



## Exercise 2:

## Remaining calm under pressure

This exercise forms part of the support materials designed to help you explore and develop your management capability. It aims to provide ideas and inspiration relevant to remaining calm under pressure, which is part of being open, fair and consistent.

Remaining calm under pressure is about being able to stay calm in pressured situations and managing your emotions, enabling you to take a consistent approach to managing people, and be fair and kind in your interactions with people.

If you haven't already done so, use the step-by-step guidance to help you get feedback, identify strengths and areas to develop and plan the action you will take. There is also an action plan sheet, which can be used to note down and track your actions.



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|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Reflect on your own responses: what are the warning signs that you are struggling to keep calm?</b></p> <p>Observe how you feel and behave when you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relaxed and entirely calm</li><li>• Under pressure, but still staying calm</li><li>• Starting to feel stressed, but things still feel bearable</li><li>• Experiencing considerable stress</li></ul> <p>Note down some key emotions and behaviours as a reminder for what to look out for. This can help you spot when you are most at risk of behaving in ways that are not helpful for you or those around you.</p> <p>You might want to consider developing a Wellness Action Plan for yourself that includes your early warning signs, triggers and positive actions, together with what support is helpful to you.</p> |   |   |
| <p><b>Understand and address causes: what moves you into the 'calm zone' and what moves you into the 'stressed zone'?</b></p> <p>Observe and note down things that move you towards the 'relaxed and entirely calm' end of the scale and that move you towards the 'experiencing considerable stress' end of the scale. You can include these in your Wellness Action Plan if you develop one.</p> <p>Increase your calm enhancers: Find ways to add more of the things that move you into your calm zone into your day-to-day life.</p> <p>Reduce your stress inducers: Consider how to reduce how often and to what extent you experience the things that move you into your stressed zone.</p>   |   |   |



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| <p><b>Explore your thinking: where might your thinking patterns contribute to or get in the way of feeling calm?</b></p> <p>Where you can't avoid things that move you into your stressed zone, changing or acknowledging the way you think about them may help. The following are some common ways of thinking that make us more likely to feel stressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All or nothing thinking: You see things in stark black and white terms – for instance either the piece of work is perfect, or it is totally wrong.</li><li>• Over-generalisation: You view a negative event as a neverending pattern – for instance thinking 'Things never go right for me' or 'This never works'.</li><li>• Focus on negativity: You dwell on negative comments and ignore positive ones – for instance in an appraisal, it might have been 99% positive but you leave worrying about the one development area identified.</li><li>• Discounting positives: Insisting your good qualities and accomplishments don't count – for instance not taking or believing praise and compliments.</li><li>• Jumping to conclusions: Making predictions about what might happen, for instance thinking things will go wrong.</li><li>• Magnification: Blowing issues out of proportion.</li><li>• 'Should' statements: You berate yourself and others with 'shoulds', 'oughts' and 'musts'.</li><li>• Labelling: Instead of thinking 'I made a mistake', you think 'I am a failure'.</li><li>• Blame: You feel guilty and blame yourself for things you are not responsible for.</li></ul> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p> |   |   |



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| <p>Do you have any of these unhelpful thinking patterns? Becoming more aware of your thinking is an important step as it allows you to see them for what they are – unhelpful ways of thinking rather than hard facts. It can also help you either challenge your thinking or learn not to engage with your thoughts, so you believe your unhelpful thinking patterns less and less. Engaging in mindfulness practice can support you to notice your thinking patterns and to allow your thoughts to come and go, so that you don't identify with them or believe them so much.</p>   |   |   |
| <p><b>Review your attitude to yourself: could you be more selfcompassionate?</b></p> <p>The elements of self-compassion are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mindfulness:</b> taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions and experiences so that we neither suppress them nor exaggerate them. It involves recognising our negative thoughts and emotions with clarity and bringing a nonjudgemental awareness of them just as they are.</li><li>• <b>Self-kindness:</b> bringing warmth and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, fail or feel inadequate, rather than either ignoring the situation or giving ourselves a hard time. It is about being gentle with ourselves.</li><li>• <b>Common humanity:</b> recognising that struggles, pain (emotional and physical) and personal inadequacy are part of our shared human experience – this is something that we all go through rather than something that happens to 'me' alone. Reflect on how you are doing in these three areas. Listening to self-compassion audios and doing compassion-focused reflection exercises can help you develop more selfcompassion.</li></ul> |   |   |



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| <p><b>Review your lifestyle: could you take greater care of yourself?</b></p> <p>Having a healthy lifestyle can protect us against stressors and help us cope with stressful situations. While it may not remove the sources of stress, having a sense of health and wellbeing can help you be more resilient when these things arise.</p> <p>One framework to consider for this is the '5 ways to wellbeing', which point to five broad ways to enhance psychological and physical wellbeing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 CONNECT – Investing time in developing relationships with everyone around you – be that at work, family, friends, neighbours, or in your local community.</li><li>2 BE ACTIVE – Choosing an exercise that you enjoy and that suits your life can help you keep active: it may not be joining a gym or going for a run; it might be walking your dog, playing a game, gardening or dancing.</li><li>3 TAKE NOTICE – Being aware of your environment and the world around you, taking time to notice changes or beauty. Appreciating every moment. Being more 'mindful' and less on 'auto-pilot'.</li><li>4 KEEP LEARNING – Learning something new can help build your confidence and see new perspectives. It might be signing up for a development course at work, or learning to play an instrument, speak a different language or other new skill.</li><li>5 GIVE – Thinking of, and showing appreciation for others by giving praise, volunteering your time, thanking, or helping someone out.</li></ol> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p> |   |   |



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| <p>Other important lifestyle factors to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding how what you EAT AND DRINK supports your general wellbeing</li><li>• The quality and amount of SLEEP you are getting</li><li>• The amount of RECOVERY TIME you allow yourself, for example, switching off from work, taking breaks and holidays, doing hobbies that help you get away from everyday stressors</li><li>• The BOUNDARIES you set around work and your availability to your team</li></ul> <p>Reflect on how you are doing in all these areas. What one further action could you take today to improve your self-care?</p> |   |   |