

STRESS AND COMMUNICATION

What is Stress?

Stress is a **physical, mental, or emotional** response to a demand.

The demand can be either **real or perceived**.

- Real stress tends to be more objective in nature.
Example: My husband just had a heart-attack.
- Perceived stress tends to be more subjective in nature.
Example: I haven't heard from my sister so I wonder if she is mad at me?

What is Stress?

The response to stress is intended to serve as a source of protection from potential harm.



What is Stress?

The response to stress can be **positive or negative**.

- **Short-term** stress can be positive if it creates change or motivations that serve the person well.
Example: My husband's heart-attack has prompted us to exercise more and change our diet.

- **Long-term** stress can have physical and emotional impacts that disrupt life.
Example: My sister not returning my phone calls just reinforces my belief that I will always be the outsider of the family.

Approaches to Stress

People respond differently to stress depending on their stress-tolerance ability and their overall temperament.

Variables that trigger stress are unique to each person.

When you cuss I get nervous and when I withdraw you get anxious.

Responses that occur in people may vary among individuals.

I might get a headache and you might not be able to sleep.
I might lash-out and you might avoid people.



Approaches to Stress

While we all adapt to stress, there are personal patterns that individuals gravitate towards during stress.

When our “back is against the wall”, we lean on a particular approach to cope. Personality traits steer us when we decide how to deal with stress.

By understanding our personal approach and that of those around us, we are better equipped to deal with crisis.

Approaches to Stress

A helpful way to determine your personal style when responding to stress is to look at a specific past situation when you experienced extreme stress or a crisis.

Did you become more...

Passive or active in behaviors?

Introverted or extraverted with communication?

Cooperative or competitive with others?

Analytical or impulsive with decision-making?

Avoidant or engaging with the problem?

Evaluating Stress Styles

Our stress responses, patterns, and approaches typically contain *both* positive and less desirable attributes.

Remember the beneficial aspects of the way you approach stress, along with the constructive ways that others deal with stress.

Where we place our focus shapes our energy, beliefs, and behaviors.

External vs. Internal Variables

External Influences = Can be inside and outside of your control.

- Inside your control = working overtime when it isn't required.
- Outside your control = working overtime when it is required.

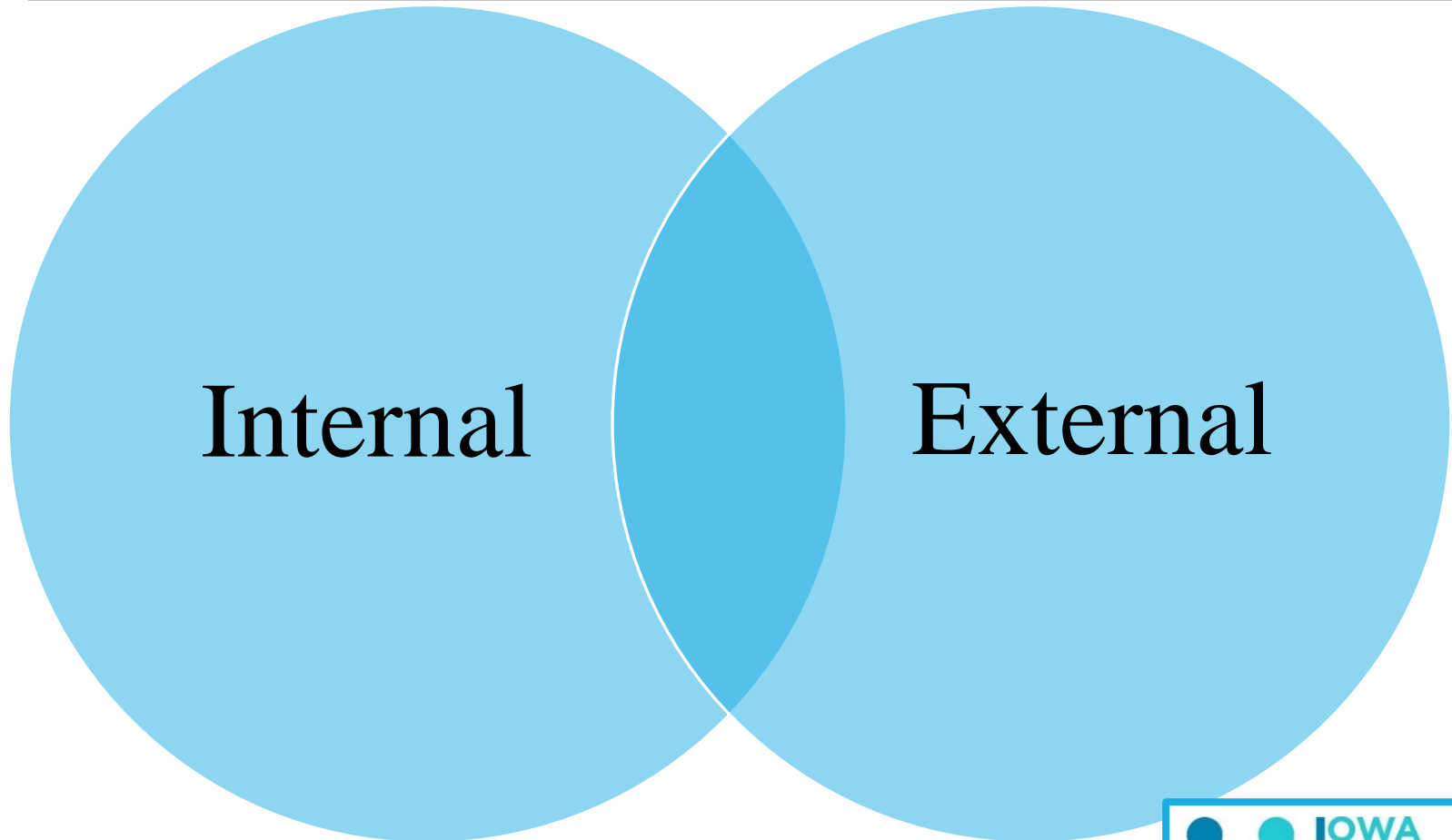
Internal Decisions = Inside of your control.

- You are asked to work overtime and you decide if you will do it.
- You are required to work overtime, and you decide if you will stay with the employer, if you will change jobs within the company, or if you will request a schedule shift.

There is often more choice than we acknowledge.



Balancing the External and Internal



Stress Confusion



People often confuse the following with their stress:

1. They are not sure about the actual source of the stress.
2. They misunderstand why certain people/activities are triggering to them.
3. They overestimate the strength of the boundaries they have established to respond to the stress.
4. They underestimate the amount of choice they really have.

Evaluating these areas can help you de-escalate stress within yourself and when dealing with others.

Stress Confusion



IAMNOWHERE

We are not eating
broccoli today

Stress-Reflection Skills

1. Think about the stress in your life you can control.

How will you handle this stress moving forward?

2. Think about the stress in your life you can not control.

How will you acknowledge this stress?

3. Identify the personality traits you lean towards during stress.

How does your response display itself? How does it benefit/hinder?

4. Identify the personality traits of those around you.

How do these personalities benefit or hinder you?

5. Determine the best ways of honoring your needs.

What areas in your life could use self-care?

6. Determine the best ways of accommodating the needs of others.

How can you support their needs?



Stress Problem-Solving

- **Compare** proposed **reality** with your perception of reality.
- Make sure people have a **shared understanding** of the information.
- Define and declare specific and concrete **terms**.
- Review proposed **time frames**.
- **Compare outcomes** with original demands/needs/requests.

Stress Problem-Solving

Problem-solving should be evaluated with other **standards** to better determine appropriate responses:

- Other people's principles
- Legal parameters
- Community expectations
- Organizational practices
- Your personal perspective

Stress Problem-Solving

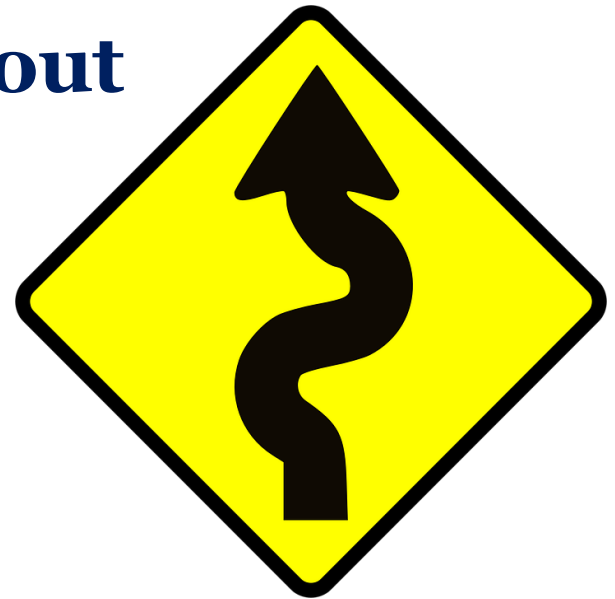
- Helps information be more clearly seen.
- Encourages solutions otherwise ignored.
- Aids in overcoming communication barriers.
- Identifies underlying issues.
- Recognizes what can and cannot be controlled.



What is our Path?

What to consider throughout the process:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?



Create a Plan

What scenarios do you typically encounter?

What can you prepare for?

How might you respond to certain actions?



Establishing Boundaries

- **Identify** and accept your boundary needs: If you don't protect your space, you're more likely to feel drained.
- Be polite but **firm**. Firmness is often misunderstood as rudeness, but they are fundamentally different.
- Start with something small to **practice** boundary-setting; consider a step that feels safe.

Establishing Boundaries

- Know what you mean when you say “yes” and when you say “no.” **Pause** before you commit either way.
- Give yourself **permission** to have guardrails. Eliminate guilt for implementing professional and personal self-care.

Next Steps

Stress and crisis can occur even with proper planning, reflection, and problem-solving.

The next steps are to:

Communicate Neutrally

Use De-Escalation Techniques



Communication Blockers

Directing/Ordering

“Stop complaining...”

“Try harder...”

Threatening/Warning

“You had better...”

“If you don’t.....”

Moralizing/Preaching

“You ought to...”

“Good parents don’t...”

Moralizing/Preaching

“You ought to...”

“Good parents don’t...”

Lecturing/Arguing

“The fact is...”

“Yes, but *this* is the way...”

Advice Giving

“Why don’t you ...”

“If you would do this...”

Criticizing/Blaming

“You’re not thinking straight..”

“You’re acting crazy...”

“You should have...”

Diagnosing/Counseling

“You don’t really mean that...”

“What you need is....”

Cross-examining, Prying

“When are you going to?”

“Why did you do that?”

Denying/reassuring

“Don’t worry about it...”

“It’s not that big of a deal...”



Neutral Communication

- **Use neutral affirmations.**

“It sounds like this is important to you.”

“Thank you for letting me know you want to talk.”

- **Use open-ended expressions.**

“Please describe ways you see for improving...”

- **Reframe the emotion.**

Lower the intensity by rewording or paraphrasing.

Neutral Communication

- **Keep your body language neutral.**
Be aware of non-verbal cues such as crossed arms, facial expressions, and body positioning.
- **Demonstrate active listening skills.**
Stay engaged and pay attention – don't immediately move ahead.
Restate what you hear to check for meaning.
Clarify and summarize.



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De-Escalation Techniques

- **Move to a private area if possible.**
- **Consider scheduling a specific time to talk.**
- **Respect personal space.**
- **Allow silence for reflection.**

De-Escalation Techniques

- **Be nonjudgmental.**

Indicate acceptance.

Relax your body, thoughts, responses.

- **Be empathetic.**

Show compassion. Acknowledge feelings.

- **Focus on what is behind the feelings.**

Assess the background of personal feelings and of others.



De-Escalation Techniques

- **Set and communicate expectations.**
- **Offer respectful choices.**
- **Play out consequences of options.**
- **Allow time for decisions.**

Pulling it All Together

Communication:

- Clear
- Concise
- Consistent

Checks-and-Balances:

- Strategically Problem-Solve
- Plan for Emergencies
- Utilize Resources and Other People
- Piece the Variables Together

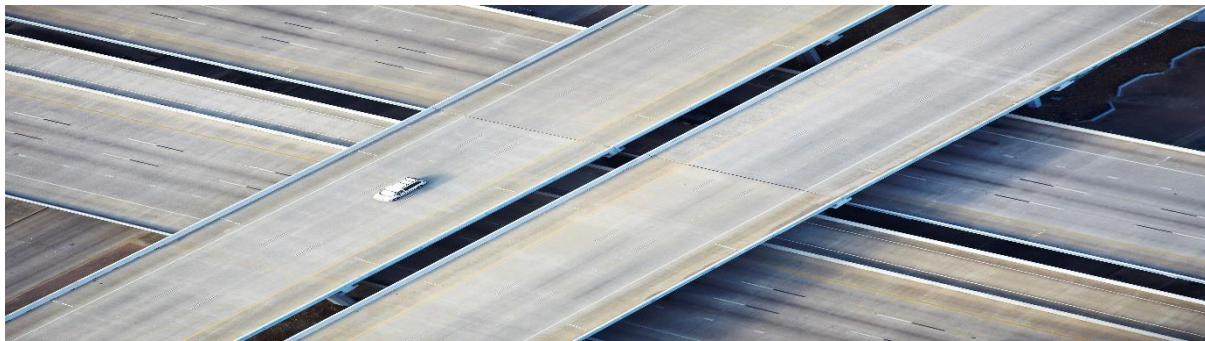


Reminders

Choose your lane.

Exercise disciplined empowerment.

Acknowledge and embrace options.



Thank you!



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