

WHAT MAKES IT SO STRESSFUL?



We all have unique triggers that cause us stress, but there are three factors that are always going to lead to a stress reaction of some kind. Even having just one of these present in a situation, is enough to lead to feeling more stressed out than usual.



01 | A LACK OF CONTROL

We all like to have a feeling of being in control – of ourselves, our decisions and our environment. When we are in a situation where we feel that we have little control, or have lost control, there is an immediate stress reaction. This happens even if we only perceive that we have no control, when in fact we actually may have a degree of control. For example: you are moved into a new team or you have a new manager you don't really connect with and you have to accept it. If you feel that this change has happened without you asking for it or being consulted, and you feel powerless with little control to do anything about it, you are focusing on what you can't control.



02 | SOMETHING NEW

When something new shows up in our world, like the new team or manager in the above example, we have no frame of reference to put it in so we don't know how to react. The novelty factor means we now have to explore the situation to figure out how it's going to work. For example, do the new team meet socially and have meals together or not, is the new manager someone who micro-manages or leaves you to do your own thing? It takes time and energy to figure these things out and adapt – while still trying to perform your normal tasks or duties.



03 | UNPREDICTABILITY

This factor compounds the first two. If there is a lot of change in your environment (at work or at home), so you are often dealing with change you can't control – factor 1 – and ending up in new circumstances a lot of the time – factor 2 – it's stressful already. Add in that these things happen at random, with no warning before they happen, and you are going to feel stressed every day without even realising it. For example, you get moved between teams and managers at random, even if you are in the middle of a project. Or a person you work closely with has random outbursts of anger or crying fits, with no warning signs beforehand.

Lack of control, novel situations and unpredictability are part of life from time to time. When there are a lot of these happening, or when two or more happen at the same time, we are definitely going to experience higher stress levels. Knowing about these risk factors helps us understand why certain situations can upset us significantly more than others and that we need to find more support than usual while that situation lasts.

Dr Colinda Linde MA Clinical Psychology;
D Litt et Phil
 Clinical psychologist

Google Play



App Store



AppGallery



Chat to Healthy Company for free advice

Healthy Company is here for you. Access Healthy Company on the Discovery app, on our website at www.discovery.co.za or call us on 0800 320 420.

