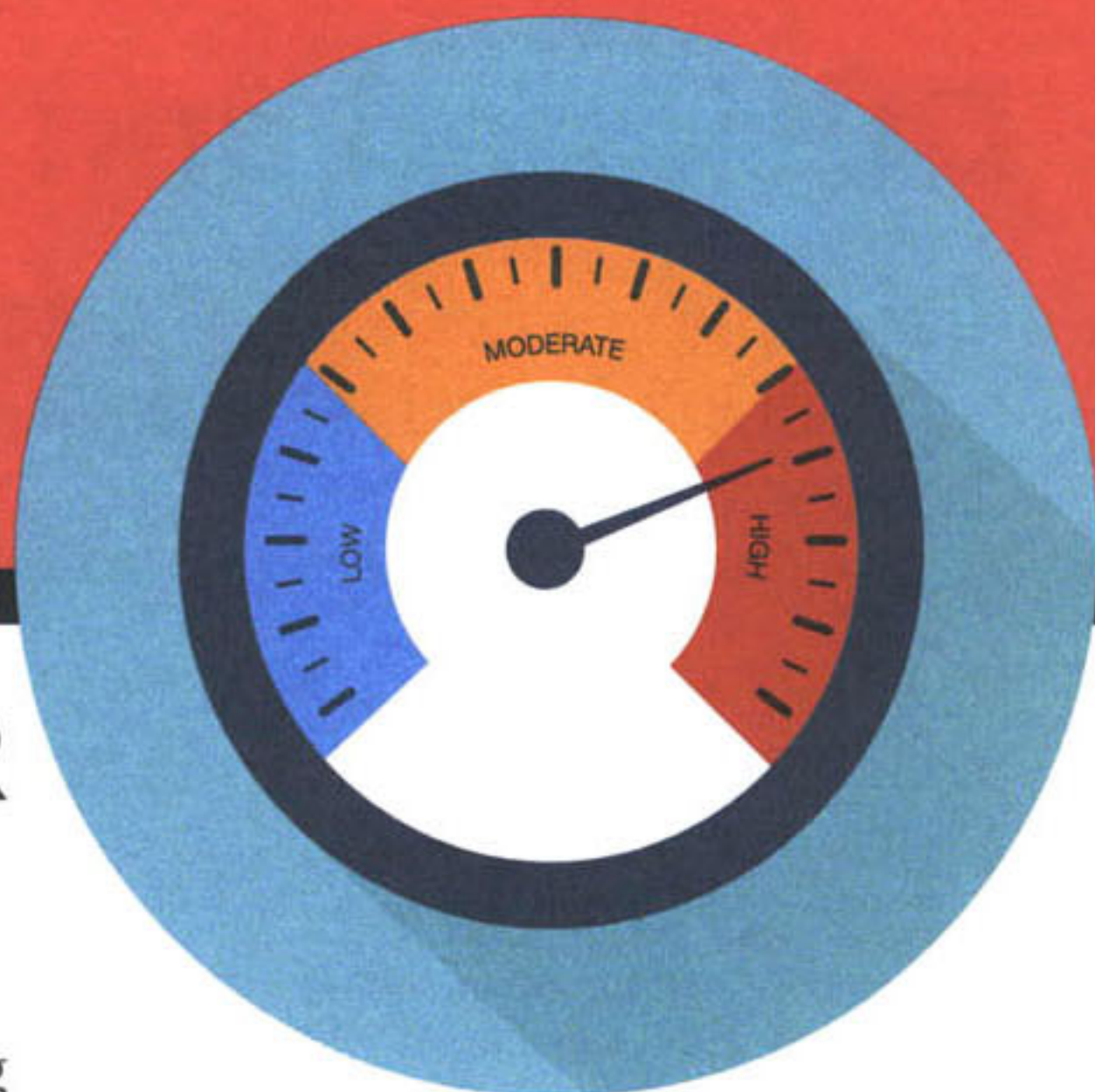


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KNOWING YOUR OWN STRESS

Consultant at CoSector, **Laura Brammar**, shares advice on coping with stress in the workplace

From sometimes feeling as though you never can catch up with yourself, to dreading Monday morning on the Sunday night, stress is something that most of us face at some point or another during our working lives.

Because of this, it is really important that we learn how to manage stress effectively. While we may not be able to eradicate it completely from our professional landscape, it is nevertheless helpful to have a clearer understanding of what our stress triggers are and how we can manage them more effectively.

Stress triggers

The causes of stress for optometrists vary from the unrealistic commercial expectations of managers, to the incessant pressure on testing time.

However, much of how we successfully manage stress is about how we strike a fine balance that helps support our wellbeing.

As researchers have found, wellbeing is a sense that you have the necessary resources to meet the demands around you (*Howard et al*, 1978). If there is ever a mismatch between those demands and resources then the resulting feeling can be one of stress.

For this reason, it is very important to reflect on the things that cause you stress and ask yourself which of them you can control, which you can influence, and which you can

neither control nor influence and must therefore accept.

Dealing with stress

Systematically listing your causes of stress and then dividing them into these three categories can be incredibly helpful.

So often we expend energy in aspects of our working life that are completely out of our control when we would be much better focusing on the things that we could try to change, such as our responses to people around us. Equally, when we do identify things that are within our control, it can be useful to ask ourselves what is stopping ourselves from changing such causes of stress.

However, it is not only external factors and other people that cause us to feel stressed. It is often about the internal narratives that we tell ourselves about ourselves (*Yurica*, 2002). These internal narratives can be really damaging in our quest to manage the demands around us.

Some common internal narratives that can get in the way of us accurately assessing stress our causes include:

- Externalised self-worth – ‘I’m only good if others tell me’ – this excessive need for external validation can leave us at the mercy of other people, whether they be our line manager or our patients
- Fortune-telling – ‘I can foresee it happening, so it will’ – this tendency to predict the future, often in a

“Understanding our stress is almost as important as managing our stress... Once we know what we’re dealing with, it’s far easier to figure out a treatment plan and get on the right path to recovery”

doomsday-like fashion, can also wear down our resilience

- Magnification – ‘That would be an absolute disaster’ – this temptation to be over dramatic in our appraisal of events and consequences can often make us more stressed than we need to be in reality.

Understanding our stress is almost as important as managing our stress. Like any problem, whether it’s clinical or not, once we know what we’re dealing with in more detail, it’s far easier to figure out a treatment plan and get on the right path to recovery.

For full references, see the online version of this article at www.optometry.co.uk •

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AOP webinar

To read more about the AOP’s recent webinar on stress in the workplace, visit bit.ly/2d6gy5T