

Are you putting holes in your 'stress bucket'



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The concept

All of us have some amount of stress in our lives. Now stress on its own is not always a bad thing. 'Good stress' can help motivate us and create a feeling of fulfilment. In fact, our brains are wired such that it's difficult to take action until we feel at least some level of this emotional state. But prolonged stress is not good for you. It negatively impacts your cognitive performance (your thinking + decisions), your physical well being and your self control.

When under stress, we find it harder to concentrate, our reaction times slow down, it is more difficult to stay focused, think laterally and analytically, make decisions. It is much harder to control emotions, to recognise risks and communicate effectively. And if this continues for a long time, the effects are much more serious and can seriously impact physical and mental health.

This visual acts as a reminder that there is only so much stress humans can cope with. It identifies some possible stress triggers, shows the level in the stress bucket rise, and what is at risk when the stress bucket gets too full. It then reminds you of the need to find some ways to put 'holes' in the bucket, so you can prioritise your own wellbeing.

Why it's useful

It is really important to recognise the signs that you are moving from feeling *healthy pressure* to *unhealthy stress*. You can then step in to take some action to help manage your responses to stressful triggers. This visual prompt helps you consider just how high the stress bucket is and prompts you to think about how to put some 'holes' in it, to release some of the pressure. For some, it is not always possible to reduce the stressors. What this visual prompts is an awareness of how you currently feel, and the need to **actively manage your personal level of stress**. *Tips for how to de-stress are in another leadership bite - these ideas consider the physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual elements of wellness.*

How/when to apply it

This is a useful visual to have near your workspace to act as a prompt for you to stop and consider how high your stress bucket is right now. Save a copy on your phone. Put a reminder in your diary once a month to do a stress bucket audit!

Keep it handy to share with others when you start to notice the unhealthy signs of stress. Add the topic to a team agenda. This is a useful visual to show you care about the wellbeing of others, and provides a touchpoint to have a conversation about the importance of personal wellbeing.

