

Reducing employee stress: a guide for SME managers



MIND YOUR BUSINESS

myhrtoolkit



01 Your Stress Response System



Stress doesn't respect any boundary, neither gender or age, position nor seniority.

It can affect all of us if we don't learn how to handle it, in our own way.



01 Your Stress Response System

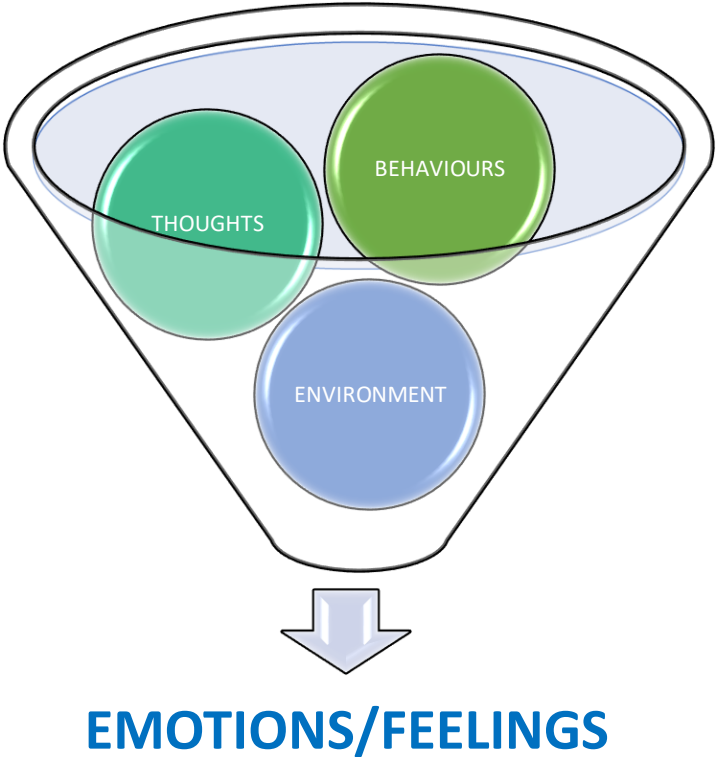
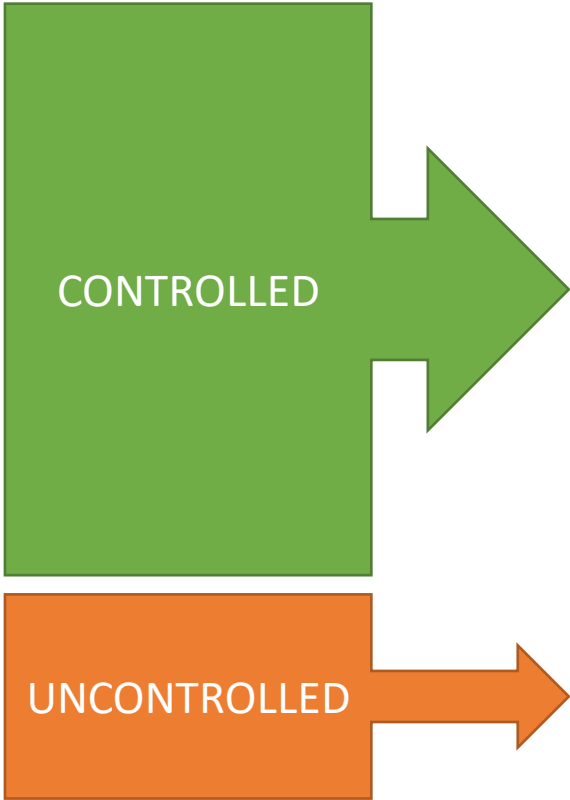


We are all working our way through the current situation, whether you're working from home, dealing with home schooling and childcare, have continued to be out at work or you're moving back into the workplace – all the uncertainty is causing us stress



01 Your Stress Response System

You can't control your emotions, they happen to you based on your thoughts and behaviours in relation to the environment you're in.



01 Your Stress Response System



We have 2 main operating systems in the brain:

- Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS), the stress response system (freeze/flight/fight centre)
- Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS), the rest and digest mode

01 Your Stress Response System

The SPEAR[®] model breaks down our innate survival mechanism into its component parts, summarising the order of events that occur whenever we deal with any sensory input from our environment.



02 Consequences of Prolonged Stress



Your Parasympathetic and Sympathetic nervous systems are mutually exclusive, you cannot be relaxed and stressed at the same time.

What you can do is re-train yourself to operate from that relaxed state more, which dampens down the stress response or operate more from the stressed mode – essentially the more you use it the quicker it responds, the less you activate it the less responsive it becomes.



02 Consequences of Prolonged Stress

PHYSICAL

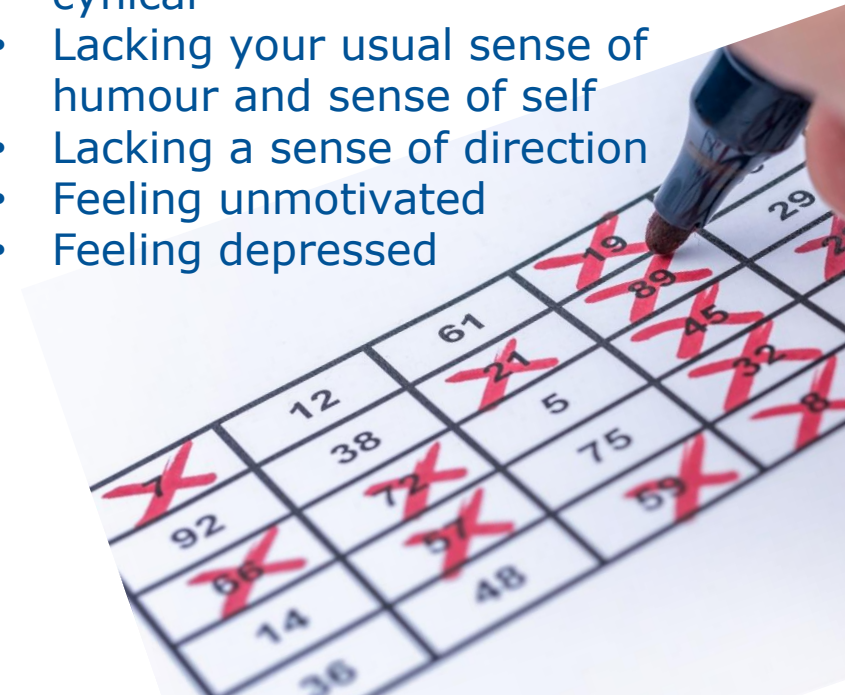
- Pounding heart
- Sweaty palms
- Indigestion
- Shortness of breath
- Tense muscles
- Headache
- Nausea
- Skin rashes
- Cold hands
- Sleeplessness or oversleeping
- Fatigue
- Upset stomach / IBS
- Muscle pain / tension

BEHAVIOURAL

- Forgetting to do stuff, losing concentration or perspective
- Having difficulty thinking clearly or making decisions
- Being disorganised
- Snapping or losing your temper
- Being unable to see other points of view
- Habitually indulging in negative self-talk
- Finding it harder than normal to do logical tasks
- Relying on an addiction in order to 'switch off' / 'clear my head' / 'escape'

EMOTIONAL

- Low mood
- Feelings of irritability
- Edginess, anxiety or hostility
- Feeling nervous, fearful or cynical
- Lacking your usual sense of humour and sense of self
- Lacking a sense of direction
- Feeling unmotivated
- Feeling depressed



02 Consequences of Prolonged Stress



The bio-chemicals that help us to cope with rapid change are:

- **Adrenaline** - alerts us, readies us for action, increases the heart rate and blood pressure and mobilises energy reserves
- **Cortisol** - replenishes energy supplies and alerts the immune system to possible injury

03 Understanding the Impact of the Pandemic



The World Health Organisation defines stress as "the reaction people may have when presented with demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."



03 Understanding the Impact of the Pandemic

DAILY EXPRESS
WE'RE BACKING BRITAIN

BUDGET BOOST
Cash for flood zones and broadband

You clever sausage!
Dachshund wins Crufts

NOW SHOPS TO RATION FOOD

- 'Selfish' shoppers urged to stop virus panic buying
- PM holds crisis meeting as third victim dies in UK
- Italy death toll soars to 366 with 16m in lockdown

DEPARTMENT STORES have been forced to bring in their own 'lockdown' rules, with some closing their doors to non-essential shoppers.

THE PM has held a crisis meeting as a third person has died from the coronavirus in the UK. The death toll in Italy has risen to 366, with more than 16 million people in lockdown.

Zero-waste warriors
The people whose rubbish fits in a jam jar

Free delivery for six weeks
Get the Guardian sent to your home with no delivery charge Page 34-8

Thursday 4 Mar 2020 12.20 From £1.75 for subscribers

The Guardian

UK coronavirus death toll is now the worst in Europe

Official figures prompt calls for inquiry into handling of pandemic

Scientific adviser quits over rule breach

Heather Stewart
Political editor

Professor Ferguson, the epidemiologist whose modelling helped shape Britain's coronavirus lockdown, has quit as a government adviser after leaving the role by receiving calls from his girlfriend at his home.

Ferguson was the group of scientists at Imperial College London whose projections helped persuade ministers of the need to impose stringent physical distancing rules, or risk the NHS being overwhelmed.

In a statement yesterday he said he was resigning from his post as the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), one of "a lot of judgement".

The Daily Telegraph revealed Antonio Guterres had visited the UK from his family home to visit it at least two occasions and that measures were imposed on 27 and 28 April.

Friends told the average man does not believe that the British will be able to do it.

The article also says the government's "stay at home" message, which is to remain within their groups, will not stop it unless it is enforced.

"I accept I did not see the need for judgement as

DAILY EXPRESS
WE'RE BACKING BRITAIN

FURY OVER EU FISHING DEMANDS

No mercy for thugs who attack our police

Disease spreads across Europe as UK schools are forced to shut

KILLER VIRUS: BRITONS TRAPPED IN HOTEL HELL

Kate, the glittering star of the show

BRITAIN'S schools were closed in their bid to stop the virus spreading. The closure of schools has meant that a "killer virus" will spread across the country.

BRITAIN'S schools were closed in their bid to stop the virus spreading. The closure of schools has meant that a "killer virus" will spread across the country.

FREE DELIVERY FOR 6 WEEKS

LOCKDOWN BRITAIN

PM's historic stay-at-home plea to beat virus

Astonishing restrictions on daily life → NO travel unless essential → Don't see friends or family → Only one exercise outing a day → Fines if you don't obey → Mass closures of shops → All for at least 3 weeks

'You must stay at home'

Only go out subsequently to buy food. Exercise outside once a day at most. No gatherings of more than two people. Do not go to those who don't comply. Non-essential shops shut. Exercise including walking, cycling. Museums to shut for 3 weeks.

End of freedom

STAR

MAKE YOUR OWN MACCY'S

CORONA CHAOS

YOU

100 days on way

FREE HOME DELIVERY

...TO NAFF

HOUSE ARREST

- PM: Brits must stay home
- Police fines up to £1,000
- Gatherings over 2 banned

METRO

FIND THE GAP

BRITAIN ON LOCKDOWN

Sport in Footba/ and cri count cost e

News F

03 Understanding the Impact of the Pandemic



Your immune system is supported by your **lifestyle**, it is therefore important to make the best choices possible.

It is a sad fact that the more stressed you are, the more likely you are to turn to things like alcohol and poor food choices, to suffer with broken sleep which impacts on your desire to exercise...

04 Supporting Employees Through Change

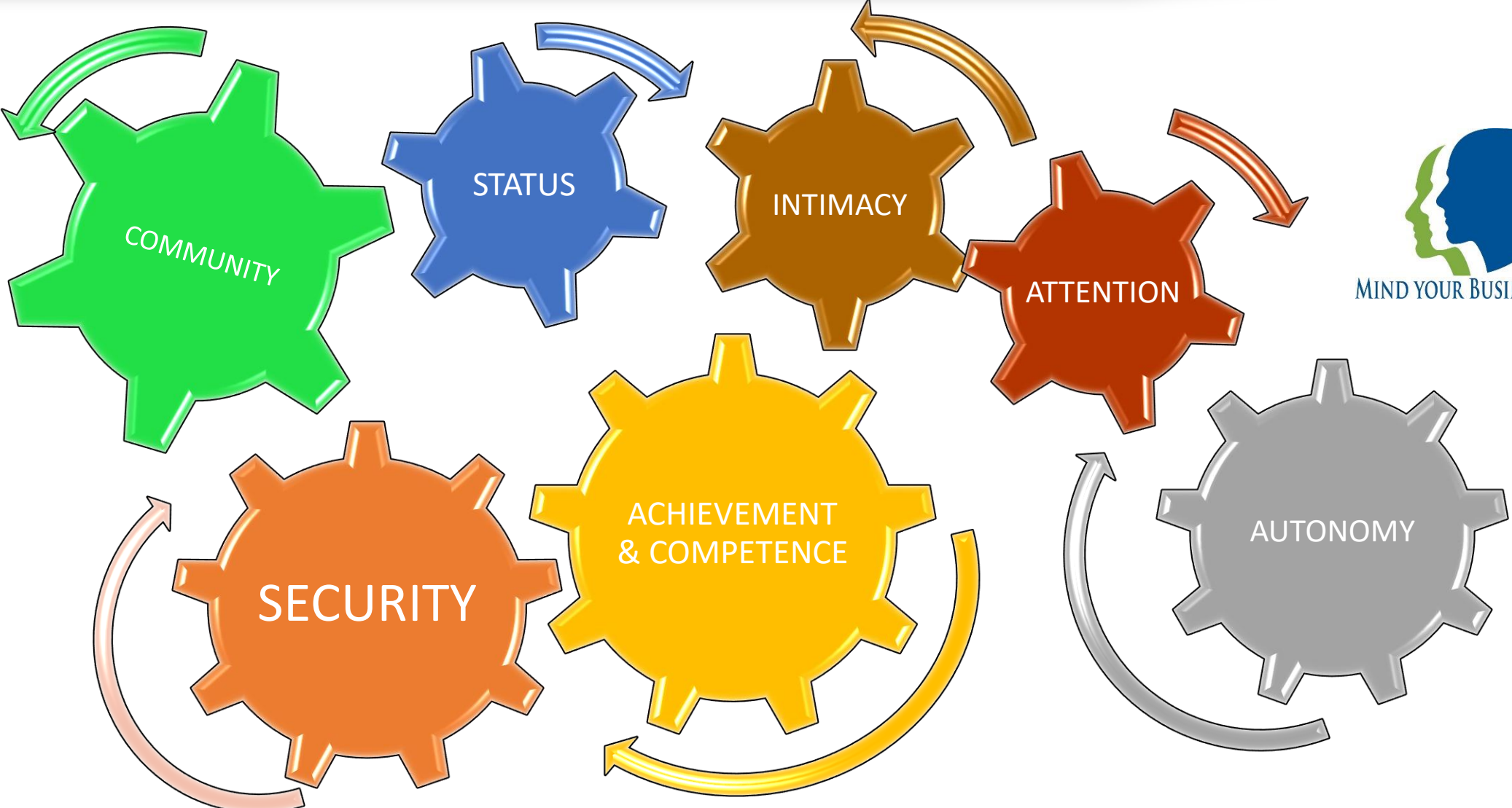


We are living through the largest shake-up to the work framework since the introduction of the 8 hours work/8 hours recreation/8 hours sleep of the early 1800's!

Companies that eschewed working from home or flexible working arrangements are suddenly being forced into them – and it's not all bad...



04 Supporting Employees Through Change



04 Supporting Employees Through Change

SECURITY

- We all need a safe environment that allows us to live without undue fear, develop fully and have space to grow – physically and emotionally

AUTONOMY

- We like to have a sense of control over what happens to us and around us, the freedom to make our own decisions and choices which helps us to feel in charge of ourselves, rather than overwhelmed by life, helpless and frustrated.

INTIMACY

- This describes our emotional connection to others through friendships and loving relationships. We are hard-wired for connection and collaboration

04 Supporting Employees Through Change

ATTENTION

**ACHIEVEMENT &
COMPETENCE**

COMMUNITY

- Both giving and receiving it are vital for our development, paying attention to each other forms part of our group bond (we are better in a tribe than as individuals)
- We need a sense of our own competence, ability, knowledge and skills without which we may feel inadequate, lack confidence, develop low self-esteem
- Our early survival depended on being part of a collaborative team, those who got separated or ostracised were likely to be eaten by predators or die of starvation. Even in today's world we still feel mortal fear if we are outcasts, we therefore have an ingrained need to belong

04 Supporting Employees Through Change

STATUS

- We crave a sense that we are accepted, valued and have status within the groups we belong to, being respected for who we are and what we do – all linking back to community, and wanting to belong so we don't feel in danger of being thrown out or left behind

04 Supporting Employees Through Change



Employers can support their employees through positive wellbeing initiatives (these help to support the immune system and offer an opportunity for people to get together where the focus is not on work), such as talks on:

- Personal stress management
- How to promote good sleep habits
- Exploring relaxation techniques
- Mental health awareness
- Money/Financial wellbeing

Also include employees in the conversation on their own wellbeing

04 Supporting Employees Through Change

You can help others who may be struggling with their emotions :

- Be prompt at addressing any misinformation which may be causing undue stress
- Look out for any changes in behaviour that may indicate someone is struggling
- In conversations, acknowledge their emotions – be sympathetic and non-judgemental
- Ask open questions about how they are coping and if they need any support
- Explore their coping strategies, looking for signs of overwhelm
- Ensure they know what support is available (EAP, etc)
- Encourage people to talk openly about their thoughts and feelings



Above all, be conscious of your own emotions

04 Supporting Employees Through Change

Acceptance... This is not about ignoring your thoughts or behaviours, but rather acknowledging them and moving past them

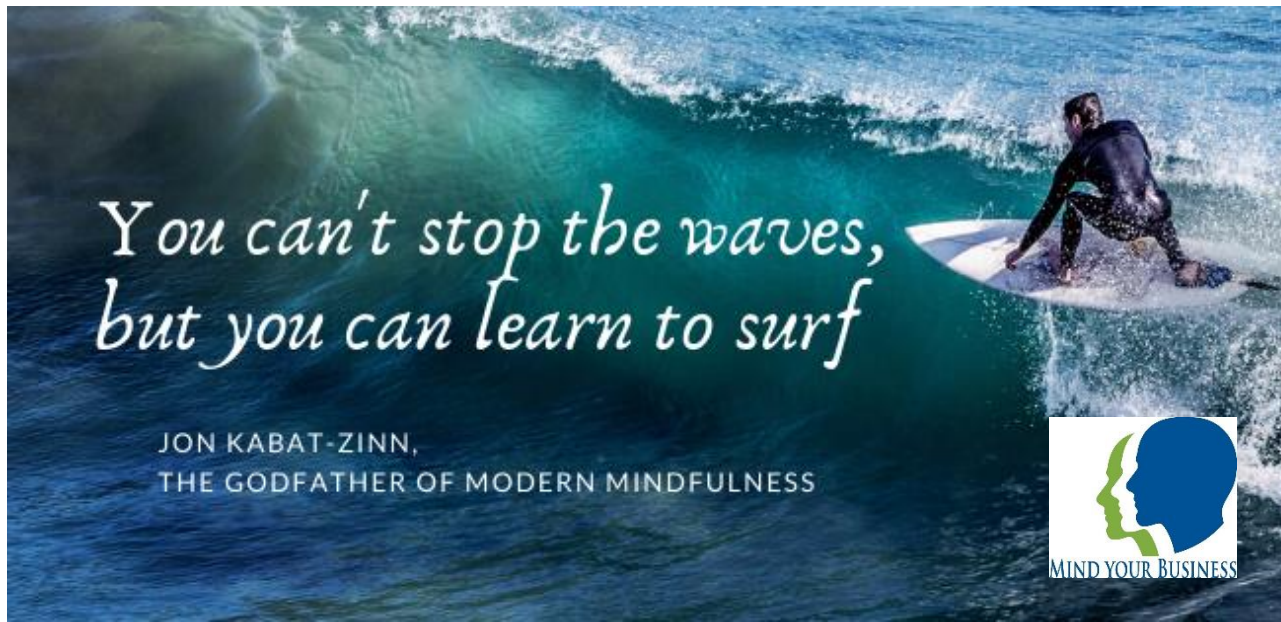
Re-framing your perceptions... taking a broader view of the situation, and learning to interpret in a different way

Multitasking... We live in an era of constant interruption, from emails, telephone, texts, social media, apps, people. Trying to multitask is energy-sapping, leaving us ending our working day feeling exhausted and yet as if little has been achieved.

Conditioning... We are all shaped by 3 elements:

- Our genetic inheritance
- Our interactions with our environment
- Our conditioning

(see my [TEDx talk](#) – Why you may inevitably turn into your parents!)



04 Supporting Employees Through Change

And in moments of stress, have some strategies ready to help you cope...

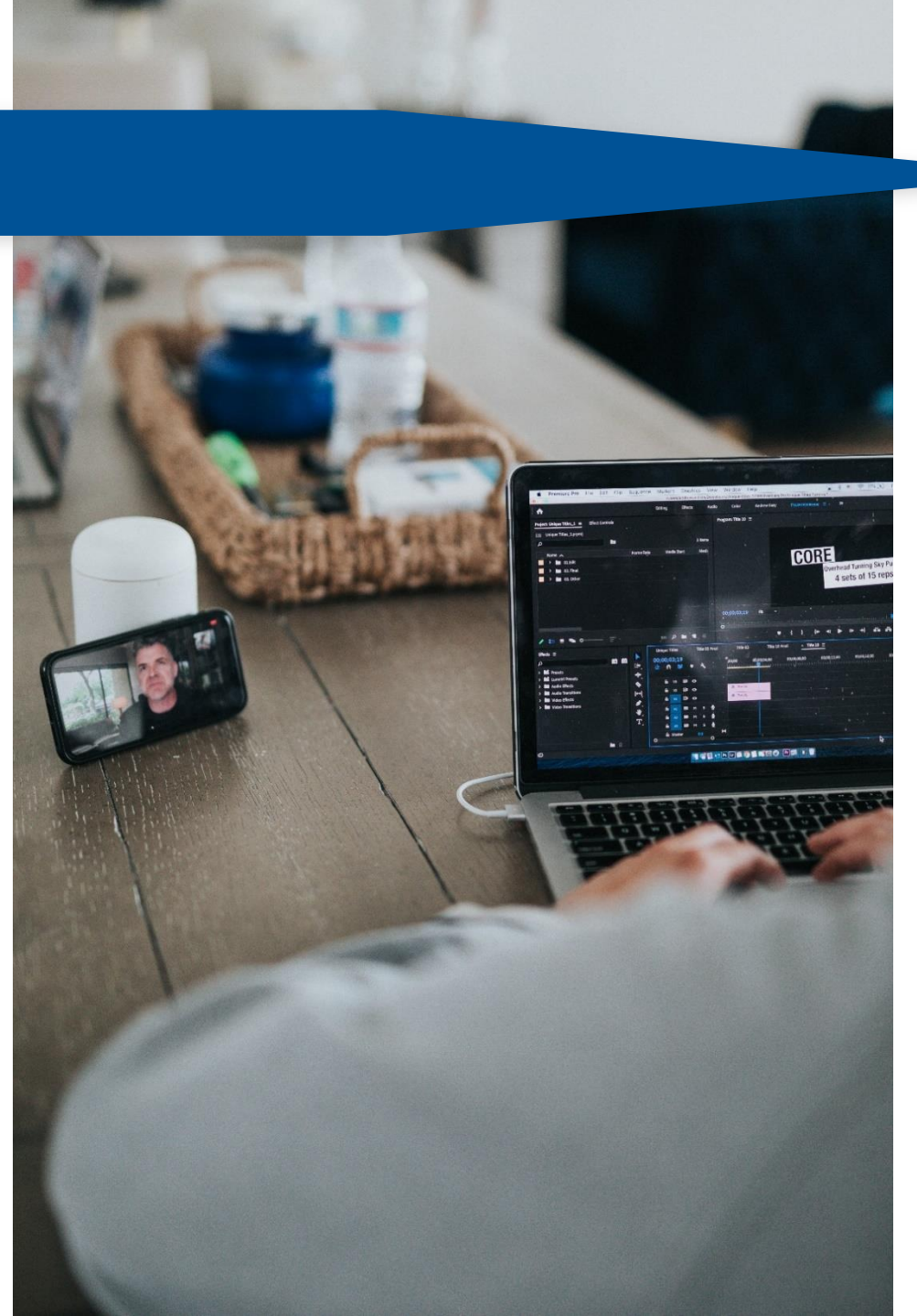
- **Breathing exercises** (7/11, box or rectangular, diaphragmatic, using apps like Headspace or Calm)
- **Grounding exercises** (STOP, 54321)



05 Q&A

We've looked at:

- The stress response system
- The consequences of prolonged stress
- Understanding the impact of the pandemic
- How you can support employees through change



05 Q&A



"CLIENTS DO NOT COME FIRST. EMPLOYEES COME FIRST. IF YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES, THEY WILL TAKE CARE OF THE CLIENTS."

- Sir Richard Branson



Taking back an element of control...

When we do that, we change the way we feel, moving from helpless and afraid to feeling more in control, better able to cope - and confident in our abilities.