

STRESS MANAGEMENT



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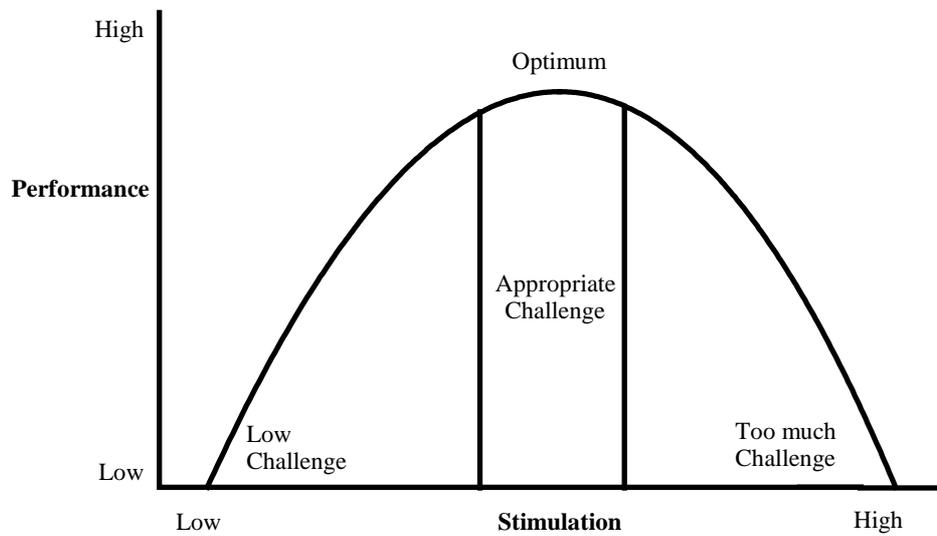
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1. INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress can be defined in many ways - as being out there in the external world or the effect it produces on individuals physically or psychologically. One starting point is to link it to stimulation.

Stimulation is extremely important for us all. Lack of it produces boredom and fatigue, and the ensuing reactions are what we tend to recognise as stress. Over-stimulation can also produce stress reactions, brought on by feelings of not being able to cope. One working definition of stress is: *The reactions of individuals to situations, which are either overly, or insufficiently demanding in terms of the individual's capabilities.*



		STIMULATION	
		Low	High
INTERPRETATION	Positive	Relaxed	Excited
	Negative	Bored	Anxious

This curve is different for each individual. Jung thought (and Hans Eysenck proved experimentally) that introverts would be stimulated far more quickly than extroverts. So for introverts the optimum peak of performance will come with far less stimulation than for extroverts. Extroverts will require much more pressure before they can get going (hence grand prix racing drivers may be brilliant on the track but bored and under stimulated off it!).

Figure 3 - Stress and Introverts/Extroverts

Of course the issue is not as simple as this - it also depends on our interpretation of what the stimulation is. Do we want it or not? What turns us on or turns us off? A positive or negative interpretation of the stimulation will psychologically affect its 'stress' on us, i.e.

<p>A signal to develop capabilities Or To change the environment.</p>
--

The challenge in much stress management is to get people to move to a stage of 'hardiness' - enjoying stimulation, whether low or high, and interpreting it positively. Hence the most positive way to view stress is:

Either way, action is demanded.

2.STRESS REACTIONS

Hans Selye sees the stress reaction as a three-stage process within the body that enables it to survive and adapt to change. It is a throwback to our cave-dwelling days when, on being confronted with a sabre-toothed tiger, stone-age man would experience what is now termed the 'fight or flight' syndrome: a rush of adrenalin which would temporarily provide the alertness and energy either to attack the animal or to run away. It remains with us today, like the tiny tail at the base of our spines, a reminder of what we once were.

The first stage of any stress reaction is alarm. The surge of energy concentration and power that comes with the stress alarm enables people to perform in a crisis - sometimes considerably beyond their normal physical capabilities. Another reaction at this stage, which Selye does not mention, is the 'freeze' response: we are rooted to the spot - in the hope that the sabre-toothed tiger will ignore us. This is called by some the 'possum effect'.

Once the alarm stage of stress has passed, the body enters a second stage, one of recuperation in which it repairs any damage caused by the demands of the fight-or-flight response. The third stage is a return to the body's normal state of relaxed alertness. 'Bad' stress is simply normal or acute stress that becomes chronic, continuing for weeks and months so that the body never gets time to recuperate.

Chronic stress can inflict real bodily harm - especially by lowering resistance to disease through the immune system. It is often cited as actually causing disease, but there is no real evidence to support this, beyond a possible contribution to ulcers and heart disease.

It is easy to identify isolated events, which cause a big stress reaction; it is harder to look at the mental, emotional and physical habits that cause stress each day. These stretch us like a spring when a weight is put on it.

Hooke's Law of Elasticity provides a useful reference point for this analogy. It refers to the twin factors of 'stress' - the load (or demand) that is placed on a piece of metal, and 'strain' the deformation that results. Hooke's Law states that if the strain produced by a given stress falls within the 'elastic limit' of the material, then the material will simply return to its original condition when the stress is removed. If, however, the strain passes beyond the elastic limit, then some permanent damage will result. This allows not only for the idea of a sudden immense pressure, but also pressure which is more persistent and drawn out. It also includes the notion of an instinctive resistance to some degree of stress. Chronic stress can produce deformation in us or even break us, just as a heavy weight can break a spring. We are all different, though, and have different reactions and different breaking points.

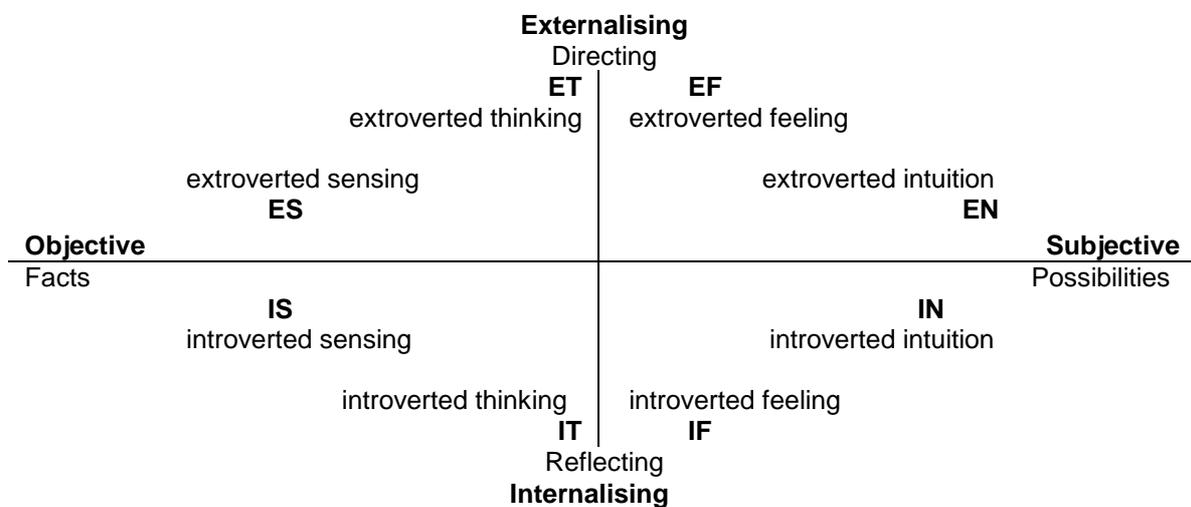
3. THE JUNGIAN TYPOLOGY

Carl Jung closely identified two directions of flow of energy. One was outwards towards the external world, the other inwards. The first is extroversion, the second introversion. He then identified four functions each of which can be either extroverted or introverted. These are:

THE JUNGIAN TYPOLOGY

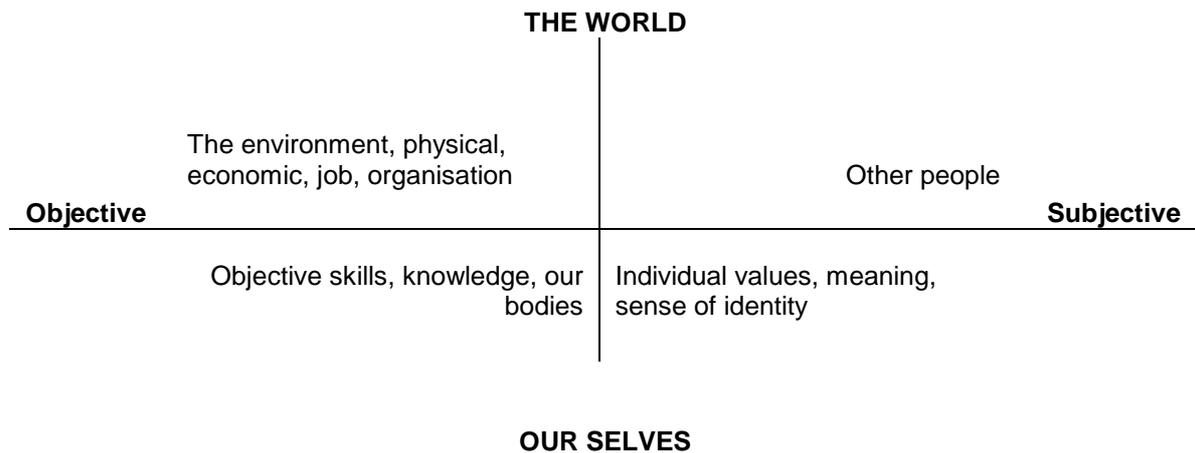
FUNCTION		FOCUS/COMPETENCY
SENSING - Focused on sensory data - The objective world	EXTROVERTED SENSING (ES)	Dealing with the practical external world - doing things.
	INTROVERTED SENSING (IS)	Absorbing sense data, classifying, details and precision
INTUITION - Focused on possibilities - The subjective world of imagination	EXTROVERTED INTUITION (EN)	Looking for opportunities and possibilities in the external world.
	INTROVERTED INTUITION (IN)	Seeing patterns and connections in mind's eye - individual vision and meaning.
THINKING - Objective analysis and Decision-making	EXTROVERTED THINKING (ET)	Planning, organising, getting things done.
	INTROVERTED THINKING (IT)	Understanding and analysis in depth of logic and ideas.
FEELING - Decisions made on subjective values and preferences	EXTROVERTED FEELING (EF)	Dealing with others - sharing subjectivities with others.
	INTROVERTED FEELING (IF)	Focusing on own internal values in depth - sense of identity

These can be arranged in the following diagram (based on Ackoff & Emery).



Jung was clear about the need to develop balance and wholeness in our lives. Thus we can use the above to identify the functions which individuals enjoy using, are good at and also those functions, which they may need to develop. The less developed functions may well be a source of stress.

Put more simply where do we focus and what areas do we neglect, i.e.:



People will tend to be oriented towards one or two of the quadrants by way of the functions or ignore another area. Therapists for example, will tend to be more interested in the inner world of values and meaning - they may well neglect the outer objective physical world.

This framework will be the basis for the analysis of stress.

4. SOURCES OF STRESS

Stress can come from external or internal sources. Working with Jung’s typology, extroverted sources can be environmental (such as physical working conditions) or interpersonal (such as the people you work with). Internal (introverted) sources include their own physical, bodily conditions, emotional reactions and needs, and states of mind. How these might look with the eight Jungian types (ES, EN, ET, EF, IS, IN, IT, IF) is illustrated below:

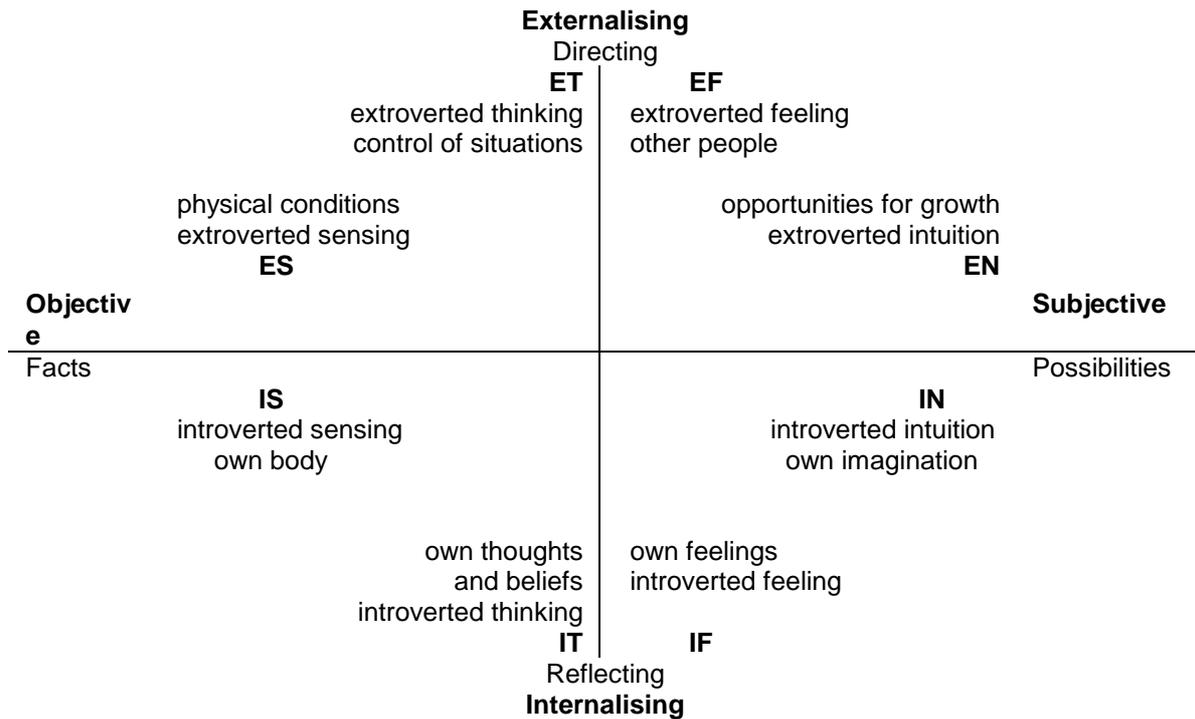


Figure 5 - Sources of Stress

Jung was very clear about the need to develop competency in all the functions (not necessarily to enjoy using them). Stress can become from the ‘shadow’ areas, aspects that we have not developed - or from areas that have been blocked because the world or we will not use them. For example an intuitive individual being brought up in a world of sensing.

Hence the stress areas can start to give us valuable information about what specific areas we need to focus upon whether internally or externally.

5. THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

5.1. Internal stress factors

Research into highly anxious individuals shows that their thinking habits are often based on a negative view of themselves in comparison to others. They have a poor 'self-image'. In some individuals, anxiety manifests itself in emotional habits such as fear and guilt; others experience stiff necks or tense shoulders. If we experience stress internally, it will take one of these forms - mental, emotional or physical.

Mental habits (introverted thinking, introverted intuition)

Stress, which involves the functions or introverted intuition, relies on our special private interpretations of events, which determine our emotional response. The meaning of an event is embodied in a thought or image; if reality is distorted as a result then our emotions respond to the distortion rather than to factual reality. People who, in favourable conditions, have a preference for extroverted sensing or extroverted feeling will often react to stress through the (for them) unconscious and underdeveloped functions of introverted intuition or introverted thinking. Negative thoughts and images appear spontaneously; they usually involve considerable distortion of reality and are difficult, sometimes impossible, to shut out.

These are typical statements that might be made by someone experiencing stress through **introverted intuition**:

- *I imagine terrifying scenes*
- *I can't keep anxious pictures out of my mind*
- *My life lacks meaning*

Typical statements resulting from stress in the area of **introverted thinking** might include:

- *I can't make up my mind fast enough, so I feel I'm losing out*
- *I find it difficult to concentrate because of uncontrollable thoughts*
- *I worry too much over things that don't matter*
- *Some unimportant thought keeps bothering me*

Emotional habits (introverted feeling)

These involve emotional tension and feelings such as panic and worry. Whereas introverted intuition raises fears of an event's possible unpleasant consequence, and introverted thinking provides a 'logical' argument as to why everything is going wrong, introverted feeling concentrates on the way the person feels during the stress. It may give rise to a feeling of worthlessness, of paranoia that everyone is commenting on the person's performance, or an emotional outburst.

Typical statements made by someone reacting in this way (**introverted feeling**) include:

- *I feel a greater dislike for people in general*
- *I feel depressed and upset*
- *I want to shout out*
- *I want to cry*
- *I get angry and irritable*
- *I lose my temper over trivial things*
- *I feel emotionally out of control*

Physical habits (introverted sensing)

Much stress is physical. We are continually in fight, flight or freeze situations when the adrenalin builds up and we do not know how to discharge it. Most car drivers experience it at some time or another. Constant arousal leads to muscular tension, which may gradually become a habit. Muscles lose their flexibility and act like armour to protect the body, thereby failing to work independently. Shallow breathing leads to a pent-up feeling of anxiety.

Typical statements resulting from stress linked to **introverted sensing** include:

- *My heart beats faster*
- *I perspire*
- *I feel shaky*
- *I get diarrhoea*
- *I pace nervously up and down*
- *I become immobilised*
- *I feel tense in my stomach*
- *I can't relax physically*

With these internal stress factors, as with all the introverted functions, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between cause and effect. For some people, a distressing thought (introverted thinking) may cause a tense feeling in the stomach (introverted sensing); while for others, tension in the stomach caused by some physical illness may express itself as stress provoking uncontrolled and unpleasant thoughts about the nature of the illness.

5.2. External stress factors

It is important for us as individuals to feel that we have some impact on the environment and on other people. When this outside world is overwhelming us and we feel we have no choice or ability to do anything about the demands being made on us, the result is stress.

Work and stress (extroverted thinking, extroverted sensing, extroverted intuition).

Work is one of our major activities in life. If it is satisfying it will have a positive effect on other areas of our lives; if it is not right, then it can become a major source of stress.

It is obviously crucial that the personality and skills you have are right for the job. A simple example of mismatching would be someone who was outgoing and liked people having to work in an office all day by themselves. Stress would be the result. If you are well matched with the job you do, it is unlikely to be stressful.

Stress in the area of **extroverted sensing** will be associated with the practical realities of your workplace; not so much physical comfort (which is closer to introverted sensing) but the concrete demands your job makes on you. Someone experiencing stress in this way may make the following statements:

- *I find it hard to achieve practical objectives*
- *I can't cope with this mountain of paperwork*
- *I lose track of where I am on the job*

Extroverted thinking causes stress in similar, concrete ways, but, because it is more concerned with decision making, whereas extroverted sensing is concerned with perception, someone experiencing stress in this area may make the following distinct kinds of statement:

- *I can't organise my work properly*
- *I find it hard to make an objective decision*
- *I keep missing deadlines*

Extroverted intuition is concerned with the possibilities inherent in situations and its related stress follows a similar pattern, resulting in the following kinds of statements:

- *I can't cope with a new situation*
- *I find it difficult to come up with new ideas*
- *I am concerned about where my job is going*

Stress and others (extroverted feeling)

Dealing with the physical realities of the job is one source of stress in the workplace; the people around you are another potent source. Someone experiencing stress in the area of extroverted feeling might make the following statements:

- *I never know the right thing to say in a situation*
- *I can't cope with people interrupting me all the time*
- *I always seem to be being persuaded to do things against my will*

With the extroverted functions it is easier to see how our inability to deal with certain kinds of situation may be a result of our not being developed enough in one or more of the functional areas. Someone with a preference for extroverted intuition, for example, should have very little trouble generating ideas - but it can happen! If you scored highly in the stress results in an area, which is identified, overall as a strongly preferred function for you, take comfort from the knowledge that you should find more tools at your disposal for coping with the situation.

5.3. STRESS RESPONSES QUESTIONNAIRE

Tick any statements that apply to you when you are feeling anxious:

- 1. I feel a greater dislike for people in general....
- 2. My heart beats faster....
- 3. I imagine terrifying scenes....
- 4. I feel I am losing out on things because I can't make up my mind fast enough....
- 5. I perspire....
- 6. I can't keep anxiety -provoking thoughts out of my mind....
- 7. I feel shaky....
- 8. I get diarrhoea....
- 9. I can't keep anxiety-provoking pictures out of my mind....
- 10. I nervously pace up and down....
- 11. I feel depressed and upset....
- 12. I want to shout....
- 13. I find it difficult to concentrate because of uncontrollable thoughts....
- 14. I become immobilised....
- 15. I worry too much over things that don't matter....
- 16. I feel tense in my stomach....
- 17. I want to cry....
- 18. I get angry and irritable....
- 19. Some unimportant thought runs through my mind bothering me....
- 20. I lose my temper over trivial things....
- 21. My eyes fill with tears when I am upset....
- 22. My life lacks meaning....
- 23. I cannot relax physically....
- 24. I feel emotionally out of control....

- A 4, 6, 13, 15, 19.... Mental - Thoughts
.... Total (A+B)
- B 3, 9, 22.... Mental - Imagination
- C 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 23.... Physical
- D 1, 11, 12, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24.... Emotional

6. DEALING WITH STRESS

Coping is an attempt to master a demanding situation, which is seen as stressful. The more coping skills that are available, and the more confident people are in using them, the less likely is stress to lead to strain. Coping skills are affected by:

- A sense of personal control;
- Adequate information;
- Social support - a sense of connectedness;

These factors increase a person's ability to feel that they can cope and are confident of meeting challenges. A key point is that 'good' coping means being able to shift from one appropriate way of dealing with stress to another, as the situation demands. People need to develop a range of successful coping skills. If they have a limited range or are not able to apply them successfully, then stress will turn to strain. In the long term this can lead to hopelessness, helplessness and depression. Obviously your functional preferences will have an impact on the ease with which you can adopt certain styles of coping.

Coping styles can be classified as **expressive** (direct action) **inhibitive** (palliative) styles. Successful coping does not always involve active mastery over the environment; inhibitive attempts such as retreat, tolerance or disengagement may be the healthiest response in certain circumstances. In non-Western cultures, for example, habitual fatalism can serve a positive function in coping with stress. This fits with Jung's view that "Introversion and extroversion are mechanisms of adaptation and defence." (CW 6 502).

Expressive styles involve dealing with the source of the problem. The critical aspect is identifying the right target. If it is wrong, the stress will continue and, to make things worse, you may be left feeling guilty at having attacked the wrong person or thing. Assertiveness techniques can be of great use here. If the target is too strong, frustration may build up which can only be avoided by displacement - which roughly translates as 'kicking the cat'.

Inhibitive strategies aim to deal not with the stress source itself but with its effect on us: we have a choice of withdrawing from the stressful situation or denying its existence. Other strategies, which fall into this category, are the use of alcohol, tranquillisers and sedatives, meditation and muscle relaxation. Problems arise with a strategy of this kind when the person employing it fails to 'return to base': an example would be someone choosing to withdraw from a situation in order to cope with emotional reactions caused by stress, but then preferring to remain in that state rather than returning to the fray, batteries recharged. Withdrawal or denial of stress can be of use in saving us from everyday hassles such as commuting to work. It can break down however, in extreme cases.

These two types of coping style mask a variety of responses, which relate to the introverted and extroverted functions. Taking the **expressive styles** first, they include:

- **Extroverted feeling**
Expressing your feelings
Letting off steam
Talking to others
Confronting others with the truth of a situation
Getting advice
Changing relationships
- **Extroverted intuition**
Looking for new ways of doing things
Looking for new opportunities
Experimenting with different ways of dealing with a situation
Exploring options
- **Extroverted thinking**
Analysing and getting rid of the sources of stress
Setting priorities
Planning and organising
Getting in control of a situation
- **Extroverted sensing**
Taking immediate practical action
Taking physical exercise
Looking at the practicalities of the situation

Inhibitive strategies include:

- **Introverted thinking**
Analysing and trying to understand exactly what is causing the stress - thinking in
- **Introverted sensing**
Trying to relax physically, to forget the stress or ignore it by focusing on physical activities.
- **Introverted feeling**
Trying to cheer yourself up, being with others who have no connection with the stress, being involved in activities that emotionally enable you to forget the stress and feel good.
- **Introverted intuition**
Redefining the meaning of a stressful situation, using meditation or imagination to cope.

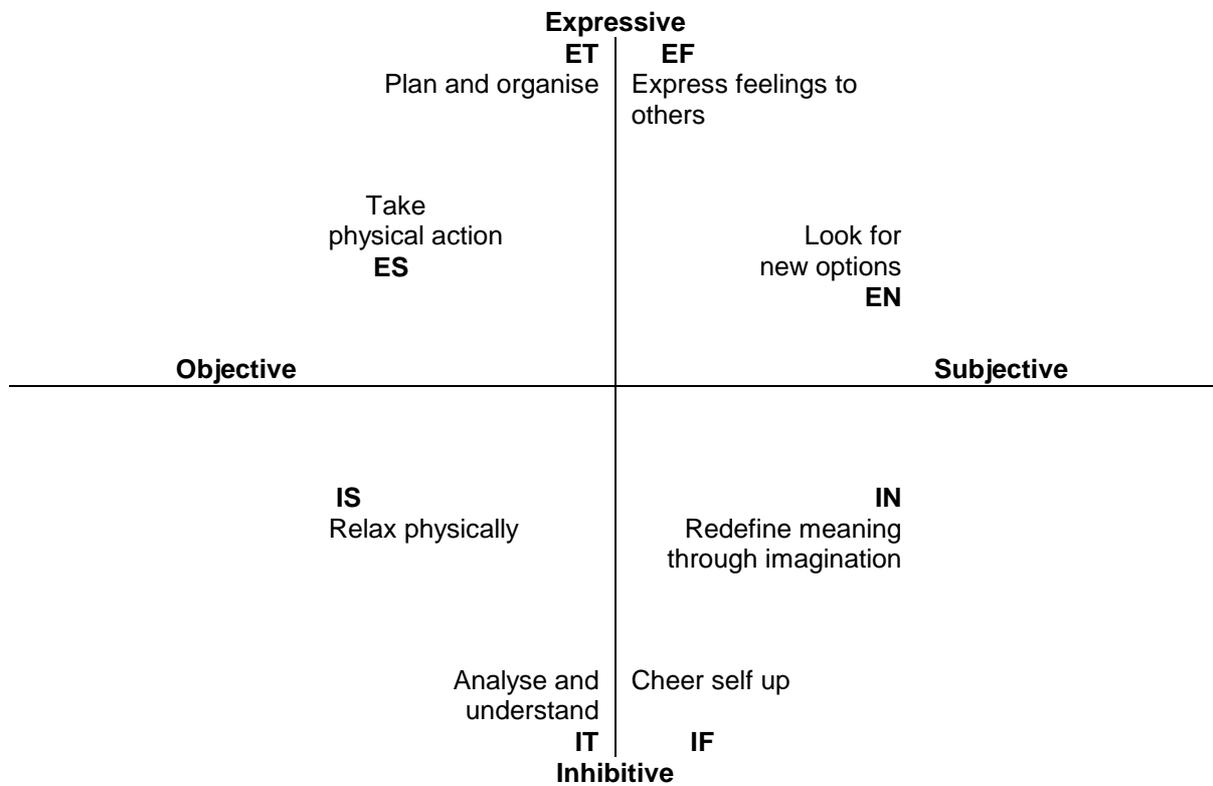
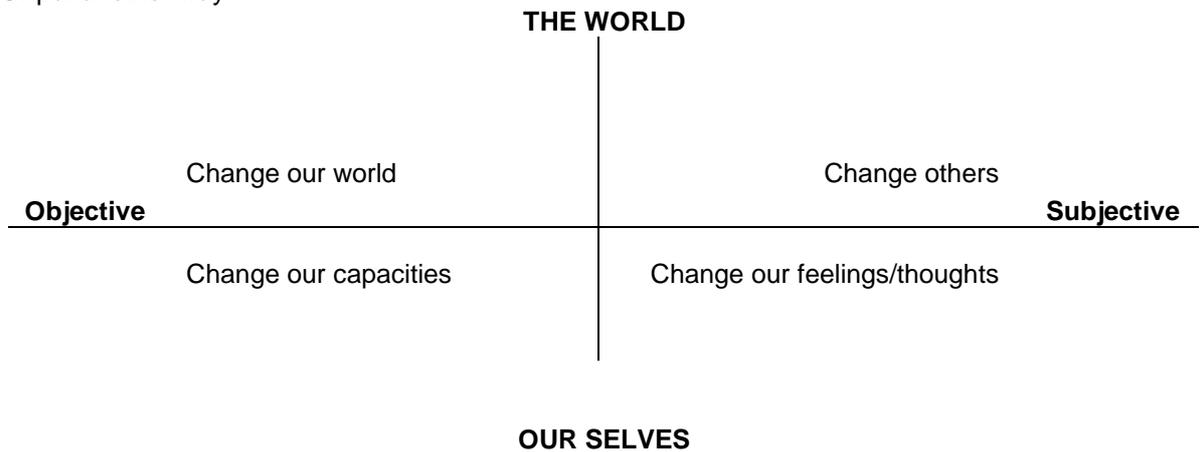


Figure 6 - Coping styles

Or put another way



7. STRESS MANAGEMENT: PATTERNS OF STRESS

In looking at the ways people manage stress several key themes emerge.

1. Stress is a message suggesting the need for change.
2. The most effective way of dealing with stress is to match the action to the cause; failing that to the effect.
3. Many people go to their favourite or preferred function to deal with stress even if it is inappropriate. For example - an introverted intuitive's stress patterns:

Cause of stress: the physical environment - dripping taps etc.
(Extroverted Sensing)
 Effect: feels depressed, worthless at not being able to fix it.
(Introverted Feeling)
 Action: hopes/imagines it will go away.
(Introverted Intuition)

At the extreme the action can be an escape from physical reality into imagination - and the signal to become more involved in the external physical world gets ignored. Needless to say the stress continues. We overuse our preferred function to avoid our 'shadow' functions.

	Overuse of:	To avoid:
EXTROVERTED:		
- sensing	taking action	Experiencing
- intuition	lots of projects	Awareness and connections
- thinking	planning and organising	analysis and understanding
- feeling	Socialising	resolving issues
INTROVERTED:		
- sensing	experiencing	taking action
- intuition	awareness and connection	lots of projects
- thinking	analysis and understanding	planning and organising
- feeling	resolving issues	Socialising

Figure 7 - Overuse of functions

This often leads to burnout. Garden found that burnout was marked by chronic energy depletion and the over-used function being 'shut-down', i.e.

- for feeling types, a loss in (or lower level of) the inclination to care for others:
- for thinking types, a loss in achievement orientation or ambitiousness:
- for sensing types, a loss of roundedness:
- for intuitive types, a loss of enthusiasm and originality.

Burnout, this flipping to the opposite, results from the tension between the superior (most preferred) and inferior (least preferred) functions, and is a message from the psyche to stop overusing the preferred function and to bring more balance again between the functions. Play prevents burnout and helps to reduce stress by allowing the underdeveloped functions to emerge. The more preferred

functions for many therapists are feeling and intuition, so a loss of an inclination to care for others and a loss of enthusiasm may indicate symptoms of burnout.

Equally important as a cause of stress is the blocking of use of a function and this also needs to be examined. People who feel blocked or not able to fully use their functions will feel frustrated and lacking in the areas corresponding to that function, i.e.:

- Extroverted Sensing* to enjoy adventure, take risks, be physically stimulated, excitement.
- Extroverted Intuition* to have change, variety, a buzz, opportunities for development.
- Extroverted Thinking* to achieve, be competent, to control and organise.
- Extroverted Feeling* to belong, be valued, contribute, to connect.
- Introverted Sensing* to savour, taste experiences in depth.
- Introverted Intuition* to have a 'sense of meaning', a vision, authenticity.
- Introverted Thinking* to understand, analyse, develop ideas.
- Introverted Feeling* to feel worthy, to be intimate, to know others in depth.

Jung's typology provides a clear framework of classifying causes, effects and appropriate means of dealing with stress.

Underlying this framework is a set of assumptions all based on Jungian thought. We continue to grow and develop all our lives - this means continuously challenge which leads to development of all our functions - a balance and roundedness. Stress (and burnout) are valuable mechanisms, which help us achieve this.

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7. STRESS MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

For each question, allocate 4 points to the OPTION (a, b, c,...) that is most true for you, 3 to the next, 2 to the next and 1 to the next.

CAUSE The things that cause you most stress are:

- a concentrate on detailed factual work
- b having to take direct practical action
- c dealing with the demands of other people
- d having to create a range of future courses of action
- e coping with your own difficult feelings
- f coping with what seems to be a meaningless situation
- g having to make decisions on complex logical issues
- h structuring activities in a logical way

EFFECT Stress makes it difficult for you to:

- a relax physically
- b do practical tasks
- c deal with people
- d understand and cope with new ideas or situations
- e cope with your feelings of being down
- f be yourself
- g think clearly or analyse things
- h organise or plan things to do

ACTION In a stressful situation you would:

- a look forward to doing things differently
- b try to change the way you feel
- c try to understand what the stress is telling you
- d analyse the causes of stress
- e get help from other people
- f try to beat the stress by switching off
- g take direct action to combat the stress
- h schedule activities to beat the stress

Stress Levels

Please rate your stress levels in terms of EACH option from 1 (very low) through 3 (moderate) to 5 (very high). How much stress do you experience with

1 2 3 4 5

- a physical health and well being
- b material and physical surroundings
- c relations with other people
- d your own feelings of happiness and contentment
- e individual growth and development
- f opportunities for change and variety
- g keeping your work organised and under control
- h learning and thinking out things

Overall how would you rate your stress level at the moment?

1 2 3 4 5

.....

Transfer the figures as before.

STRESS								
	ES	EN	ET	EF	IS	IN	IT	IF
Cause	b ...	d ...	h ...	c ...	a ...	f ...	g ...	e ...
Effect	b ...	d ...	h ...	c ...	a ...	f ...	g ...	e ...
Do - Action	g ...	a ...	h ...	e ...	f ...	c ...	d ...	b ...
Stress Levels	b ...	f ...	g ...	c ...	a ...	e ...	h ...	d ...

	Extroverted		Introverted		Total	
Sensing	1		5		Sensing	
Intuition	2		6		Intuition	
Thinking	3		7		Thinking	
Feeling	4		8		Feeling	
TOTAL						

Satisfactions

- A You are happiest when you are:
- a having a good time with lots of people
 - b able to use your imagination fully
 - c thinking about ideas and facts
 - d doing something physically active
 - e achieving your vision of what you want
 - f feeling happy and at peace with the world
 - g discussing ideas and facts with others
 - h physically relaxing

- B The things that make you feel great are:
- a the companionship of others
 - b understanding how things or ideas fit together
 - c being on top of things through planning and thought
 - d enjoying physically pleasurable experiences
 - e achieving practical results through your skills
 - f being clear how your life is meaningful
 - g to have time to think about things or ideas
 - h to plan different activities, sightseeing, etc.

- C You go on holiday. You would want:
- a to be physically active
 - b to lie back and enjoy the surroundings
 - c to have a friendly time meeting lots of people
 - d to be happy and content with one or two close friends
 - e to have time to contemplate life
 - f to absorb the different cultures
 - g to have time to think about things or ideas
 - h to plan different activities, sightseeing, etc

Satisfactions

SCORING	Extroverted				Introverted				
	Sensing Feeling	Intuition	Thinking		Sensing Feeling	Intuition	Thinking		
A	d	e	g	a	h	b	c	f	
B	e	g	c	a	d	f	b	h	
C	a	f	h	c	b	e	g	d	
TOTALS									
%									
RESULTS		Extrovert				Introvert			
%									
.... Sensing				
.... Intuition				
.... Thinking				
.... Feeling				

ACTIONS:

8. STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

INTRODUCTION

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one Life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Overall guidelines would include:

- Balance work, leisure, social and family - don't let work intrude into home
- Learn to set sensible, realistic targets and be able to say no!
- Look after your body, emotions and mind! (Exercise, being in positive relationships, mentally stimulated.)
- Look for the positive - what is this situation teaching me? - What do I enjoy?
- Reward you for things done well!
- Know your own capacity - energy, concentration etc.
- Don't be too tough on yourself.
- Laugh - see the humour.
- Try positively to forget negative experiences.

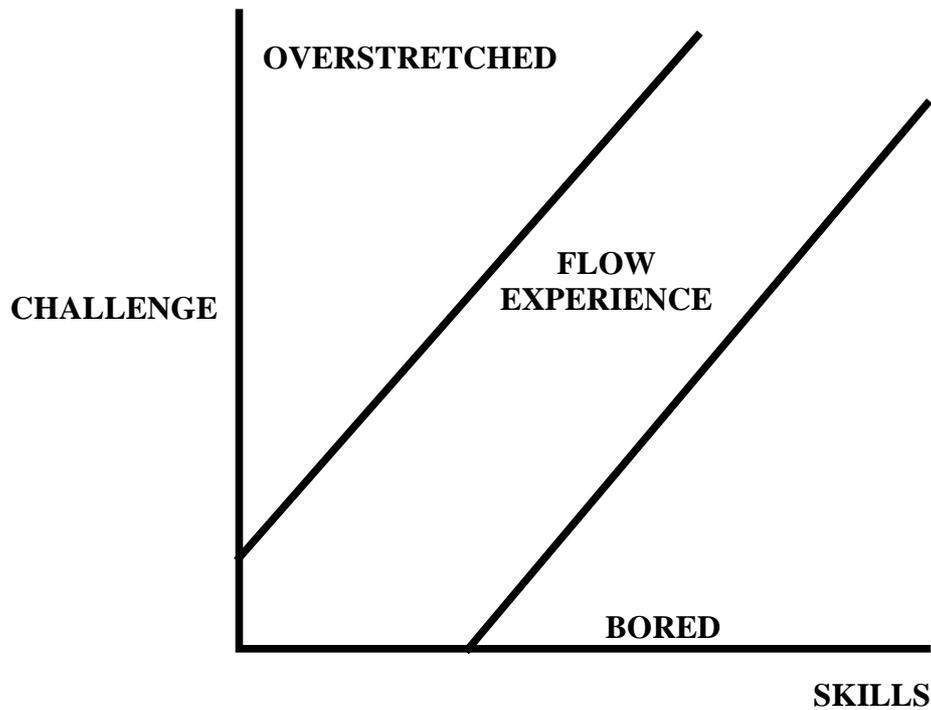
Think of yourself as a car - don't accelerate too roughly.

LEISURE

Leisure activities that absorb us; in which we lose track of time seem to be critical in "bouncing back" from being stressed. Almost anything can be regarded as 'leisure', i.e.:

"The results suggest that anything one does can become rewarding if the activity is structured right and if one's skills are matched with the challenges of the action. In this optimal condition people enjoy even work, extreme danger and stress. To change a boring situation into one that provides its own reward does not require money or physical energy ; it can be achieved through symbolic restructuring of information" (changing your view of it!)

Beyond Boredom and Anxiety
Mihaly Csikszentmihaly
Jossey-Bass 1975



The aim is to remain in the middle part of the graph.

Challenges should be matched to skills. Other conditions for this 'flow' experience are:

- clear goals and feedback
- loss of self-consciousness
- narrow focus of interest
- sense of control
- time passes quickly

It is useful to look at what activities meet these requirements for us, i.e. What do we love doing? Sailing? Playing chess? Socialising? Watching TV?

EASING STRESS

RELAXATION

"Slow Down" Breathing

The simple act of slow, deep breathing can have an exceptionally relaxing and settling effect. Assume a comfortable position and begin breathing in slowly and deeply through your nose. Inhale to a slow count of three, making sure your abdomen swells as you fill your lungs. Pause for a count of two, then slowly exhale. As you do this, let your muscles go as loose and relaxed as possible. Visualise the tension flowing out as you exhale. Do this 10 - 15 times.

The "Mantra" Method

Just one simple word, repeated over and over to yourself for several minutes, can relax you. This is used in transcendental meditation (TM). It must be a neutral word that has no special significance or meaning to you. Its sound must be conducive to rest and relaxation. One or two syllable words ending in "m" and "n" seem most effective. The word "one" is favoured by many. Simply get comfortable, close your eyes, relax your muscles, breathe slowly and deeply and silently, repeat a single word such as "calm" or "one" on each exhale. Concentrate on your one-word "mantra" and continue for several minutes.

The "Tight & Loose" Technique

Alternative tightening and relaxing your muscles relieves muscle tension. Sitting comfortably, eyes closed, take a slow, deep breath and gently tighten all the muscles of your body. Hold for 3 - 5 seconds, then exhale in a long, easy sigh, letting all your muscles go as relaxed as possible. Do 10 - 12 times.

The Quieting Response

This is a term used by Strobel based on his research. It found that the physiological response to stress happens in the first five seconds. People experience:

- * Eyes dilating
- * Tensing of muscles, eyes, mouth
- * Catching of breath, shallow breathing
- * Blood stops flowing to the arms and legs and is pumped to the organs
- * Jaw muscles are clenched

On the basis of this, he argues that you can stop most of the stress response in the first five seconds. This breaks the stimulus-response pattern (it only applies to "events"). The Quieting Response consists of the following:

- * Think "alert mind, calm body"
- * Think a smile. This counters tension around the mouth (it is not necessary to actually smile for this to work)
- * Breathe deeper
- * Breathe through feet and legs
- * Drop the jaw - let the mouth open a little

Relaxation

First, make yourself as comfortable as possible in a chair. Let the chair support your body totally. Loosen tight clothing. Remove your spectacles, close your eyes and take a moment to become as relaxed as possible.

Let us begin with the muscles of the hands. Make a fist with both the right and left hands. Feel the pull across the top and bottom of the hands. This is what is meant by tension. Hold it, and feel the sensations in your hands. Let your fingers come away from the palms slowly; separate your fingers a little and gradually rest them on the arm of the chair. Feel the changes; notice your hands, how the tension begins to disappear and tightness slowly fades. You become more aware of a sense of calm relaxation. Note that your hands are becoming more and more relaxed and that a sense of warmth and calm is spreading through the muscles of your hands. Notice the changes you are bringing about.

Now that you have relaxed the muscles of your hands, tense and hold the muscles of the chest and back. Do this by filling your lungs slowly, with short deep breaths, holding each one and then slowly breathing out. Hold your breath until you feel the need to exhale. Part your lips and breathe out. Let the air out so that your chest assumes its normal position. Continue to breathe evenly and easily.

Now try to inhale fully and then exhale slowly. In order to control how fast you exhale, just imagine you are blowing across the top of a spoon of hot soup, gently so that you don't spill it or that you are flickering a candle without blowing it out. Notice the difference between the states of tension and relaxation.

Some people have found that they can enhance their state of relaxation even further by saying to themselves 'relax', 'calm' as they exhale. You may even be able to see the letters R-E-L-A-X or C-A-L-M in your mind's eye. Other people find it helpful to picture a calm, peaceful scene as they exhale. Think of some moment when you were relaxed and carefree or imagine a pleasant scene.

The use of slow, deep breathing is an excellent way to short-circuit the effects of stress. You can control how you feel; you can interrupt the cycle of tension and bring about a state of calm. Then you can begin to use the other coping responses we have discussed. When you are calm, it is easier to see stressful events as problems to be solved than as personal threats.

Use slow, deep-breathing whenever you feel the early signs of stress. Learning to relax is a skill that has to be acquired like any other skill. It requires practice but it pays handsome dividends.

There are, of course, many different ways of relaxing, and it is not clear that any one way is better than any other. Find a way that is comfortable for you, a way in which you have some confidence. Then practise it and try out the procedures in stressful situations.

STRESS MANAGEMENT PLANS

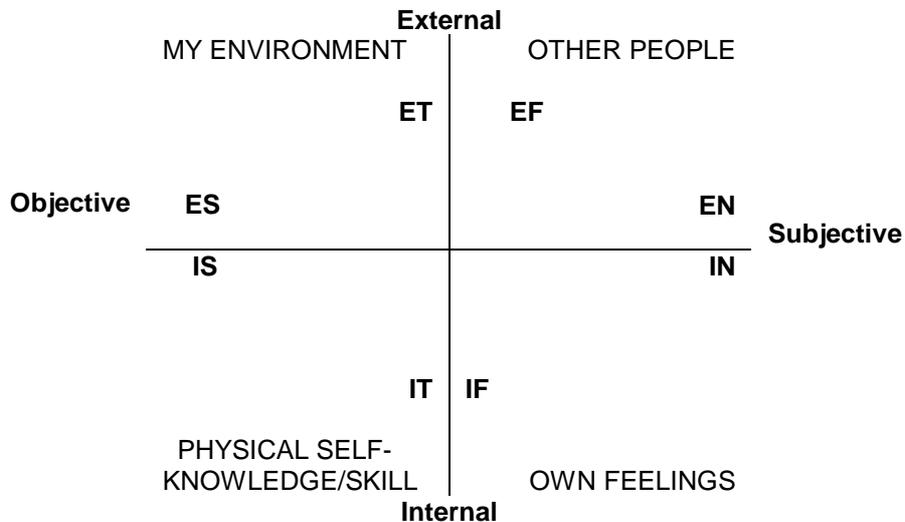
What are my stress levels? If low, ignore this and carry on having fun!

What causes me stress? Under/over challenged?

What effect does it have on me?

What do I do about it? Is this appropriate?

My stress management goals?



Plot causes, effects and actions on the above. What goals do you set re?

Work}
 Leisure} Stress
 Social} Management
 Personal}

The 'Human Givens' explanation of depression

Features of REM sleep (Rapid Eye Movement) The purpose of REM sleep, which is when we dream, is to complete any unfinished emotional business from the preceding day's activities. We can then start the next day refreshed and with a clean emotional sheet. During REM sleep/dreaming we use more energy than we do when awake! Non-REM sleep is the resting part of our sleep. Everyone normally dreams for about an hour each night.

Centres of Emotion We have two centres of emotion:- the first is ancient, located in the primitive reptilian part of our brain and is concerned only with survival. It triggers instantly, totally focuses our whole being on survival, and considers only two options - fight or flight. As you can imagine, in this state we are very highly emotionally and physically aroused - we may have shuffled round a tree in the woods and found ourselves in front of a sabre-toothed tiger - a decision and action have to happen very fast if we're to survive! The second emotional centre is in our more recently developed higher cortex of the brain. Here lies our creativity, intuition, non-verbal holistic data processing (how we recognise faces for example), artistic abilities, our sensitivity to who we are and where we are in the world. It enables us to take a very wide view and sense the relationships between huge numbers of variables. (It is also a centre much neglected and underrated in Western society!)

Emotional Capacity Imagine we have a tank of emotional 'fuel' to draw on throughout the day as we go about our normal lives. If we are sensible, we will be very sure to keep a good bit of fuel in reserve for unusual events. If we suddenly experience a major trauma, or an accumulation of significant emotional events, or increasing and persistent levels of stress, we're liable to find ourselves running near empty by the end of the day. Then it would only take a small incident to 'run out'. When that happens, we hit our emotional trip wire, and our survival/fight or flight response is triggered! So what's all this got to do with depression?

Surprisingly, amazingly, depressed people are in a very highly emotionally aroused state! Why? Because their fight or flight, survival mechanism has been aroused, and they're stuck in it. Usually they've faced an accumulation of significant emotional events and stress, which eventually ran them out of emotional 'fuel'. Then just one more, may be very small, incident and the tank's emptied, the wire is tripped and it's 'fight or flight!' But there's no sabre-toothed tiger! There's nothing to fight or run away from. So the survival mechanism cannot be shut off! Now what happens? At the end of the day the person goes to bed, and usually falls straight to sleep. But there's a massive load of unresolved emotion from the day, which REM sleep/dreaming has to deal with. And typically, a person in this state will have four or five, or more, hours of REM sleep per night!

So for four or five hours in the night, they will be using up loads of energy, and of course only having a small amount of restful sleep. No wonder they are utterly exhausted in the morning! Actually, in my experience, apart from an initial hour or so, sleep goes altogether, presumably as the REM process tries so hard that I wake up. The result is a thoroughly depressed person, physically and emotionally exhausted, still in Fight / flight mode with its very narrow focus and only Yes/No options, and out of emotional 'fuel'. They're exhausted, stuck in very black and white/ catastrophic thinking, and cut off from all the colour and nuances and infinite options they would usually have, as well as their logical, problem solving, intellectual processes.

What to do? Relaxation is the key. Get yourself immediately to a 'Human Givens' trained therapist who will;

- a) help you relax
- b) then give some specific therapy to disarm the fight/flight mechanism

Now that you're out of the fight/flight mode, you will again have access to the powerful resources of the higher level emotional part of your brain, as well as your problem solving, thinking abilities. With the help of the therapist, you can then examine what was happening in your life just before you fell into depression, to understand how this happened. Essentially this means discovering which emotional needs were consistently not being met - the failure to satisfy a core emotional need is at the root of all depression.

Our core emotional needs include security, social contact, having a meaningful life, autonomy and control, achievement, attention, purpose, emotional connection, fun, and intimacy. Then, back in touch with your resources, you will be able to look positively and realistically at ways of getting these vital needs met. Usually, only one or a very small number of therapy sessions are needed to release someone from depression. While you're finding ways of meeting your needs, keep a close eye on stress levels, pay attention to the things you know or discover you love to do, and make sufficient time to enjoy them! Having time to do the things you love must be your priority! This will keep your emotional tank topped up.

The Human Givens approach to depression indicates that traditional psychotherapies which focus on dredging up and re-experiencing emotional grief, often from long ago, are not helpful. By encouraging prolonged introspection on emotional problems, they're very likely to maintain the depressed person in the fight/flight mode and therefore in depression!

'Human Givens - a new approach to emotional health and clear thinking'
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