



## Transcript – Understanding Stress

This module is about the biggest problem that we are here to solve... stress.

By the end of this surprising module you will have discovered:

- What stress is really and how it's actually designed to protect us.
- That not all stress is the same, some stress is even good for you!
- How the mind and the body create and respond to stress.
- How to recognise the signs of stress early in yourself and others so you can do something about it.

We would all agree that feeling stressed is an awful experience, and we therefore often lose sight of the fact that the stress response itself is actually designed to protect us.

Imagine way back when we were hunter gatherers. You're out on the Serengeti, like you do, and you see a lion.

Immediately you perceive it as being a threat and certain things happen in your body... the hormones cortisol and adrenaline are released, your heartbeat increases, you begin to breathe more rapidly. The blood moves from your external organs to your internal organs - in case you get injured, so you won't bleed to death! Your vision becomes more steely and focussed, honing in on the threat, your appetite is suppressed for both for food and sexually... and all this happens to prime you to take the appropriate physical action... to freeze, to flee or to fight.

Now assuming the lion didn't eat you and you got away, your physiology returns to normal or homeostasis and everything is fine. You go about your business and hopefully it's quite a while before another lion comes along.

However, how we live our lives today is very different to all that time ago. You are living in the safest world there has ever been, you are much less likely to be killed because of violence or war now than at any time in our evolution.

However, the body responds to a perceived threat in exactly the same way as it does to actual physical threat. So, we only need to think about the threat for the stress response to kick in. And it doesn't have to be a physical threat, it could be a threat to our ego, or our perception of our selves or being left out of the gang.

So, if you get some negative feedback on your performance or if you don't get enough likes on a social media posting or if you don't get invited to a meeting or a party or a wedding. We respond in the same way as if we were physically at risk.

Lions don't come around very often, but we are bombarded with this stimulus all of the time which we perceive as threats.

So how does this play out and how are we impacted by it... well, what starts as a challenge, can move to a stretch, pressure, overwhelm, panic and in some cases burnout.



1 in 6 people will experience burnout in their life and I wouldn't want that to be you.

So often when I'm coaching people they don't realise that they are stressed, because they are so deeply in it.

One of the very first workshops I ran I was introduced by a woman who shared her own personal story. She said "I was working on a project a few years ago, it was one of those projects that had a ridiculous deadline which had to be met, we had no option but to deliver. I pulled out all the stops, working crazy hours, burning the midnight oil and got it across the line just in time. The next day I went on holiday with my best friends. Two days into the holiday one of them pulled me aside and said; 'what's going on, you've been on holiday with us all this time and you've hardly opened your mouth'. The funny thing she said was that "I wasn't even aware of how stressed I was!"

This is so often the case.

The **Thrive sheet** for this module provides a list of symptoms and everyone is able to identify with at least one of them.

Are you curious about your stress reactions or are you already aware? I'd say it's best to check.

I recommend that you pause the video, quickly download the '**Thrive sheet**' and do the 1st exercise now. Of course, you can go back and do the exercise later, but if you can, I'd advise you that do it now as you'll get so much more from the next section.

So, assuming that you've already done the exercise, hopefully you now know what to watch out for in terms of your emotions, your physical feelings and your behaviour. Let me now share with you some examples that other people have said in the 100's of workshops I've run.

#### Emotions

- Detached
- Denial
- Not focussed
- Withdrawal
- Needy
- Over sensitive
- Taking things personally
- Anxiety or frustration
- Numb
- Guilt
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Feeling misunderstood



#### Physical:

- Lack of Sleep, can't get to sleep or waking up in the middle of the night
- Not paying attention to your appearance
- Frown, look steely and tightened in the face
- Headaches or migraines
- Increased heart rate
- Nausea
- Increased blood pressure
- A feeling in your stomach
- Back, neck and shoulder pains
- Decreased sex drive
- Coating on your teeth

#### Behavioural signs:

- Over or under eating
- Drinking
- Behaving rudely to other people
- Having unrealistic expectations of others
- Withdrawing/hiding yourself away
- De-prioritising looking after ourselves
- Being a control freak – lock everything down
- Lack of empathy
- Over compensating – working too hard and trying to play hard at the same time
- Short tempered
- Forgetful
- Lack of attention to detail

When you see all these lists together, it becomes obvious that they are related.

Feeling anxious might lead to you having back, neck and shoulder pains, then in the evening you might have a glass of wine or even a bottle of wine to try and relax, sleep badly and then feel worse the next day.

Maybe the anxiety and dodgy tummy leads to a little tearfulness and later a headache and if it's not dealt with the stress will move around in a vicious downward circle. So often the strategies that we have for dealing with stress in the short term end up, creating more stress for us.

HOWEVER – If you could take some practical steps, the vicious circle, can actually turn into a virtuous circle.



So, as you look at these lists now I'm wondering if you can identify for yourself any of the warning signs.

I was working with a coaching client a couple of years ago who experienced terrible migraines. When we first started working together she really resented them but over time she started to see them differently, not exactly seeing them as a friend but grateful for helping her to be more aware. Now, for me, I get a skin irritation in the middle of my chest when I'm beginning to feel stressed. When that happens, it gives me pause to stop and think what is that I'm doing that's causing me stress and what is it that I need to do differently.

So, take a moment to write down in your 'Thrive Sheet' what are the signs for you.

So, that was about stress...the difference between good stress and bad stress, and how we identify it early in ourselves and in other people, so we can do something about it.

So, to recap on this module:

- You now have a better understanding of stress.
- You recognise the early signs of stress for you, and those around you, so you can do something about it.

So, that's all the negative stuff over and done with!

In the next module we will be moving into the positive realm.

In the meantime,

Be well and thrive!