

The Stress Reset Toolkit

4 Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Stress & Restore Clarity

By Dr Paulette Ogun

Introduction

Stress is not always caused by one big event.

More often, it builds quietly over time — through responsibility, emotional load, and constant pressure.

This short **Stress Reset Toolkit** brings together four **evidence-based psychological strategies** designed to help you reduce stress, restore clarity, and support your wellbeing in demanding roles.

Each strategy is:

- practical
- easy to use
- grounded in psychological research
- suitable for work or home

You don't need to use all of them at once.

Even small resets can make a meaningful difference.

Strategy 1: Time Projection Imagery

(Perspective Reset)

Purpose:

To reduce emotional intensity by widening your time perspective.

How to use it:

1. Think of a current situation that feels stressful.
2. Imagine yourself **3 months in the future**.
Ask: Will this feel as stressful then?
3. Imagine yourself **6 months in the future**.
Ask: Will this still feel as important?
4. Imagine yourself **12 months in the future**.
Can you see yourself getting on with life?
5. Imagine yourself **2 years in the future**.
Can you imagine perspective, distance, or even humour?
6. Imagine yourself **5 years ahead**.
Has the memory faded into the past?

This strategy helps remind the brain that **most stress is temporary**, even when it feels overwhelming in the moment.

Strategy 2: Containment

(Mental Reset)

Purpose:

To reduce overwhelm by temporarily setting stress aside safely.

How to use it:

1. Notice what feels most stressful right now.
2. Imagine a strong, secure container (box, safe, filing cabinet).
3. Visualise placing the stressful thoughts or feelings inside.
4. Close the container securely.
5. Say to yourself:
"I can come back to this later, when I have more capacity."
6. Gently bring your attention back to the present moment.

Containment is especially helpful when you need to function, rest, or sleep — without carrying everything at once.

Strategy 3: Physiological Sigh (Breath Reset)

(Body Reset)

Purpose:

To calm the nervous system quickly during moments of stress.

How to use it:

1. Inhale slowly through your nose.
2. Take a second, short inhale through the nose (a top-up).
3. Exhale slowly and fully through the mouth.
4. Repeat 2–3 times.

This breathing pattern has been shown to reduce physiological stress by helping the body return to a calmer state.

Use it before meetings, after difficult interactions, or whenever stress spikes.

Strategy 4: Control vs Influence Sorting

(Cognitive Reset)

Purpose:

To reduce mental overload and refocus your energy.

How to use it:

1. Write down what's currently causing you stress.
2. Label each item as:
 - **Control** (You can directly change it)
 - **Influence** (You can affect it indirectly)
 - **Outside your control**
3. Focus your energy on the first two categories only. Write down some actions you can take to make things better – from what you can control or influence.
4. For anything outside your control, gently remind yourself:
"This does not need my energy right now."

Stress often eases when we stop trying to control what we cannot change.

Examples:

Control – Example

You can control **how you structure your working day**, such as taking regular breaks, setting boundaries around email outside working hours, and deciding when to pause rather than pushing through exhaustion.

Influence – Example

You may not control organisational decisions, but you can **influence your workload or expectations** by having a clear conversation, requesting adjustments, or sharing what support would help you work more sustainably.

Outside Your Control – Example

You cannot control **other people's decisions, reactions, or timelines**, such as organisational restructuring, leadership changes, funding decisions, or how others respond emotionally under pressure. Recognising this can reduce the mental load that comes from repeatedly trying to "fix" or anticipate things that are not yours to carry.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on your wellbeing journey. You can write in the space below.

Consider these questions:

- What strategy resonated most with you, and why?
- How can you incorporate these strategies into your daily routine?
- What other self-care practices do you find beneficial?
- Where might you be spending energy on something that isn't within your control right now?

Closing Thoughts

Stress does not always need to be solved. Sometimes it needs to be reset, gently and regularly.

You can return to these strategies whenever you need to restore calm, clarity and balance.



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