



Jonathan's Voice
Speaking out for mental health

Managing stress at work

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Jonathan's Voice
www.jonathansvoice.org.uk
Registered Charity 1180424

Introduction to Jonathan's Voice



Jonathan was a patent attorney in Bristol. On the outside, life appeared to be going well. But a month after his 35th birthday he tragically took his own life on 30th October 2017. An “out of the blue” suicide. Sadly, he had been masking his mental health struggles very, very well.

Shortly after this tragic event his family founded Jonathan's Voice, now a registered charity, to promote better mental health in the workplace.

What do we do?



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- Because of our history we have a particular focus on the staff working in intellectual property sector and associated professions.
- We work alongside professional institutions, individual firms and CIPA, CITMA and IP Inclusive to help develop mentally healthy workplaces where all may thrive.
- We provide workshops, webinars and resources. As a charity, we can offer these free at the point of delivery.
- We also fund vital research into better understanding of male suicide and preventative steps.



All available to download free of charge from
www.jonathansvoice.org.uk

What we are covering



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- Flipping the way we think about stress in the workplace
- Reflection on findings on the IP Inclusive/Jonathan's Voice wellbeing at work survey
- Understanding workplace stress; cause and effect
- Workplace stress as a hazard: remove or manage?
- Working together to change the culture; whose responsibility?
- Psychological safety
- A few tips to help you manage
- Next steps – little by little



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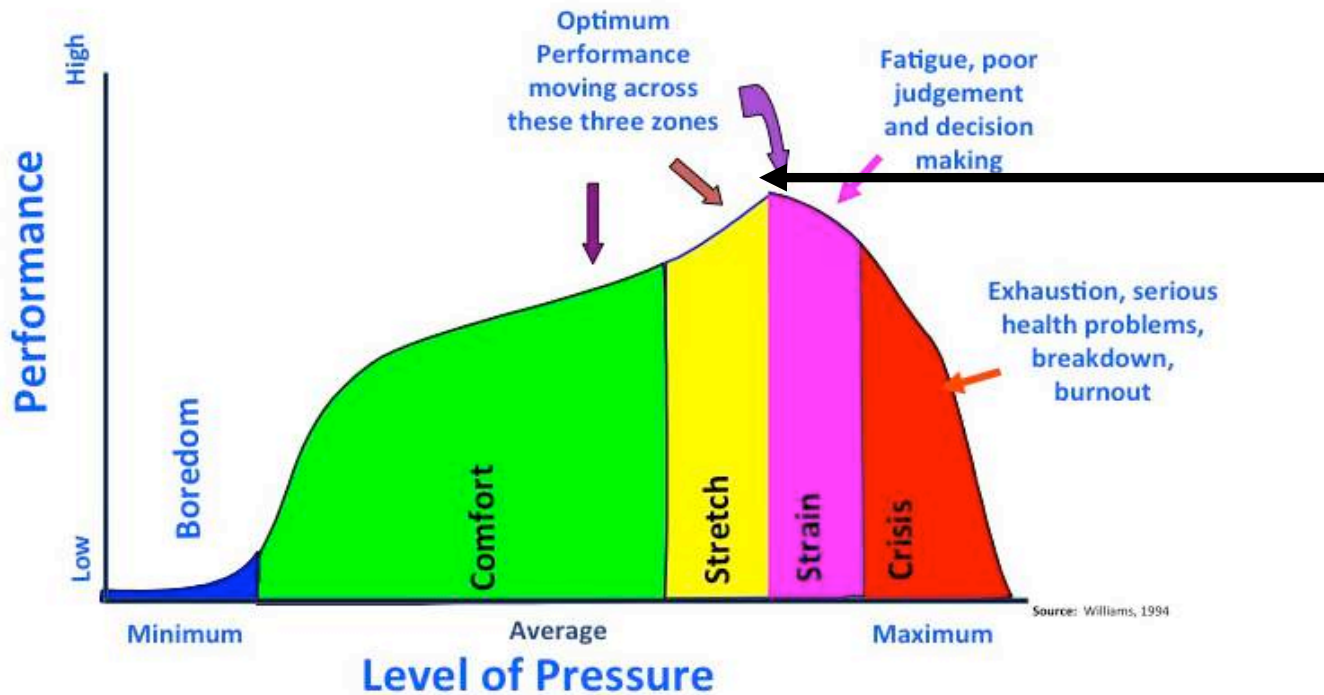
What is stress?

When the demands put on us outweigh our ability to cope, we can become stressed

Fight, flight or freeze response to danger or threat

Stress in the workplace

Pressure Performance Curve



We all have different “tipping points” when too much pressure makes us unwell (causes stress)

Prolonged stress can lead to burnout and other physical and mental health difficulties

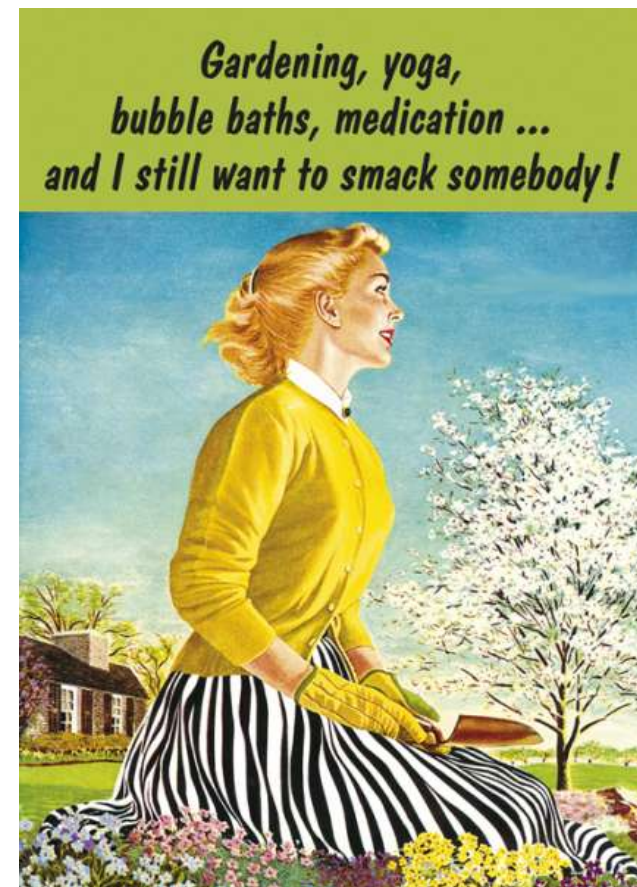


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Burn out

'burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed'.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)



Flipping the way we think about stress in the workplace



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- So often the emphasis has been on the individual and help has been targeted at individuals who are struggling
- While this is important, a far more effective approach is to look at the whole system and treat the causes and not the symptoms
- This might be hard as it is difficult to challenge the notion that this is the way it has to be because it's always been like this or it's just the nature of the job

Let's all think – and talk - about workplace stress differently



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- Let's **stop** focusing on the individual ie trying to give them the skills to manage intolerable stress or providing support when they struggle
- Let's **start** creating an environment where known stressors are recognised and minimised – or even eradicated
- Where **everyone** – at all levels - feels comfortable in speaking up and identifying this

Let's try and create a culture where

- Time off is encouraged as good practice and staffing levels are high enough to accommodate this
- We don't see unhealthy working practices (presenteeism, working over-long hours, not taking annual leave etc) as somehow heroic or showing true commitment
- Being able to complete your work within your allotted hours demonstrates efficiency and good productivity; if this is not possible your workload needs to be reviewed

Understanding workplace stress; cause and effect





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IP Inclusive and Jonathan's Voice

Wellbeing in the workplace survey 2022

This was sent out via CIPA, CITMA and IP Inclusive
Three versions:

[Survey for student members of CIPA and CITMA](#)

[Survey for IP paralegals and business support professionals](#)

[Survey for all other CIPA and CITMA members](#)

A lot of similarities between all three

Headlines



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	Students N: 100 %	Support staff and paralegals N: 154 %	Others N: 168 %
High stress levels	71	50	59.5
Anxiety	62	49.5	56
Other MH problems (formally diagnosed or not)	36	21.4	27.4
None of these	16	37	17.3

Causes of stress and anxiety



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	Students N:99 %	Support staff and paralegals N: 154 %	Others N:168 %
Exam performance fears	57.6	N/A	N/A
Finding time for exam prep	68.7	N/A	N/A
Deadlines	50.5	37.5	60.1
Billing targets	48.5	5.3	44.1
Insufficient control over workload	38.4	33.6	32.1
Insufficient support	30.3	29.6	35.7
Conflict with home life	18.2	26.3	32.7

What else might be going on?



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Intersectionality; other factors that might be contributing

- Some personal (private, home life, illness, unique to the individual)
- Some external, systemic – affecting whole profession
- Some societal such as Covid or ‘cost of living crisis’, which will affect most people to differing extents and erode resilience
- Impact of race, gender, sexuality, disability etc; some communities might have to deal with greater stress in the workplace than others

Workplace stress as a hazard: remove or manage?



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What's the hazard?

Deadlines

Can it be removed?

No – deadlines can't be removed but maybe the way we deal with them can be. What can you do to manage it/mitigate the effects?

What's the hazard?

Finding time for exam preparation

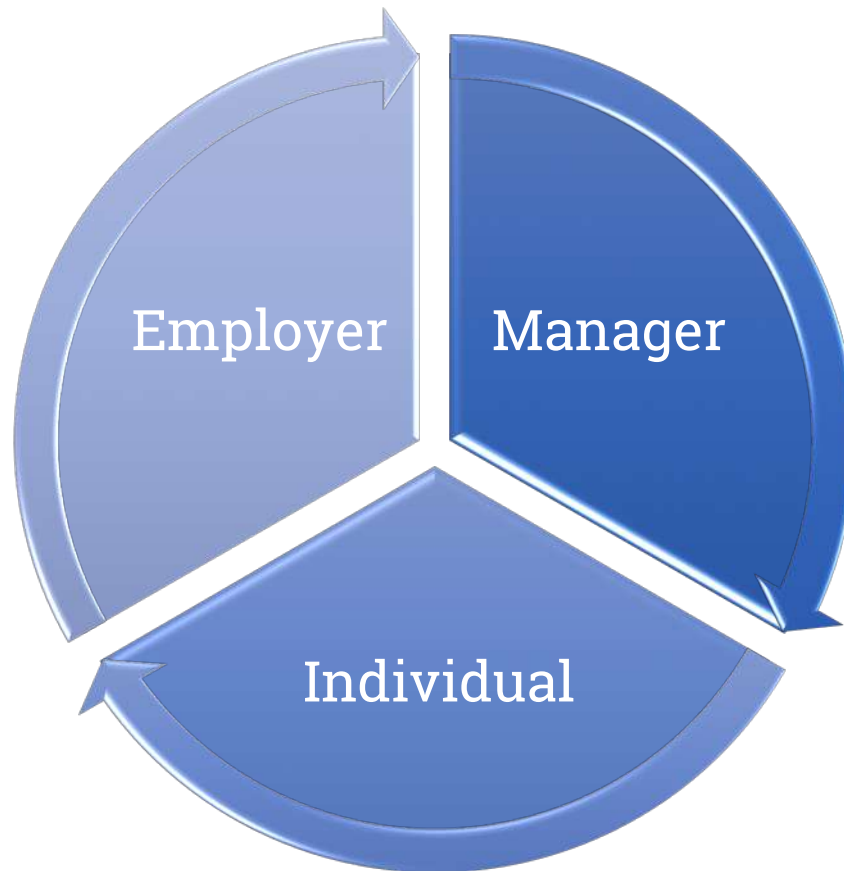
Can it be removed?

Yes – What can you put in place to reduce this stress? Make sure it is effective and supported

Managing stress in the workplace: who's responsibility?



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Working together to change the culture



What's stopping people talking?

- Stigma?
- Embarrassment
- Fear
- Feels too private – don't know how to talk about it
- Don't think that talking will help

What's stopping people taking time off?

- Let's look at the survey results

Time off due to mental health problems

	Students N: 100 %	Support staff and paralegals N:153 %	Others N:167 %
None	78.0	87.6	83.8
A few days	13.0	9.2	12.00
1 – 3 weeks	6.0	2.0	3.0
> 3 weeks	3.0	1.3	1.3

Reasons for not taking time off

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	Students N:99 %	Support staff and paralegals N: 154 %	Others N:168 %
Having too much work to do	55.0	45.4	59.9
Feeling you should be able to cope anyway	65.0	40.1	46.1
Not wanting to make life difficult for colleagues	48.0	46.7	49.7
Concern about its impact on career prospects	54.0	19.1	35.3
Embarrassment	34.0	20.4	18.6
Not wanting to let clients down	19.0	7.9	38.9



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Other things to consider

- Professional culture
- Company culture
- Lack of psychological safety
- Financial reasons
- Personal drivers

Cost of not addressing stress at work



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	Students N:99 %	Support staff and paralegals N: 154 %	Others N:168 %
Reduced productivity	73.0	35.6	73.2
Finding it hard to concentrate on your work	72.0	49.7	34.5
Considering leaving your current job	50.0	40.3	41.1
Considering leaving the profession	43.0	21.5	33.9
Nearly making a work-related mistake that would not have happened otherwise	30.0	34.2	34.5
Making a work-related mistake ...	35.0	27.5	17.3



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In summary

Managing mental health at work can appear challenging. But it should not be seen as onerous. Rather, it offers an opportunity for growth and sustainable development. Safe, healthy and inclusive workplaces not only enhance mental and physical health but likely also reduce absenteeism, improve work performance and productivity, boost staff morale and motivation, and minimize conflict between colleagues.

WHO Guidelines on mental health at work, September 2022

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240053052>

Changing the culture

Set realistic expectations, change happens ... little by little



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- Change doesn't happen over night
- Younger generations have different expectations to older generations; talk to each other and learn
- Think together how you would like it to be, be creative, be bold – change can happen
- Everyone can play a part but senior leadership buy-in is essential
- Think about where the stress points are in your company – what next steps can you take to alleviate these – remembering they will be different for trainees, fee earners and support staff

The importance of psychological safety



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- ***Psychological safety*** (first identified by Amy Edmondson in 1999) ensures that people feel able to say what they think and feel without fear of recrimination or ridicule.
- A psychologically safe environment also encourages people to give feedback and make suggestions, knowing they will be taken seriously.
- Regular, honest, transparent and consistent communication helps build trust.
- Responding to/acting on feedback shows that people's opinions are of value

In the meantime, some (not so) easy tips...



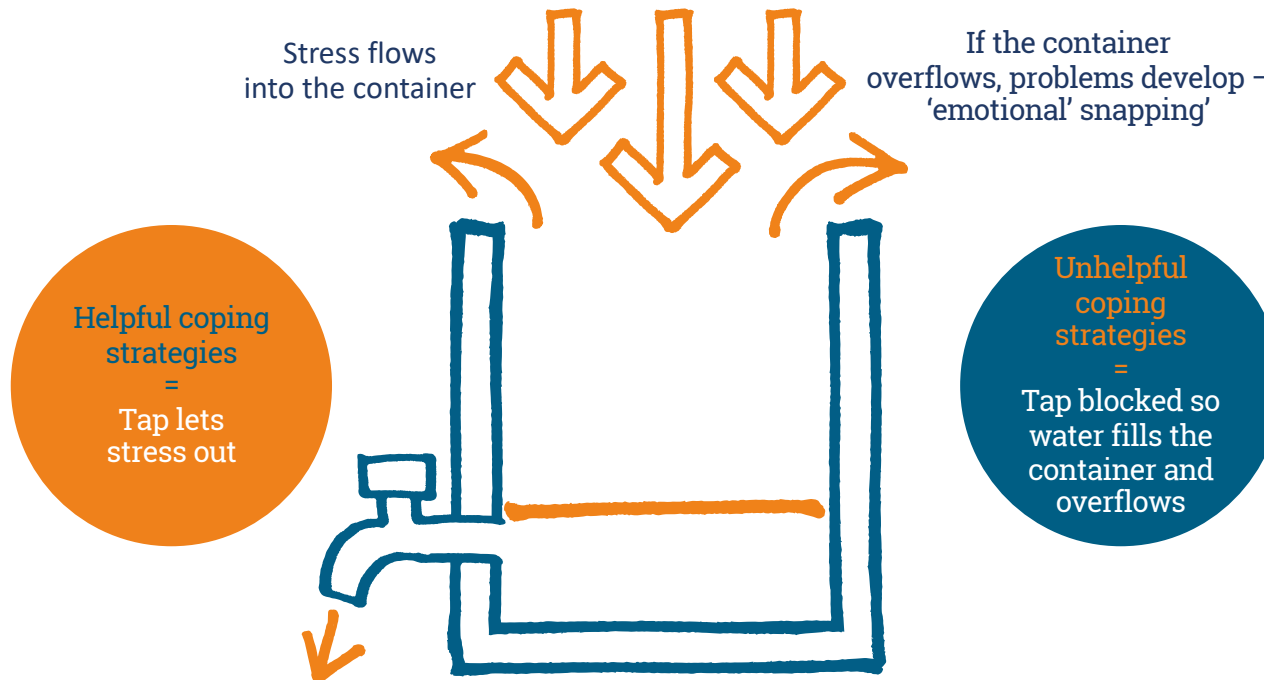
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1. Whose stress is it anyway? Stress can be catching
2. Sphere of influence/sphere of control
3. Calm down your amygdala: a few deep breaths
4. Take proper breaks, including time off if you are not well
5. Be clear about your boundaries and stick to them
6. Learn how to say no to impossible or unreasonable requests
7. Talk to your manager if you feel your workload is unrealistic or other people's behaviour is putting you under excessive stress
8. Talk about stress and what's causing it - stop thinking about it as an individual failing if you can't cope – it could well be that there is just too much to do!
9. Think about stress at work together; this is an issue that potentially affects everybody

What's in your stress container?



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What's in your stress container?

Spend a couple of minutes thinking about your stress container and write down:

- What is in the container?
- Unhelpful coping strategies?
- Helpful coping strategies
- How might you take this forward with with yourself and others?

Don't waste time trying to control the things you have no control over



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Managing stress:

First, calm down your amygdala and engage the rational part of the brain



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Helpful to remember what's going on in your brain – the role of the amygdala

When your amygdala gets over-stimulated you tend to

- Over-react/Knee-jerk reactions
- Jump to worst-case scenarios
- Not think things through properly
- Lose perspective

Taking a few deep breaths or counting to 10 can help

Rest, relax, disconnect from work

- Regular breaks are essential for maintaining our mental wellbeing. They also help us work more effectively.
- Maintain boundaries between work and home life so you can switch off properly.
- Encourage others to do this



Rest, relax, disconnect from work

- Notice when you stop doing this.
- Feeling you are too busy to take a break is a sure sign you need one.
- Try scheduling them in to your day.
- Try not work when you are not well (presenteeism) or on holiday (leavism).



Impact

- Giving yourself time to recharge will increase productivity
- It will decrease stress and anxiety
- Reduce risk of burn out and increase job satisfaction
- Less likely to make mistakes
- It's better to nip things in the bud if you are feeling unwell rather than let them develop into something serious
- Being properly rested will help your immune system



Set boundaries



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- **Boundaries** are important for both you and others
- They should be agreed with your manager/supervisor, clearly communicated where necessary and stuck to
- Make sure that you are clear about your boundaries with yourself and others
- Flexibility is important occasionally but this should be the exception rather than the norm – or you may find you are giving mixed messages which are confusing

Learn how to say 'no'



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- Keeping to your boundaries should help in **saying no** when requests or demands are unreasonable because of the timing, you have too much to do or that they are 'not your job' (there may be other reasons)
- You can be clear, explain why you need to say no, if necessary, and still be accommodating, where appropriate

Keep well with the CLANGERS

Adapted from 5 Ways to Wellbeing by Dr Phil Hammond

Connect

Keep Learning (and being creative)

Be Active

Notice

Give to others

Eat well

Rest and Relaxation

Sleep

How can you bring the **CLANGERS**
into your life?



And don't forget to breathe ...

- It sounds obvious but we need to remember to breathe during difficult times
- Breathing deeply helps calm our systems down and lowers our heart beat
- It increases oxygen which will give us more energy and mental clarity

A simple breathing exercise: breathe in for 3, pause, breathe out for 3, pause – repeat 3 times (or for as long as you need)



Next steps for you:

1. Think about what you will put in place for yourself to help you manage or protect yourself from stress at work – this may include having the confidence to speak up when things get too much.
2. Are there any steps or ideas you'd like to suggest to your team or senior management to help reduce work-related stress? Be as creative as you like!

More information:

CIPD fact sheets Stress in the workplace:

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/stress-factsheet#gref>

Where to get help



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- Your GP or practice nurse, especially if you have physical symptoms that need checking out; ***in a crisis call 111, 999 or go to A & E***
- Hub of hope <https://hubofhope.co.uk/>
- Your line manager, supervisor or colleague
- Human Resources
- Mental Health First Aider or Mental Health champion
- Employee Assistance Programme, if you have one
- For student members of CIPA, there's also the Informals' MHFAer support line via informalswelfare@gmail.com
(see <https://yellowsheet.wordpress.com/access-to-mental-health-first-aiders-and-support-helplines/>).
- LawCare <https://www.lawcare.org.uk/> **0800 279 6888**
- Samaritans <https://www.samaritans.org/> **116 123**
- Calmzone <https://www.thecalmzone.net/> **0800 585858**

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Thank you for listening



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Any questions?

Finding a breathing space



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