


Stress

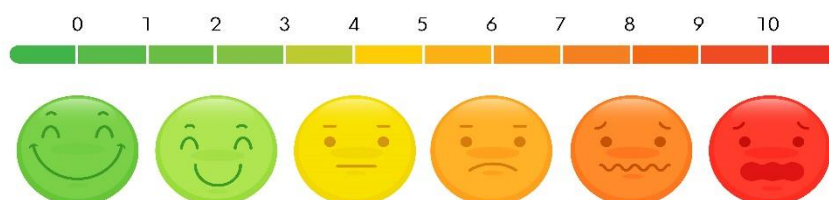
“Stress will move you: it will push you either forward or backward, but you choose which direction.” —Chelsea Eriean

Warm up

- What are some things that stress you out?
- Do you think the stress levels at your job or school are particularly high?
- Do you know anyone with a job that you would find very stressful? How do they deal with it?
- Do you have any good strategies for dealing with stress?
- Do you feel like people are more stressed out now than they were 10 years ago? Why or why not?
- Is there a place you go when you need some peace and quiet?



 1. With a partner, rate the life experiences based on how stressful you think they are. Feel free to discuss any personal experiences you have with these in more detail.



- Going to the dentist
- Moving house
- Organising a party or dinner at your house
- Going to a job interview for your dream job
- Ending a long-term relationship
- Deciding on a large purchase such as a house or car
- Taking a long international flight
- Christmas with your family
- Going through a two week period at work or school when you have to work a lot more than usual



2. Read the article and answer the questions on the next page. Try to figure out what the underlined phrases mean based on their context.

There's no doubt about it, modern life can be a drag sometimes. Bills to pay, deadlines to meet, and an endless list of meetings, most of which probably could have been an email. However, it's vital in the modern world to take a step back, stop and smell the roses, and manage your stress effectively. In this article we'll take a look at some of the biggest stressors in the lives of young professionals, and give some constructive tips on how to deal with them.

Not every workplace has a specific "crunch time", but it's no coincidence that industries with crunch time have much higher levels of burnout. Some workplaces even have what is being referred to as "crunch culture", that being a culture which encourages long hours and sometimes absurd amounts of work leading up to the deadline for a big project. Crunch culture is particularly prominent in entertainment industries such as video game development, and it's not unheard of for some video game developers to work 80 or even 100 hour weeks in the lead-up to a big release. These kinds of hours often lead to burnt out employees, which leads to even more stress, as burnt out staff have to take time off, leaving the rest of the already exhausted workforce to pick up the slack. If you feel like your work has an unhealthy "crunch culture", the two most important things are to set clear boundaries (i.e. I won't even be looking at my emails outside of work hours) and to clearly communicate with your boss that you feel like it is literally not possible to continue working under this much stress.

Speaking of colleagues taking time off, this often causes a lot more stress than you might expect. If you work closely with and rely on your colleagues, you may have mixed feelings when they take time off work right when you need them the most. Of course you're delighted for Carol from accounting when she tells you she's spending the next two weeks on a beach in the Bahamas... but does that mean you're going to have to do the invoices and the tax returns?? You're already flat out, and now this?! In this situation preparation is key. Make sure you know exactly what tasks you'll be taking over, and how to do them. The person who is on leave needs to write clear notes on all their tasks and responsibilities. That way you won't be pulling your hair out and trying to figure out exactly what you need to do.

For workers who have children, balancing work and family can feel like an impossible task sometimes. Football games, dentist appointments, and helping with projects from school are just a few tasks that can fill up your already busy schedule. In these situations it is vital to manage your stress levels, because a worn out parent is far more likely to snap at either their spouse or their child, creating even more stress. The first step to avoiding this is to make sure the parental responsibilities are shared evenly, that way you won't end up resenting your spouse for taking a smaller portion of the work. It's also very important to keep in mind that these "tasks" are not just responsibilities that must be taken care of. It's very easy to just see them as another on a long list of things to do, but these times are actually valuable time to bond with your children, and although they may seem to come at the least convenient times, you should try to find the moments of joy in them, and they may actually come as a welcome relief to the grind of your work day.

- a) What advice does the article have for people who are overworked? Do you think it is good advice? *Set clear boundaries with your boss*
- b) According to the article, why might someone not be happy about a colleague going on vacation? *Because they may have to do the work of their colleague*
- c) What advice does the article have for working parents? Do you think it is good or realistic advice? *To split their responsibilities evenly between parents and to try to enjoy the time you spend with your kid and not see it as just a responsibility*
- d) For each of the three subjects discussed here, what advice would you give?



3. Match the underlined phases in the article to their definition below.

- a) To be extremely busy. *flat out*
- b) Something that is boring and exhausting. *a drag*
- c) A feeling of relaxation after stress or anxiety has been removed. *A relief*
- d) To be very tired, usually because of a long period of work. *worn out*
- e) To be so exhausted that you are unable to continue working. *burnt out*
- f) Something that is very unlikely but happens anyway. *a coincidence*
- g) Something that we mean seriously, exactly as we say it. *literally*
- h) A period during which you must work extra hard. *crunch time*
- i) To take a break and appreciate the beauty in life. *stop and smell the roses*
- j) To yell at someone unexpectedly, usually for a small thing. *to snap at*
- k) To do the work or tasks that have been left undone for some reason. *pick up the slack*



4. Ask and answer the following questions with a partner.

- a) When was the last time you felt really worn out? What caused it?
- b) Do you feel like your job or school has crunch time? When is it, and how do you deal with it?
- c) When you are stressed, do you ever snap at people? Do you know anyone who does?
- d) Have you ever experienced a coincidence, such as having the same birthday as someone else?
- e) Do you think you take enough time to stop and smell the roses, or do you feel like you need to do that more often?
- f) Have you ever known anyone who was completely burnt out at work or school? What caused it?



5. Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

- a) How many hours a week is Mark working at the moment? *70*
- b) What does Mark do? *He's a tax advisor*
- c) Why doesn't Mark believe that Jenny is really sick? *Because she gets sick the same time every year. It's too much of a coincidence.*
- d) Why does Mark think telling his boss that he won't work more than 50 hours is a bad idea? *He needs to keep his job, he has a family to support.*
- e) What did Mark have a fight with his partner about? *Lucy bought their son a drum kit without asking him.*
- f) How does Mark like to relax? *Gardening*
- g) Why is Lucy, Mark's wife, irritable at the moment, and how does that add to Mark's stress levels? *Her mother is sick, and Lucy has to take care of her.*
- h) What suggestion does Claire make as a way to unwind, and how does Mark react to it? *She suggests playing music with him. He thinks it's a good idea.*



6. Read the email and answer the questions on the next page.

Staff need to blow off some steam!

Hi guys,

I don't know if you've noticed this, but all 3 teams are super worn out at the moment. I mean we are always exhausted after delivering a big project like we did last week, but this time it seems like more than just tired, I think the long hours and the fact that the client was constantly changing their mind about what they actually wanted has taken some of our employees dangerously close to burn out. I've noticed staff who are usually good friends have started snapping at each other, I've heard 3 staff members this week alone crying in the bathrooms, and yesterday I watched Mark from accounting type for literally 15 minutes on a computer that wasn't turned on... So, I think we might have pushed them a bit too hard.

Now I think as a way to help them unwind, but also as a valuable opportunity for staff members to bond together, we should organise a company weekend at a resort in Turkey, Antalya. The resort I've chosen has an enormous amount of group activities available, and you can also find some great activities in the surrounding area. I'd like each of you to find some activities you think would be suitable and then decide on 3 of them together. Please keep in mind that these activities are not just for unwinding, but I also really want to encourage members from different teams to bond with each other. I've noticed the three teams have started to be a bit too isolated from each other lately, and I'd like to remind them that ultimately we are all on the same side!

Regards, Richard Dreyfuss

- a) What do you think “blow off some steam” means in the subject of the email? *To relieve some stress*
- b) Why are the employees so tired? *They just finished a big project with long hours.*
- c) What 3 signs does Richard mention that show the company is overworked? *Staff members snapping at each other, staff members crying in the bathroom, Mark typing on a computer that was not turned on.*
- d) What does Richard want to do to help the company relax? Do you think it's a good or bad idea? *He wants to take them on a team building/holiday weekend in Turkey.*
- e) What two things does Richard want to achieve by having the staff do group activities? *Help the team unwind, but also help them bond as a team.*



7. Student A and Student B each have different sets of three activities. Read your own activities, explain them and their benefits to your partner, and then together choose three out of all six to present to Richard Dreyfuss.

Student A

Pottery Classes

Discover your inner artist and shape your imagination into beautiful works of art! Join our pottery classes for a hands-on experience that's a great way to blow off some steam! Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned pro, our friendly instructors will guide you every step of the way.



Sign up today and start crafting your masterpiece!

Massage and Spa Day

Spoil yourself with the ultimate relaxation experience with our luxurious massage and spa packages. From soothing massages to refreshing saunas, treat yourself to a day of pure bliss. Escape the stress of everyday life and leave feeling renewed and ready to take on the world.



Book your perfect spa day today!

Paintball

Ready for an adrenaline-packed adventure? Grab your gear, grab your friends, and dive into the ultimate paintball experience! Paintball is a great way to develop a group of people into a strategic unit that can work smoothly together!



Book your game today, you won't regret it!

Student B

Yoga Classes

Stretch, strengthen, and center your mind with our rejuvenating yoga classes. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced yogi, our welcoming instructors will guide you through every pose with ease. Come for the relaxation, stay for the transformation.

Join us today for a healthier, more balanced you!



Horse Riding Lessons

Ready to ride? Our expert instructors offer personalized horse-riding lessons for all skill levels. Whether you want to learn advanced riding, or just take a nice trot through the countryside, we can accommodate. Horses often have a calming, therapeutic effect on people, so these courses with horses are perfect for those who need to unwind from the modern grind!

Start your journey today—unforgettable moments await!



Escape Room

Ready for a challenge? Gather your team and dive into an immersive adventure filled with puzzles, clues, and adrenaline! Whether you're solving a crime or escaping a haunted mansion, every second counts. Can you escape before time runs out?

Book your escape experience today and test your wits!

The Clock is Ticking. Are You Ready?



8. Now present the 3 activities you have chosen and your reasons for choosing them to your class.

Audio Transcript

Claire: Hi Mark, are you ok? You look a little worn out.

Mark: Hi Claire, yeah I'm ok I guess, I'm just under a lot of pressure at work... and at home...and pretty much everywhere actually.

Claire: Well that sounds tough. What's going on at work?

Mark: I'm just flat out at work, I did 70 hours last week and I'm still behind on everything.

Claire: 70?? Mark that's crazy, that can't be healthy, why do you work so much?

Mark: I mean normally I don't, but February is crunch time for tax advisors. Everybody waits until the last minute to do their tax declaration and then expects us to get them done on time. I'll be so relieved when this month is over.

Claire: Ok I can imagine. But can't you ask one of your colleagues for help?

Mark: I would love to, but Jenny, who is my main support, is supposedly sick at the moment, and of course I have to pick up the slack.

Claire: Well that's bad timing but maybe she actually is sick?

Mark: I doubt it, somehow she seems to get sick every year for a couple of weeks around February. Maybe once or twice I could believe, but this has happened 7 years in a row. Doesn't seem like a coincidence to me.

Claire: I mean maybe she just gets burnt out from all the stress and needs some time off?

Mark: Honestly I don't care if she's burnt out. I'm burnt out, we're all burnt out, she can take time off after February, but right now we need her to work.

Claire: Wow that sounds like a drag. Why don't you go to your boss and tell him that the amount of work you do is unsustainable? You should set some boundaries, tell him that from now on you won't be working more than 50 hours a week no matter what.

Mark: Yeah, I can't do that Claire.

Claire: Why not? You just have to stand up to him and clearly communicate your needs.

Mark: I have a family to support Claire, if I do that there is a very good chance I'll lose my job. The job market is terrible at the moment, and I just can't afford to be unemployed, even for a few months.

Claire: Oh... ok good point, I hadn't thought of that. Speaking of family, how are Lucy and Tim?

Mark: Tim is doing great. He's started to learn to play the drums and is loving it, which is a

bit of a shock because he's never seemed interested in music before. I think he just likes hitting things.

Claire: Ha, sounds like Tim. And Lucy?

Mark: Well... me and her had a pretty big argument recently. She went and bought Tim a drum kit without asking me first, and now our house sounds like a bad heavy metal concert. It's driving me nuts, my one way of unwinding was to spend some time gardening.

Claire: I didn't know you like gardening!

Mark: People are usually pretty surprised, but yeah I love it. We have a beautiful little rose garden you should see at some point.

Claire: So... you quite literally stop and smell the roses?

Mark: Oh my god that was terrible. But yes, I do. My garden used to be the only place I could get a little bit of peace and quiet. But not anymore I guess.

Claire: Well Lucy really should have asked before buying him a drum kit... but then again, if your kid shows and interest in something like that, you really have to encourage that.

Mark: I know, I know. But when they came home with the drum kit I snapped at Lucy in front of Tim, and kind of ruined his excitement about the whole thing. She should have asked me, but I shouldn't have snapped at her. Then we had a big argument because we're both extremely irritable at the moment.

Claire: Oh? I mean for you it's pretty obvious, but why is she irritable?

Mark: Her mother is pretty sick, she's been sick for about a year, and Lucy is the main person taking care of her. Which of course means I'm the person responsible for a lot of things with Tim, like taking him to drumming lessons.

Claire: I know it's hard, but you should try to enjoy your time with him. I read an article that said a lot of busy parents end up seeing their responsibilities with their kids as just another thing on a list of things they have to do.

Mark: You're right, and I try to, but it's just hard when I'm so worn out. And on top of that it feels like everything I do with Tim is just boring stuff like driving him to school. We never seem to do anything really fun together.

Claire: Wait Mark, didn't you used to play guitar?

Mark: Yeah, a long time ago, why?

Claire: Well instead of gardening couldn't you play guitar with Tim while he plays the drums? That would be a great way to unwind.

Mark: That's... actually a great idea, why didn't I think of that? Thanks Claire.