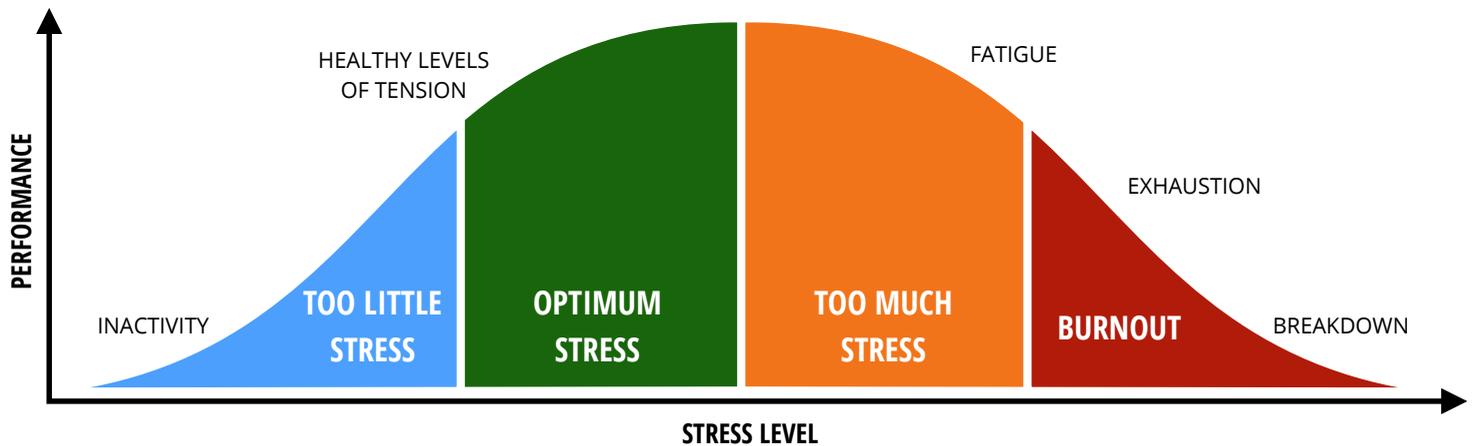


Challenge-stress balance practice

Challenge-stress balance practice is a method designed to help individuals achieve optimal performance by maintaining an ideal balance between the level of challenge in an activity and the stress that accompanies it. This balance is crucial for creating conditions that facilitate learning, growth, and the achievement of flow states, while preventing overwhelm or disengagement. The Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908) suggests that there is an optimal level of arousal (or stress) that leads to peak performance—too little stress results in boredom, and too much can lead to anxiety or burnout.



Keeping optimum stress' upper boundary constant, however, means that we will never really improve our performance. This is because as soon as conditions start to become too hard, we want to stop. Challenge-stress balance encourages improvement by steadily pushing the top of the stress curve through ongoing skill development and active stress management.

- 1 IDENTIFY YOUR CURRENT SKILL LEVEL**
This helps to define a starting point from which to build a progression plan.
- 2 SET A MANAGEABLE GOAL**
Push yourself slightly beyond your current ability without being overwhelming.
- 3 GRADUALLY INCREASE DIFFICULTY**
As the skill improves, gradually increase its difficulty. Stay just inside the optimum stress zone.

- 4 MONITOR STRESS LEVELS**
Pay attention to signs of arousal as the challenge increases. Monitor yourself carefully.
- 5 MAINTAIN BALANCE**
Practice stress reduction to return to your optimal level of arousal (e.g., deep breathing).
- 6 SEEK FEEDBACK**
Ask peers or a coach for their observations and adjust your practice as needed.

