

# POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

Navigating Stress and Burnout with a Mindful Mindset



While rest and relaxation can ease exhaustion, they don't fully address the root causes of burnout. After a break from routine, you may still face the same impossible workload and challenges and will be right back where you started. Thinking you can't cope is one of the greatest stressors. That's why adapting – which often involves changing your mindset and assumptions – can be most helpful in dealing with stress. It's important to understand what aspects of your situation are truly fixed, and which you can change. Altering your perspective can buffer the negative impact of even the inflexible aspects. This involves questioning ingrained beliefs about success, productivity, and the expectations placed upon you. Embracing adaptability and cultivating a growth-oriented mentality empower you to navigate challenges with greater flexibility. Let's look at some ways you can accomplish this...

## Adjust your standards

Do you need to vacuum twice a week? Do you need to check your work email after you leave the office for the day? Do your children need homemade cookies for the bake sale or can they be store-bought this time?

Unrealistic standards, whether self-imposed or influenced by external factors, contribute significantly to stress and burnout. The relentless pursuit of perfection and unattainable goals can create a constant sense of pressure, leading you to neglect your well-being. Adapting one's mindset to more realistic standards is a powerful strategy for preventing stress and burnout. This involves setting achievable goals, recognizing personal limits, and embracing imperfections as opportunities for growth. By prioritizing a healthy work-life balance, defining success holistically, and fostering adaptability, individuals can alleviate the burden of chronic stress. Adjusting standards not only reduces the fear of falling short but also promotes resilience, satisfaction, and overall well-being, ultimately creating a sustainable approach to navigating life's challenges.



## Reframe the issue



The ability to understand and consider alternative viewpoints, or *perspective-taking*, is a powerful tool in preventing stress and burnout. This can involve understanding the motivations and challenges of others, fostering empathy, and recognizing that everyone faces difficulties. It puts your own challenges in context and can contribute to a more positive outlook. Here are some examples:

Instead of getting stressed about a tight deadline, consider that your colleague may be juggling multiple tasks too. By understanding their workload, you can collaborate more effectively. This shared perspective reduces pressure and fosters teamwork.

At home, you may feel overwhelmed by the mess and clutter. Or, you can view it as a chance to involve your family in a cleaning spree, turning it into a bonding activity. Shifting your perspective transforms a potentially stressful situation into an opportunity for shared responsibilities and quality time.

## Change Negative Thought Patterns

When people engage in negative thinking, such as catastrophizing or assuming the worst, it can intensify stress levels and contribute to burnout. *Cognitive restructuring*, or changing negative thought patterns, helps alter the way you perceive and respond to challenging situations. Cognitive restructuring involves identifying and challenging these destructive thought patterns, and replacing them with more realistic and positive perspectives. By cultivating a more adaptive mindset, you're better equipped to navigate stressors with resilience and efficacy, reducing the emotional toll of demanding situations. This shift in thinking not only mitigates the immediate impact of stress but also fosters a long-term ability to cope with challenges.



## Don't forget the big picture



When stress becomes all-encompassing, it's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture and succumb to a sense of hopelessness. Staying connected to purpose and meaning in life can help you navigate difficulties with a sense of direction and resilience. Reminding yourself of what truly matters and reflecting on the significance of personal goals, can help you differentiate between temporary setbacks and enduring values, and better withstand the immediate pressures that contribute to stress.

This big-picture approach can also encourage you to make some adjustments in how you label stressors in your life. Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control, particularly the behaviour of others.

Rather than stress over them, focus on what you can control such as the way you choose to react to challenges or perceived problems.

You may also want to clarify the expectations that others have of you. If your job expectations are unclear, or if the requirements of your role constantly change, stress and anxiety may build up. Consider speaking with your supervisor to clarify expectations and establish strategies to meet your job requirements.

## The Five-by-Five Rule

To help keep the big picture in perspective and remind yourself of what's important, try the Five-by-Five Rule: *If it's not going to matter in five years, don't spend more than five minutes being upset by it.*

While it seems like a silly and overly simplistic approach, the fact of the matter is, some problems don't need your full attention. It's easy and quite honestly just human nature to devote hours to days, and even sometimes weeks to being upset about trivial matters. So, if something won't matter in five years don't bother being upset at it for more than five minutes.