SUPERCHARGING YOUR EFFECTIVENESS

factsheet

Autonomic Nervous System

(The Stress Response, fight flight, freeze)

- Our subconscious mind continually scans new environments, people, situations or plans for potential threats.
- The subconscious can't tell us in words if something is wrong. Instead, it sends messages to our autonomic nervous system (ANS) to...run, fight, freeze or fawn.
- Our ANS is an in-built safety mechanism. that can process thousands of pieces of information in seconds.
- When our stress response is triggered, the prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for critical thinking) shuts down, making it difficult to process the information needed to make sound decisions.
- Instead, the amygdala, which is responsible for spontaneous action, kicks in, prompting us to run, fight, or freeze.
- However, today, the stress response does not typically involve running, fighting, or freezing in place. Instead, looks like...

- **DEFENSIVENESS**
- Passive-aggressive
- Anger/aggression
- Nitpicking/snappy
- Hostility
- Belligerence
- Arumentative
- Resentful
- Judgemental
- Micromanaging
- Frustration
- Sarcasm

- **SUDDEN URGE TO GET AWAY**
- Avoidance
- Lateness
- Cancelling plans/meetings
- Physically removing yourself
- Sickness/absence
- Excessive running/cycling/walking

- **PROCRASTINATION**
- Physically hiding (car, kitchen, restroom, etc.)
- Numbing (Netflix binging, social media scrolling)
- Pity party/self-pity
- Feeling stuck
- Lack of motivation
- Immobility

- **PEOPLE PLEASING**
- Trouble boundary setting
- Put others first
- Can't say 'no'
- Fear speaking up
- Deferring to others
- Fear of speaking up
- Fear of standing up for yourself
- Conflict avoidant
- Mind-reading

Autonomic Nervous System

(The Stress Response, fight flight, freeze)

- Our brain was designed to keep us alive long enough to procreate. That's its sole purpose.
- It wasn't designed for happiness but survival!
- To that end, your brain loves certainty, even if that 'certainty' is potentially painful or harmful, e.g. staying in a job you hate or a bad relationship.
- Your brain will always gravitate toward what is known, even if, on a conscious level, the 'new' thing makes far more sense.
- Even when you know the 'new' thing is far better for you, self-sabotage results from your brain trying to take you back to what is known.
- Once we're aware of how our brain works, we can make a conscious decision to override our innate programming.

Imposter Syndrome

- Any new job, new business, side-hustle, public speaking, networking, new project, dating, etc., can trigger your stress response.
- Even though you have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the 'thing', your ANS may still consider it a threat and try to lead you away.
- Remember that your prefrontal cortex may be impaired, so you will likely lose the ability to think critically.
- Your brain may even come up with wild reasons to stop you that make no critical sense.

Self-sabotage

- Again, you attempt to do something new outside your comfort zone.
- It may start well; however, when it becomes difficult, you may start to sabotage yourself.
- You stop doing all the things you need to do to create a satisfactory result.
- Your subconscious mind has perceived a threat and employed your ANS to stop you, triggering your flight, fight, freeze response.

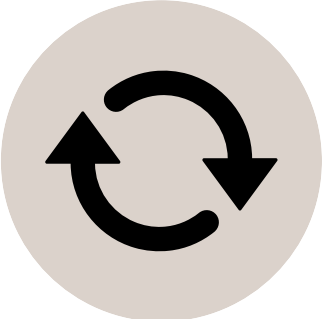
Managing Stress Symptoms

Physiological Sigh

When we feel anxious, our breath tends to be shallow, causing an imbalance between carbon dioxide and oxygen in our bloodstream. To recalibrate, we need to release the carbon dioxide stored in the lungs. To do this:

- Take two inhales through the nose (until your lungs fully expand)
- Release the air through one LONG breath out through your mouth
- Repeat 2/3 times

16-Count Breathwork



Another great way to manage the stress response is the 16-count breathing technique:

- Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold for 2 seconds
- Breathe out through your mouth for 8 seconds
- Hold for 2 seconds
- Repeat for 1-5 minutes

The 15-minute Walk

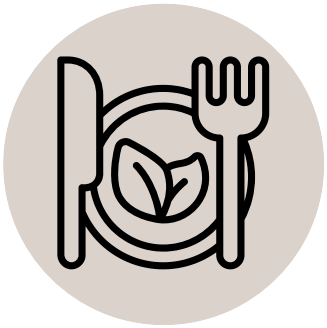
In as little as 15 minutes of walking, we can dramatically change our biochemicals, helping us to feel calmer and more in control. The benefits include:

- Burning off adrenaline & cortisol (stress hormones)
- Releasing dopamine (the reward chemical), and endorphins (the painkiller), plus oxytocin if you walk with a dog or another person
- Regulating serotonin through sunlight exposure. Serotonin regulates our sleep/wake cycle
- Widening our view (stress causes our view to narro,w leading to feelings of overwhelm)

Listening to something stimulating further enhances the positive effects

Diet , Sleep , Exercise

Diet



Eat a Balanced diet:

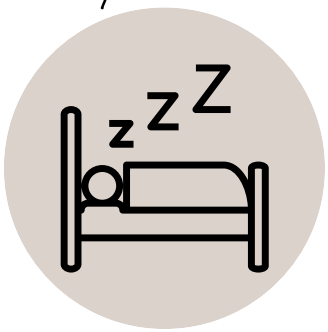
- Fruit and vegetables that are in season
- As much colour on your plate as possible
- Avoid processed food
- Limit caffeine, alcohol and salt
- Meal prep is key!

Supplements:

- Good multivitamin
- Vitamin D3/Omega 3/B12 & Folate
- Calcium
- Collagen

N.B. just implementing one 'healthy' meal a day (every day) will make a positive difference to your long-term health and wellbeing.

Sleep



How to manage night-time worry/overthinking:

- Avoid turning the light on or reaching for your phone
- Bright light interrupts melatonin release, making the brain think it's time to get up
- It can be a complete sleep cycle before you fall back to sleep
- Leave a pad and pen by the side of the bed, scribble down anything that's bothering you
- Typically, you'll only need to do it for a couple of nights, and you won't wake up worrying again

Exercise

- Make it a priority
- Schedule it in your diary as you would any other important meeting
- Find something you enjoy
- Do it with someone else (accountability partner)!
- Join a club - gym, dancing, yoga, running, walking, cycling
- Focus on how you'll feel afterwards... REFRAME!
- Seek professional advice before you start!

5 Quick Ways to Enhance Your Resilience

1. Change Your Thoughts

- If you don't like your thoughts, change them!
- You can't have two thoughts at once.
- To change your thoughts:
  - Change your pictures – visualise something different.
  - Wave the thought away/shout STOP!
  - Get moving (change your physiology) – MOTION CREATES EMOTION.
  - Use 5. 4. 3. 2. 1. to avoid procrastinating.
  - Simply decide to 'Let. It. Go!'

2. Reframe Negatives

- There are always at least two ways of looking at any situation
- When we focus on everything that's negative, that's how we feel
- Reframe your thoughts and feelings by asking better questions:
  - How can I use this?
  - Who can help me with this?
  - What haven't I tried?
  - How can I make this work?
  - What positives can I find in this?

3. Avoid The News!

- As humans, we were designed to be on the lookout for threats – it's a DNA-based survival tool dating back to our caveman ancestors
- The news keeps us on artificial 'high-alert', triggering our flight, fight, freeze response
- Excessive news exposure is linked to long-term mental health issues
- Limit your news exposure to headlines a couple of times a day

4. Better Quality Sleep

- Turn electronic equipment off at least 30 minutes before bed – the light they emit interrupts serotonin release needed for sleep
- Go to bed and get up (even at weekends) at the same time for 2 weeks – it will reset your body clock.
- If you wake up at 3.00 pm, DO NOT turn on the light or reach for your phone. Instead, leave a pad and pen by the bedside – write down anything that wakes you

5. The 10-Minute Happiness Challenge

- Today is all we have – yesterday has gone, and tomorrow hasn't happened
- This IS your life!
- Avoid putting your happiness off, as it conditions your nervous system to believe it will only ever be in the future
- DO ONE THING EACH DAY THAT MAKES YOU HAPPY (even if it's for just 10 minutes!)

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Hello!

I'm Jo Banks, an Executive Coach, Leadership Development Trainer, and founder of What Next Consultancy (UK) Ltd. After a 20-year career in HR, I set up my coaching and training business in 2009. Since then, I've worked with tens of thousands of people, from aspiring managers to senior leaders, helping them build more fulfilling careers, healthier relationships, and happier lives using practical, psychology-based tools that work in the real world.

My approach is grounded in biology, neuroscience, and behavioural science, and focuses on simple, effective methods that support real change without overwhelm. I'm passionate about empowering people to recognise their potential and thrive both personally and professionally.

There's lots more support, including plenty of FREEBIES, available on my website (jobanks.net) and YouTube channel (@JoBanks). You'll find practical, down-to-earth content on topics such as:

- Menopause and Andropause
- Bullying/Toxic Work Environments/Narcissism
- Managing Stress, Anxiety, and Overwhelm
- Neurodivergence at Work
- Boosting Productivity and Focus
- Success Mindset
- Mental and Physical Wellbeing

You're also very welcome to follow me on social media for regular insights, practical tips, and updates. Links are included below.

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