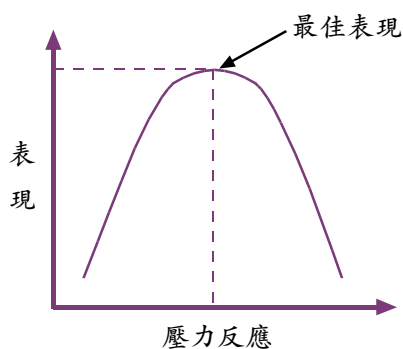


「認知行為法」 助你管理壓力

「你有壓力，我有壓力」一度成為城中佳話，究竟「壓力」是甚麼？「壓力」是人類面對事物的思想、情感、生理和行為反應。譬如，當我們獲指派一項非常重要的差事時，我們可能會思索解決辦法（思想反應），心情緊張（情感反應）、心跳加速、肌肉繃緊（生理反應），推掉約會並集中工作（行為反應）。在二十世紀初，心理學家葉氏（Robert M Yerkes）和杜氏（John D Dodson）就發現壓力反應與表現成「倒U型」關係（見圖一）。意即當我們身處於恰當的壓力水平時，我們最能發揮至佳的表現。這是因為當我們感到壓力時，身體就會釋出「壓力荷爾蒙」—皮質醇，讓身體進入最佳的狀態以面對壓力。由此可見，適當水平的壓力是「好壓力」（eustress），能讓人發揮潛能（無怪乎世界紀錄多在大型運動會中創造出來）。可是，當身體處於過量壓力時，我們會感到精神緊張和容易疲勞，集中力和記憶力會受到影響，免疫系統亦被皮質醇削弱而影響健康，這可謂是「壞壓力」（distress）。故此，有效地管理壓力是很重要的。



在日常生活中，我們可以透過認知行為法則來調節壓力水平。「認知」是我們理解事物的過程，它會影響我們對事情的反應。同事甲和乙剛獲通知下月晉升至主管級，他們的資歷和職責都是完全相同，可是同事甲只看到新工作帶來的煩惱，因此視之為「苦差」；同事乙則看到新工作所帶來的滿足，因此視之為個人突破的機

會，感到興奮和充滿鬥志。這例子說明我們的壓力正正來自我們對事件的評價，如果我們能多留意事情美好的一面，抱著「勇於接受挑戰」的精神去面對當前的困難，那麼，我們便能把「壞壓力」轉化為「好壓力」，從而發揮潛能克服困難。

我們亦可透過「行為」上的配合達致管理壓力的果效。當我們身體出現一些不良的壓力反應時（如：失眠、食慾不振、精神和身體難以放鬆），可參考以下的建議：

- 適量運動：我們進行帶氧運動時，腦部會釋出「腦內啡」（endorphin），有鎮痛和讓人感到愉悅的功效；
- 享受生活：合理地安排工作，每天留一點時間（即使只是15分鐘）給自己做一些喜歡的事情；
- 腹腔式呼吸法：此呼吸方法有效舒緩壓力導致的不適（如：呼吸困難、目眩、頭痛、肌肉緊張等）；
- 多與朋友分享：研究指出，朋輩的情感支援和實際幫助對壓力起著「緩衝作用」（buffering effect），減低「壞壓力」的傷害；
- 充足休息和均衡飲食：良好的集中力、穩定的情緒和充沛的體力實有賴足夠的休息和營養。

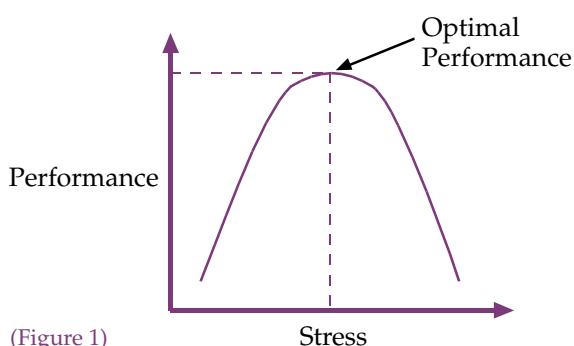
我們每天都無可避免地面對著不同程度的壓力，有效管理壓力對個人的成長和發展有莫大幫助。如欲制訂個別的壓力管理良方，歡迎與臨床心理學家探討。

黃山先生

註冊臨床心理學家
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Managing Stress with Cognitive Behavioural Strategies

We experience stress everyday but how much do we know about what "stress" is? Stress is the cognitive, emotional, physiological and behavioural responses to an event. For instance, when a person is assigned an important job, he/she will contemplate the solutions (cognitive response), feel nervous (emotional response), may experience heart palpitations and muscle tension (physiological response), and may withdraw from social functions so as to stay focused on the job (behavioural response). In the early twentieth century, Robert M Yerkes and John D Dodson, both psychologists, proposed an "inverted-U" model to describe the relationship between stress response and performance (Figure 1). According to the model, our performance reaches the optimal point when we experience appropriate levels of stress. The stress hormone, cortisol is produced, which energises our mind and body to cope with a stressful event. This may explain why most of the world records were created in large-scale sports games. The experience of "eustress" ("good stress") in these games helps bring out the potential of the sportsmen. On the other hand, unfortunately, when we are stressed overwhelmingly (i.e. "distress"), we will feel emotionally tense and tired. Furthermore, the excessive release of cortisol will compromise our attention and memory, and hamper the functioning of our immune system. Therefore, effective management of stress is crucial.



(Figure 1)

Cognitive behavioural strategies can be applied to manage our stress in everyday living. "Cognition" is the mental processing of information, which determines our responses. For example, officer A and B, having the same qualifications and work experience, receive

a promotion for the same job. Officer A perceives the new job as problematic and feels despairing because he only focuses on the negative side of the job. On the other hand, officer B perceives the new job as an opportunity for growth and, thus, feels energetic and passionate about the demanding job. The above example demonstrates that stress could derive from our interpretation of an event, which could be quite neutral. In order to transform the "distress" into "eustress", we should pay attention to the positive aspects of an event, bearing an attitude of "I am willing to take the challenge".

Behaviourally, we can manage our stress by taking appropriate actions. The following suggestions may be considered when there are adverse distress symptoms (e.g. insomnia, loss of appetite and feeling tense):

- Appropriate amount of physical exercise: during physical exercise, the brain will release "endorphins" which produce analgesia and a sense of happiness.
- Enjoy life: schedule a time slot (even just 15 minutes) for yourself to participate in an enjoyable activity everyday.
- Diaphragmatic breathing: this deep breathing exercise relieves stress-induced symptoms (e.g. shortness of breath, dizziness, headache, muscle tension, etc).
- Enjoy a social gathering: research shows that emotional and instrumental support from friends contributes to a "buffering effect" that reduces the harmful impact of distress.
- Adequate rest and nutrition: enough rest and nutrition help maintain our attention, emotional stability and energy level.

Stress is inevitable in our lives. Therefore, stress management can help people's personal growth and development. As a clinical psychologist I can provide an individual plan for effective stress management.

Mr Joe Wong

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(Remark: Clinical Psychological Service is provided at Haven of Hope S K Yee Hang Hau Clinic. For enquiries please call 2703 2060.)