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Workplace Stress: Assessing and Reducing Psycho-Social Risks

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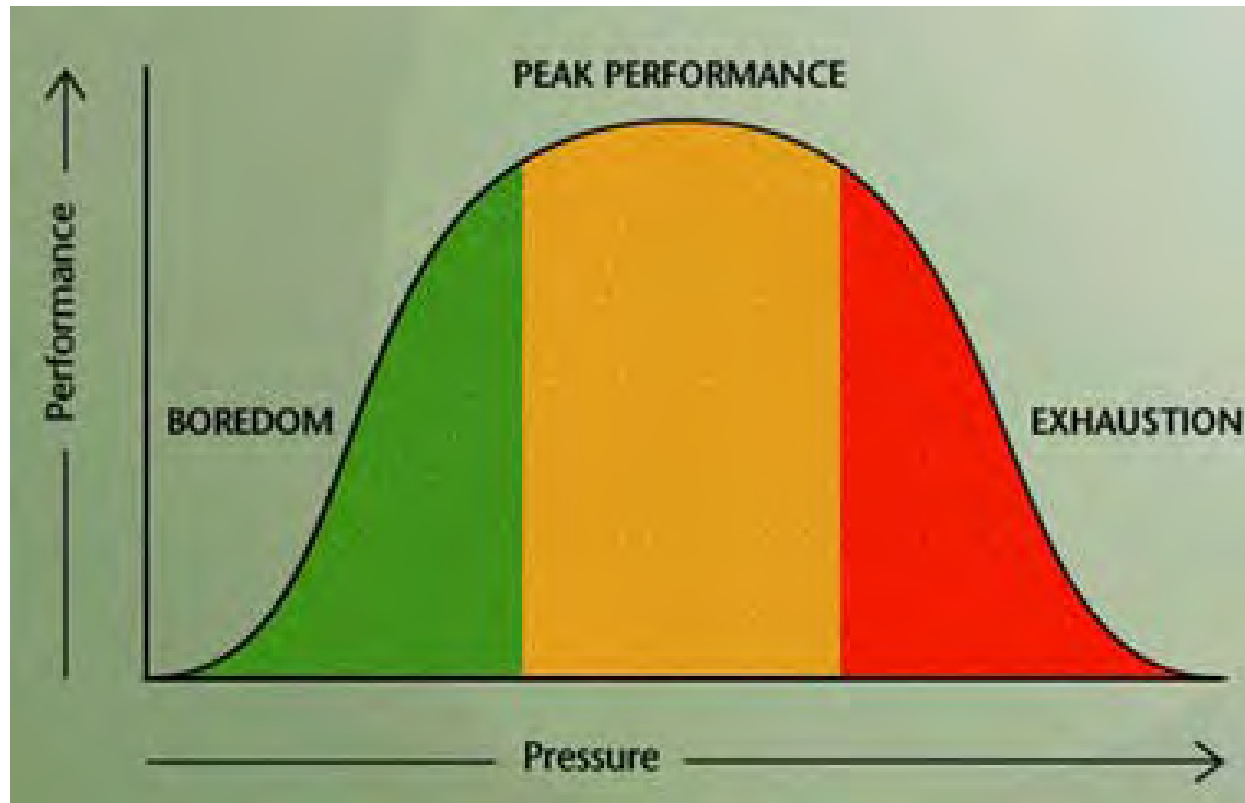


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Robertson Cooper Ltd

- Business psychologists based in Manchester and London.
- University spin-off company (UMIST) founded in 1999 by Professors Ivan Robertson and Cary Cooper
- Our core proposition is to enable organisations to develop and maintain **motivated wellbeing** in their workforce
- Work across the public and government sectors and in the private sector.

Pressure – Performance - Stress



When pressure exceeds our perceived ability to cope we get stressed.

Employer Responsibility

Employers have a responsibility to:

- Assess risk
- Apply the principles of prevention
- Ensure employees have the capability to do their jobs

The criteria for assessing employer liability

- the sufferance of a stress related illness
- foreseeability
- causation
- a lack of reasonable care

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HSE Management Standards: controlling stress is best done through good management practice

- Demands
 - Control
 - Relationships
 - Change
 - Role
 - Support
- 
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DEMANDS

Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

RELATIONSHIPS

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

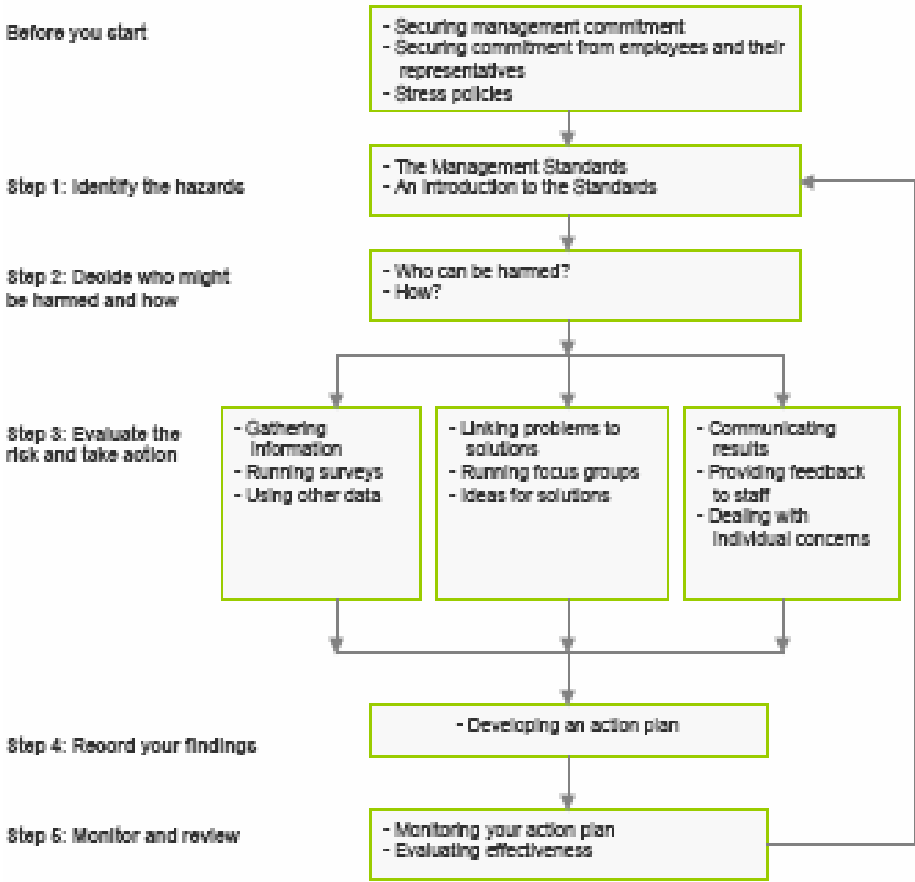
What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

HSE Approach



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Before you start

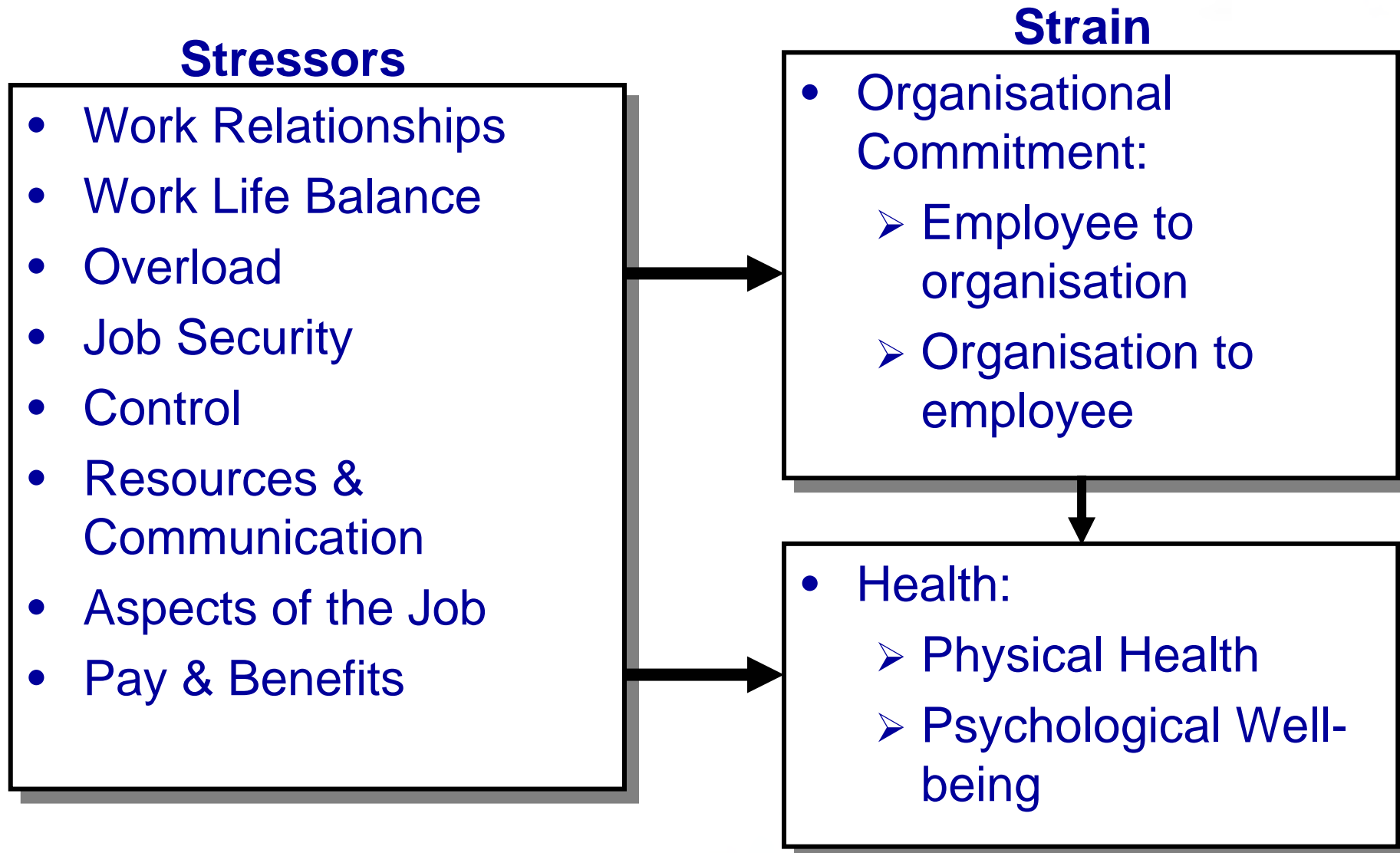
- Secure management commitment
- Secure employee commitment
- Part of clear policy and strategy to tackle stress

Identify the Hazards (Step 1)

- Management Standards
- Research Base - ASSET

The ASSET Model

(Cooper and Cartwright, 2001)



Decide who is at risk (Step 2)

- Everyone?
- Known high pressure roles (e.g. emotional labour)
- Driven by sickness absence

Evaluate the risk and take action (Step 3)

- Essentially a stress audit approach
- Need to gather data systematically
- Analyse data at various levels
- Move to proactive rather than solely reactive risk assessment

Record your findings (Step 4)

- Full reporting and feedback
- Identify “Hot Spots”
- Management Standards based action plan
- Show links and integrate with other organisational initiatives
- Allocate specific responsibilities
- Use data to inform managers – active engagement
- Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Level Interventions

Coping with Stress: Levels of Intervention



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Primary Level

- Aimed at eliminating or modifying environmental stressors to reduce their negative impact on individuals e.g. job redesign, culture change, flexible working, work life balance policies

Secondary Level: Training / Learning

- Focus on increasing the awareness, resilience and coping skills of the individual e.g. stress management training, health promotion activities and skills training more generally

Tertiary Level

- Are concerned with the treatment and rehabilitation of distressed individuals e.g. counselling and return to work policies

Managing Pressure



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- Line managers the key to reducing stress in organisations
- Should be built-in as a management competency
- Need to link management of pressure with management of performance and motivation
- Managers need to build skills in communicating comfortably and competently about stress
- Role modelling essential

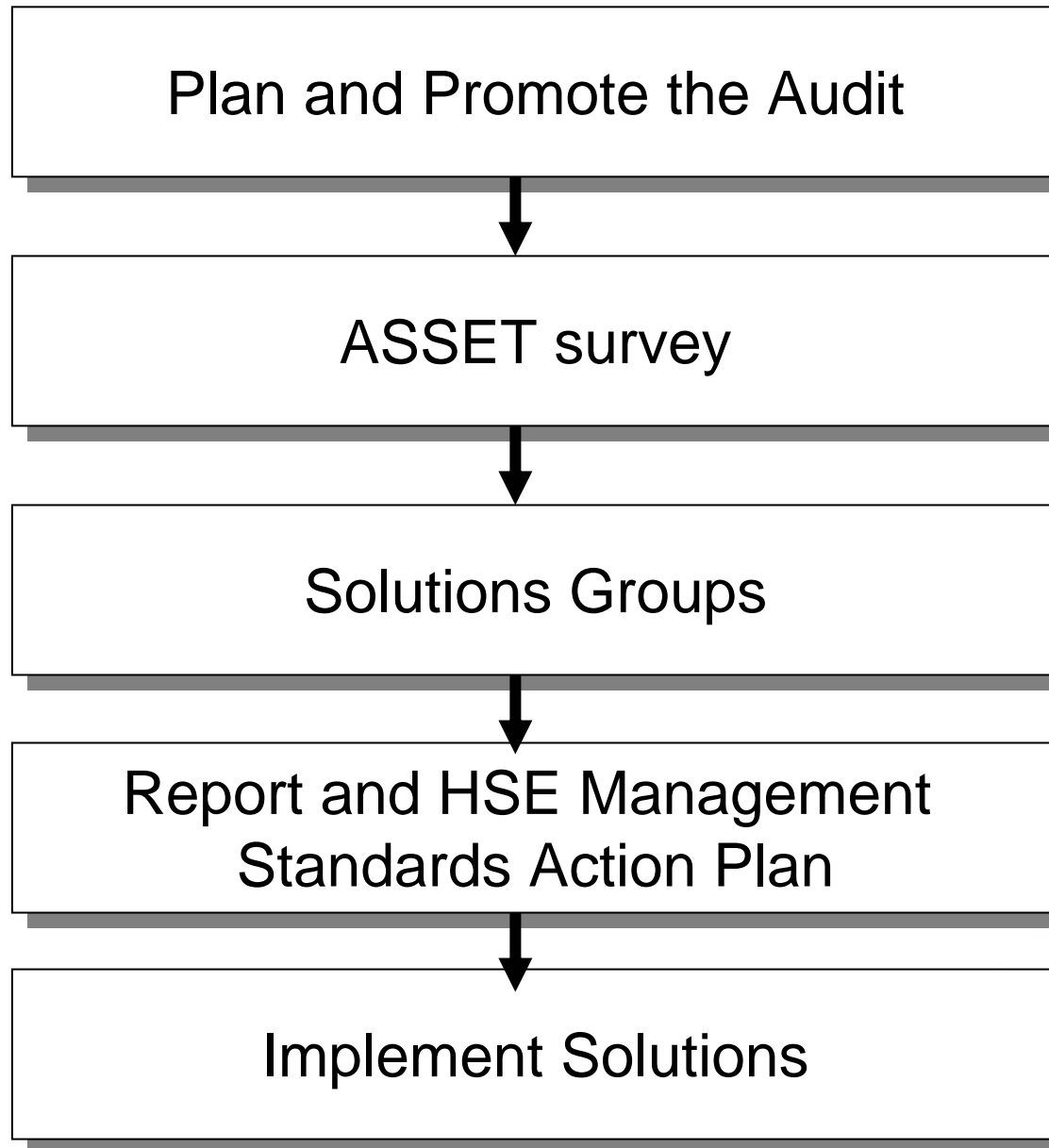
Monitor and Review (Step 5)

- Repeat Audits
- “Hot Spot” Audits
- Reactive risk assessment when required

ASSET Audit Process



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Evaluate
Impact



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Solutions

- Integrated solutions at different levels
- Motivated Wellbeing



Demands

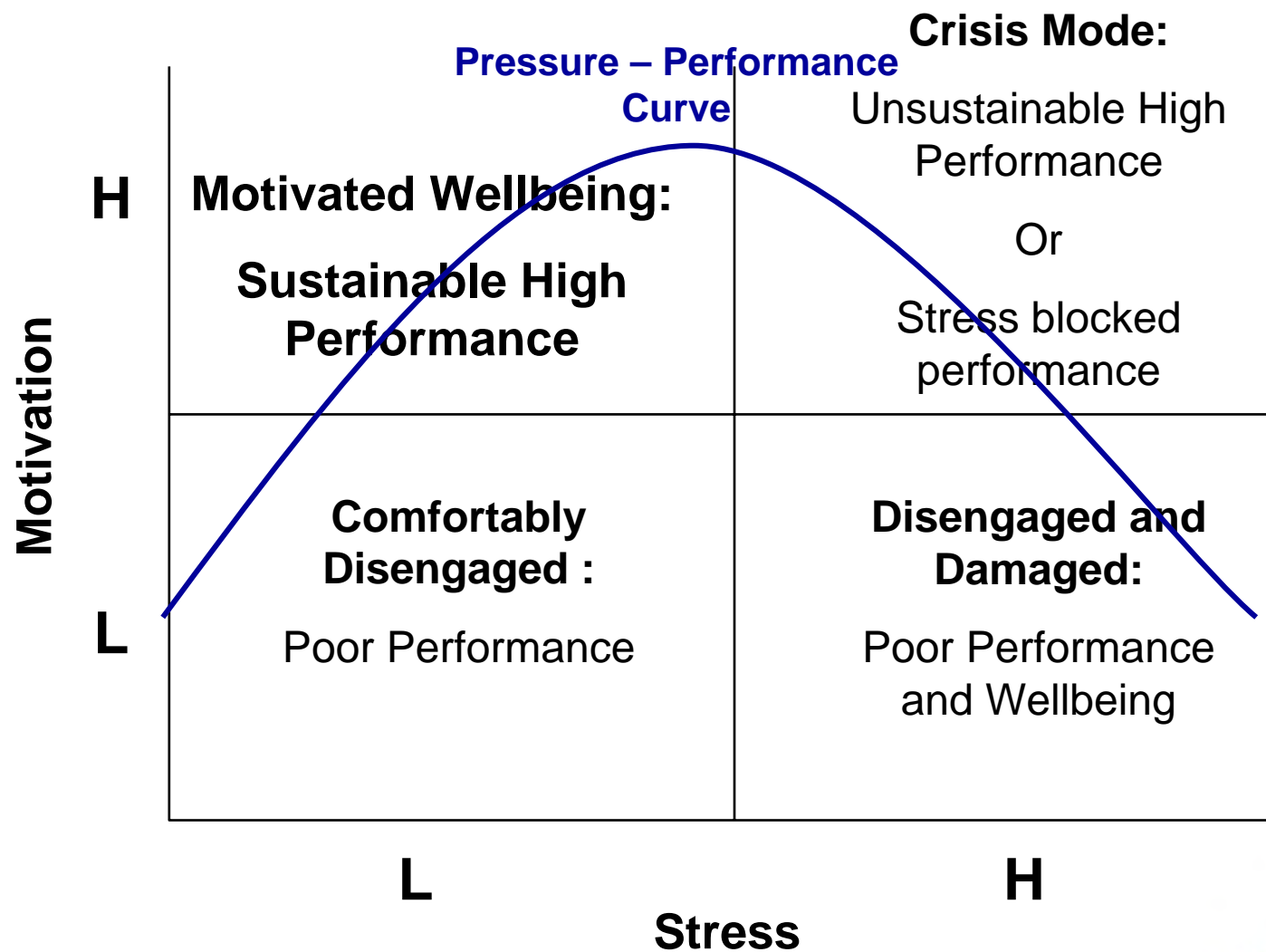
Potential Interventions

Primary Level:

- Work planning and distribution system review and re-design
- Job design / re-design

Secondary Level:

- Training / Coaching in skills associated with:
 - 📅 Time management
 - 📅 Working smarter
 - 📅 Work planning and prioritising



Useful Links

- HSE Stress Management Standards Homepage:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>
- Robertson Cooper web site:
<http://www.robertsoncooper.com/>
- HSE / Robertson Cooper Beacons of Excellence in Stress Management:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr133.htm>
- HSE / Robertson Cooper Local Authority business case for stress interventions:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr295.htm>