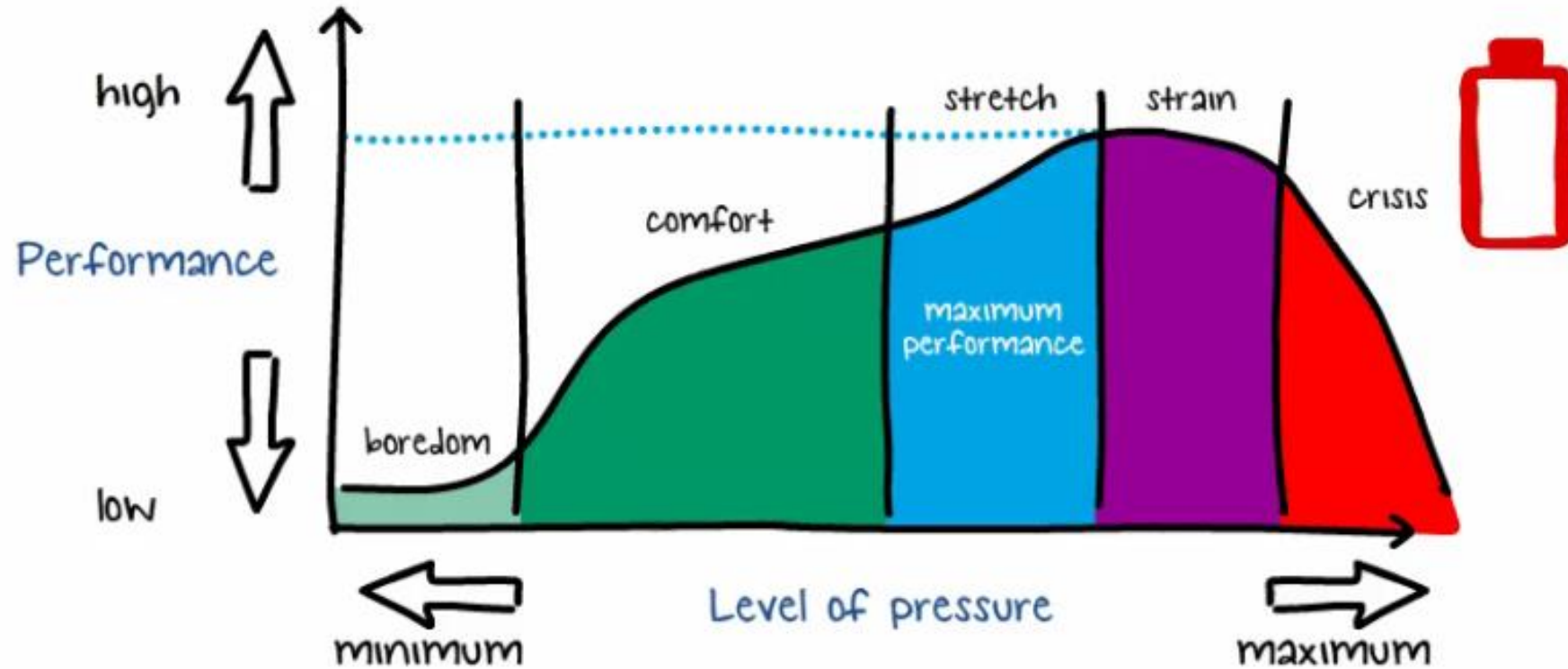
Resilience

What is it?

The capacity to stay mentally well during difficult times is what we call resilience.

Resilience is something that can change over time and that we, as individuals, have the power to change.

We believe that resilience can be taught, and learned, and that the elements that build resilience can be introduced into everyday life

wellbeing

social connections

ways to cope

Useful tools

Take 90 seconds for
YOU

Stress scan

Look out regularly for your stress signature. The sooner you spot the stress, the sooner you can manage it

1 Scan your body from head to toe.

2 Identify any physical signs of stress, such as tense muscles, an upset stomach, or shallow breathing.

3 Now scan your mind and mood. Notice if you are snappy, easily startled or have racing thoughts.

IN

Breathing window

1 Find a square shape in the room.

2 Trace each line clockwise with your eyes.

Take 90 seconds for

YOU

OUT

OUT

5 This improves oxygen flow and will adjust your focus.

4 Keep your breathing slow and steady.

3 Take a deep breath in and out as you follow each line.

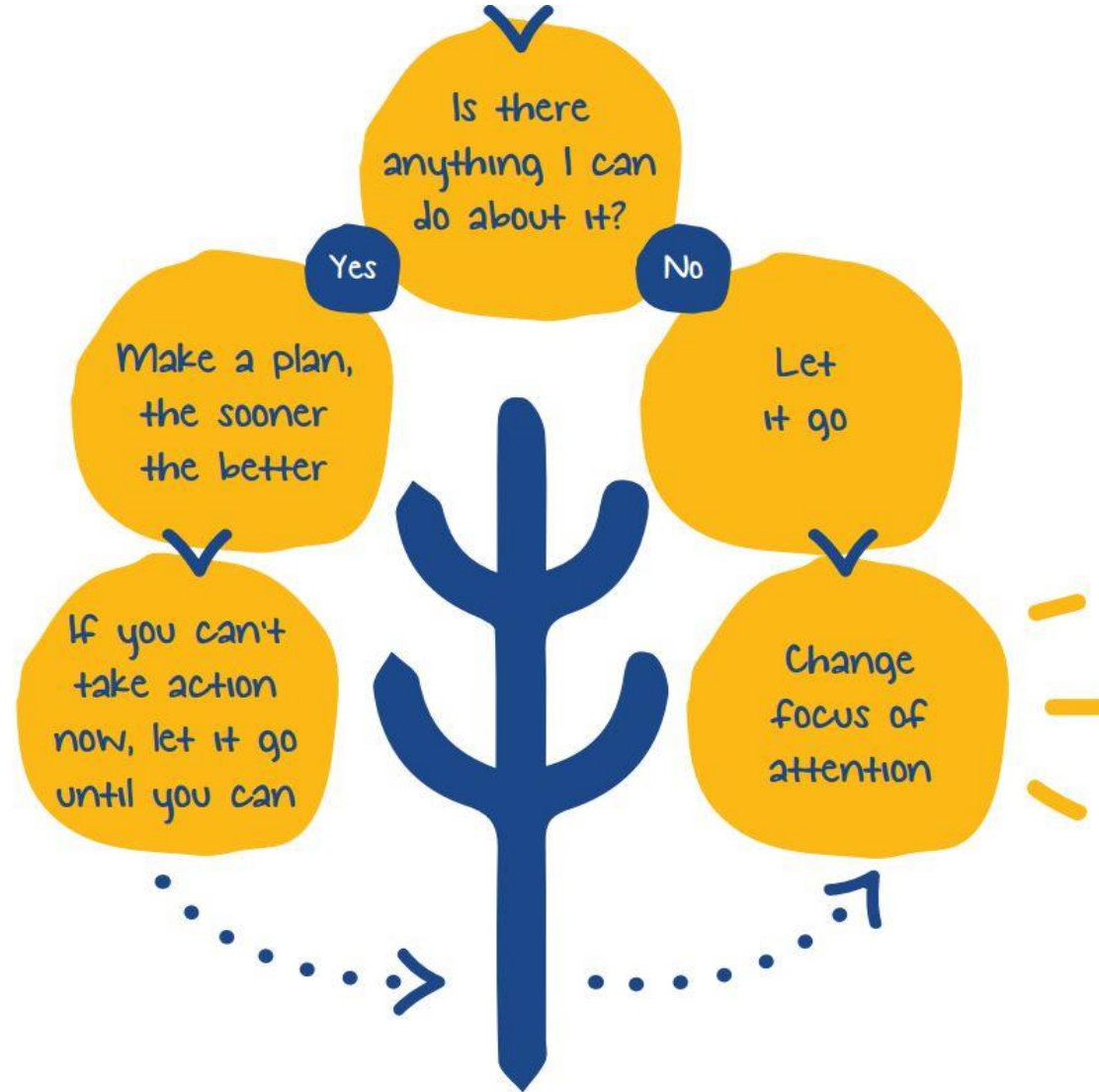**IN**

Take one minute for you – tense and relax

(5) **Inhale and tense one muscle group for five seconds** – like your feet, or shoulder muscles.

Exhale and release the tension that's there, imagining stress leaving your body.

(10) **Relax for 10 seconds**, and move on to the next muscle group, until you've worked through your whole body.

When releasing the tension, focus on the changes you feel when the muscle is relaxed.

Finally, tense your entire body and then relax. Take a deep breath and focus on the feeling of ease.

Finishing work checklist

1. Take a moment to think about today or write down your thoughts

2. Acknowledge three things that were difficult. Purposefully let them go

3. Consider three things that went well. Hold onto them

4. Choose an action that signals the end of your shift or work day

5. Now switch your attention to home

6. How will you rest and recharge?

If you're struggling to switch off...

Is there anything I can do about it?

Yes

No

Make a plan, the sooner the better

Let it go

If you can't take action now, let it go until you can

Change focus of attention

Further support

Useful resources

- Information for individuals and young people

- Information on bereavement and managing stress

- Information for workplaces

- Toolkits for employers

Contact: work@mind.org.uk

Thank you!

To find out more visit

mind.org.uk/workplace

Contact:
work@mind.org.uk
020 8215 2231

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