

The Trusted Executive

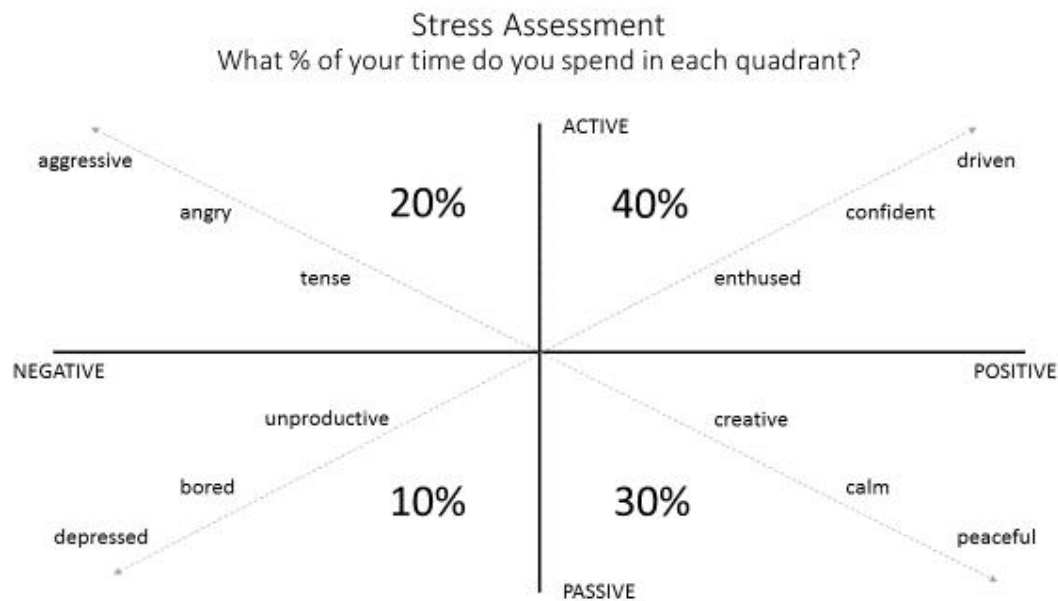
John Blakey





Stress Assessment Exercise

Sue Firth, uses a simple model for managing stress in her book 'The Shortcut to Stress Management for Executives', which many of my coaching clients have benefitted from [2]. Her work is based on a simple 2x2 matrix in which the vertical axis represents a range from passive to active energy and the horizontal axis represents the emotional state from negative to positive:-



Each quadrant represents a different emotional and physical state that is characterised by different behavioural outcomes. For example, the upper right active and positive state will show up as the executive being enthused. When experienced to a more extreme degree that enthusiasm will evolve into confidence and drive. The percentages on the diagram reveal the ideal amount of time that an executive operating optimally would spend in each quadrant. It may sound we should be spending 100% of our time in the upper right quadrant, but this is both unsustainable and unlikely to be in the best interest of ourselves or those we lead. To assess your own levels of stress, work with the above diagram using the following questions:-

- What percentage of your time do you typically spend in the upper right quadrant where you are active and positive?
- What percentage of your time do you spend in the lower right quadrant where you are passive and positive?
- What percentage of your time do you spend in the upper left quadrant where you are active and negative?
- What percentage of your time do you spend in the lower left quadrant where you are passive and negative?
- How do these percentage compare with one year ago?
- How do these percentages compare with the 'ideal' percentages that are shown on the above diagram?
- What are three actions you could take to shift the balance?



Exercises such as this one will raise your awareness of the stress levels that you are dealing with at any point in time. Brave leaders take pre-emptive action to deal with stress before it undermines their trustworthiness. Ironically, that action often involves being open and asking for help; a habit of integrity.

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