

Stress



Different things are stressful for different people. Reactions to stress are different too, which means that managing stress is very personalized. What works for one person might not work for another.

Do you know what's most likely to cause you stress?

And how can others tell when you're feeling stressed?

What is stress?

NHS (National Health Service, UK) defines stress as:

"Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure."

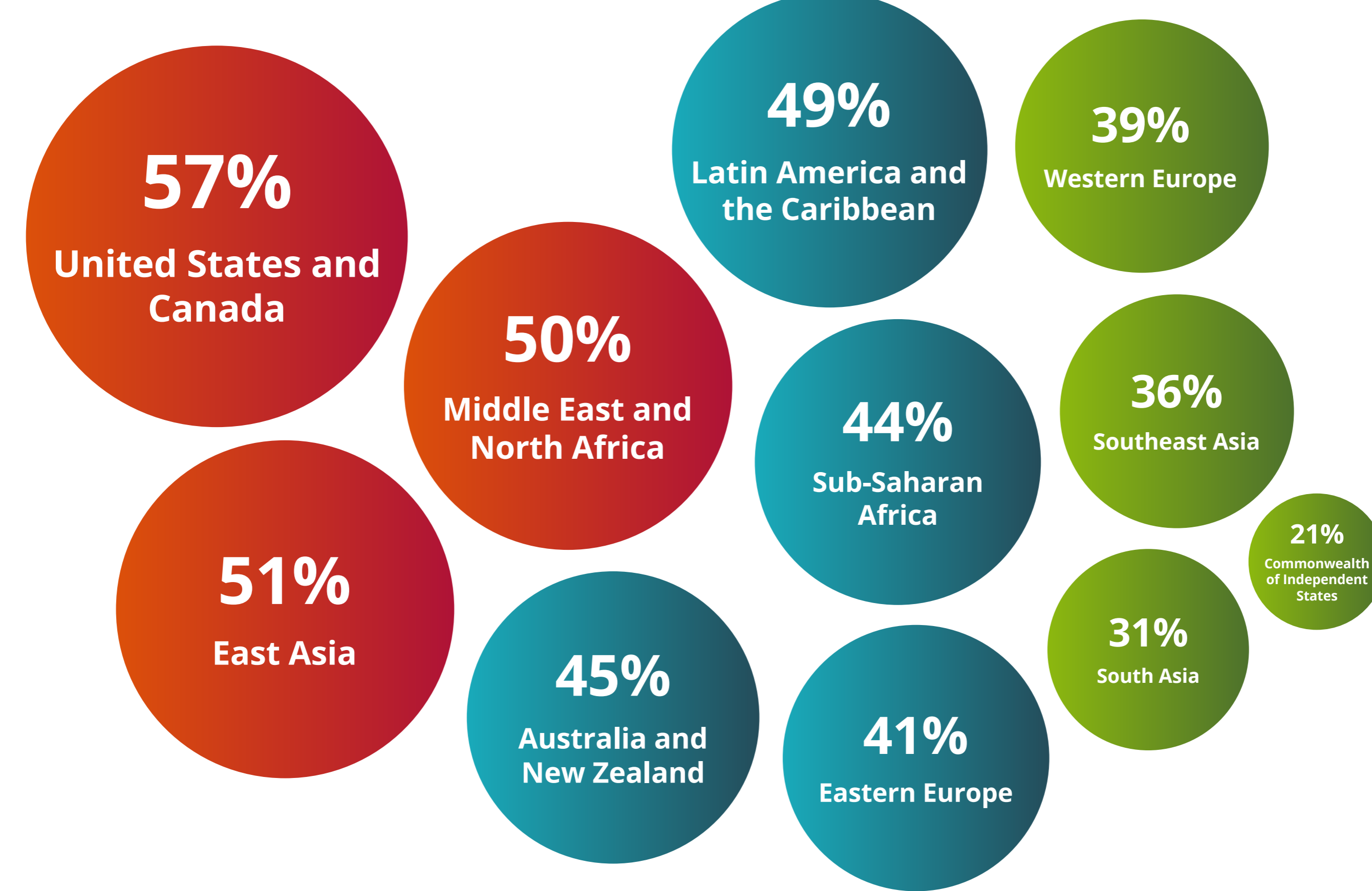
Dictionary.com defines stress (related to physiology) as:

"A physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to illness."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines stress as:

"Harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job don't match the capabilities or resources of the worker."

Unfortunately, the numbers of those reporting high stress has been [increasing globally](#):



What happens when stress goes up?

No stress

With no stress at all, you also have very little stimulation. You may be bored or asleep. Your heart rate is likely to be at a resting stage and you feel relaxed, maybe a little lethargic.

Everyday stress (peak performance)

Normal, low levels of stress will help you to increase alertness, and it's at these points that you'll reach everyday stress and also peak performance. Here, the challenges and stresses you experience are sufficient to motivate you without increasing levels of anxiety.

Extreme stress

When everyday stress increases beyond what you can handle, your performance will start to suffer noticeably and alertness will turn into worry and anxiety. Cases of extreme stress include traumatic events such as losing a job or the death of a friend or family member, but even the everyday stresses of work can build up over time. During extreme stress, you may show a very extreme and narrow version of your normal behavior, or exhibit parts of your personality that aren't normally seen and aren't part of your normal behaviors. If extreme stress goes on too long, you risk collapse or burnout.

Stimulation (low stress)

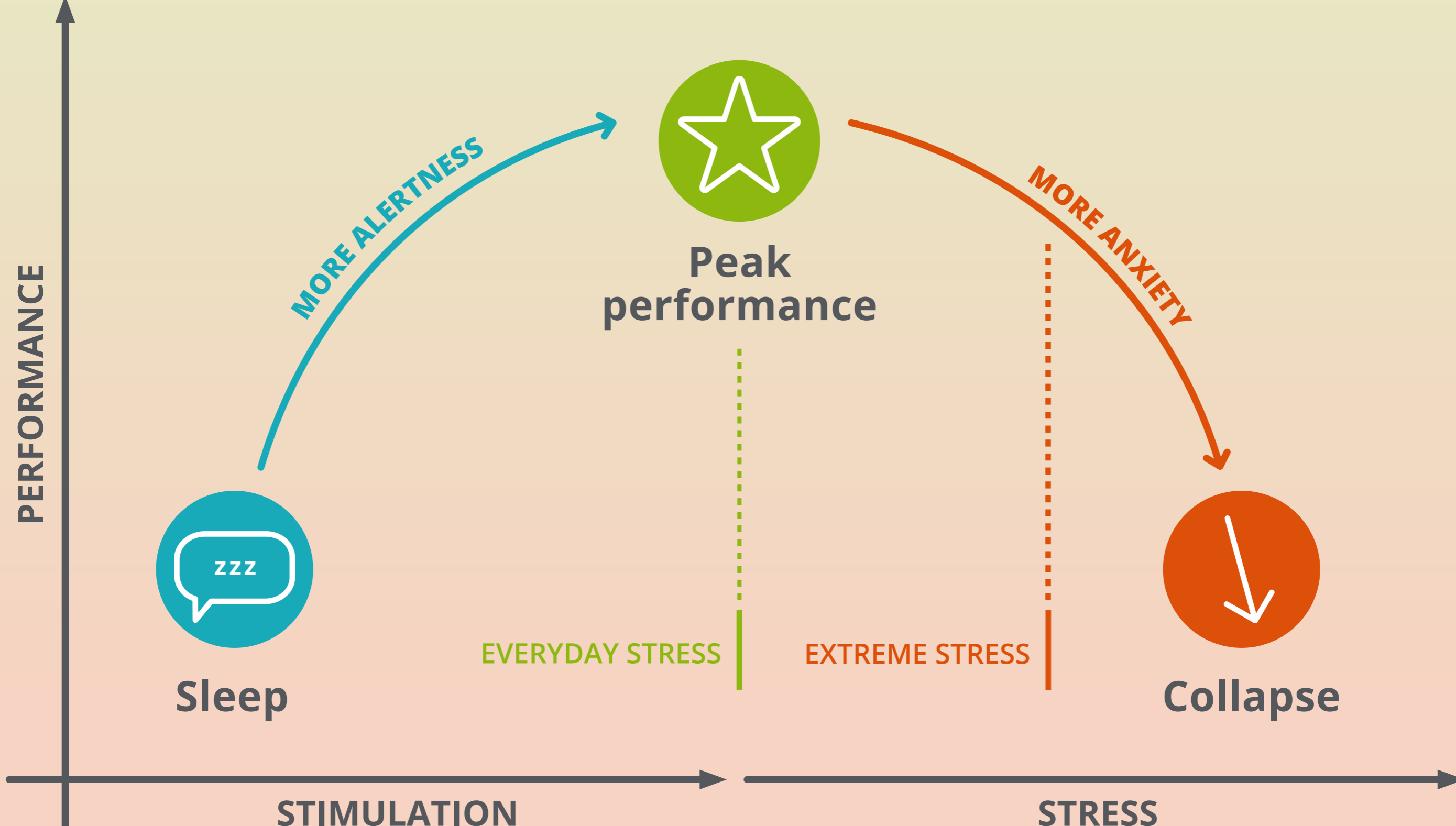
Any sort of stimulation is considered a low level of stress, and it's not a bad thing. Stimulation or low levels of stress increase your alertness and your levels of performance. For most people, the ideal workplace has some sort of challenges, and these challenges allow you to grow as you increase your performance.

Everyday stress

As stress increases, so does anxiety, and performance suffers. Everyday stress could include high job demands, lack of time, or things like daily commute traffic, minor disagreements with coworkers or family, or even small frustrations or mundane tasks like laundry or cooking. Under everyday stress, anxiety drives an exaggeration of core aspects of your personality, turning strengths into weaknesses.

Collapse/burnout

If extreme stress continues for some time, you may show symptoms of burnout, feeling overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet the demands placed on you. Your behavior is likely to be very different from your usual self. You may feel you are unable to accomplish anything in life, or that you don't really know who you are. Over time, there can be negative effects on your physical well-being.



Stressors by MBTI® personality type

ESTP and ESFP

Stressors

- Lack of stimulation and excitement
- Theoretical, abstract tasks without practical application right now
- Being physically confined, e.g. through illness or circumstances

Behavior under everyday stress

- Seeks more and more external stimulation and excitement
- May behave in a thrill-seeking or dangerous way or over-indulge
- Lives solely in the present moment and will not make any decisions

ESTJ and ENTJ

Stressors

- Inefficient people, systems, or organizations
- Lack of closure, not being able to make decisions, blockers
- Having to focus on people's feelings, rather than the task

Behavior under everyday stress

- Becomes overly directive, forceful, even aggressive
- Makes snap decisions and imposes them on others
- Dismisses evidence/other opinions that do not fit their view

ENTP and ENFP

Stressors

- People who say "it'll never work"
- Too much seemingly irrelevant detail
- Lack of variety; not being able to do anything new

Behavior under everyday stress

- Shares increasingly impractical ideas with more and more people
- Unable to take things seriously, becomes destructively 'playful'
- Will not be tied down to decisions

ESFJ and ENFJ

Stressors

- Conflict with others and between others
- Lack of warmth, not having their friendliness reciprocated
- Injustice in the world at large

Behavior under everyday stress

- Becomes effusive and over-friendly
- Becomes demanding in getting their own and others' needs met
- Interprets situations in terms of their values, ignoring any evidence

INTP and ISTP

Stressors

- Having their carefully reasoned solutions dismissed or ignored
- Illogical decisions that have not been thought through
- Excessive displays of approval or emotion from others

Behavior under everyday stress

- Withdraws to solve problems by themselves
- Fixates on finding the one correct solution
- Ignores other people; makes decisions without informing them

ISTJ and ISFJ

Stressors

- Having to act without detailed, practical information or plans
- Having the lessons of their experience dismissed by others
- Changing things that already work

Behavior under everyday stress

- Obsessively searches for that one important piece of information
- Withdraws from the outer world
- Cannot make a decision until all the information has been found

ISFP and INFP

Stressors

- People who ignore, dismiss, or contravene their values
- Working in a job that is at odds with those values
- Inflexible and unthinking people or organizations

Behavior under everyday stress

- Withdraws into an inner dialogue
- Obsessively works through decisions that fit with their values
- Ignores facts that do not fit with the picture they have painted

INTJ and INFJ

Stressors

- Not having time to think through possibilities before answering
- Having their well-considered ideas dismissed or ignored
- Disorganized, opinionated people

Behavior under everyday stress

- Withdraws to build increasingly complex ideas in their head
- These models may become divorced from reality
- Unable to act until every possibility has been explored

Dealing with stress

How can you help yourself and your employees better deal with stress?

1. Know their MBTI type and stress behaviors
2. Help employees build resilience

When you feel stressed, it can get in the way of dealing effectively with life's demands, and it can affect everything you do. Understanding MBTI personality type and helping your employees build resilience will allow them to:

- Understand their personal stress triggers
- Identify strategies for coping with and reducing stress
- Prepare them to build their resilience at work and home through personality insights

Check out the [MBTI Essentials + Building Resilience](#) virtual workshop from The Myers-Briggs Company.



Questions about stress and personality?
Contact The Myers-Briggs Company

