

4. THE STRESS

There are a number of books covering this matter, and the recurrent definition often coming up would qualify it as: «ADAPTATION SYNDROME», which is for us rather conceptual.

OUR DEFINITION WOULD BE MORE PRAGMATIC:

My level of stress is directly linked to the amount of energy I need to face a given situation.

When I am saying energy, I mean either

- PHYSICAL to cope with a very cold weather while working outside,
- MENTAL to learn a vast amount of material for a study in a short time,
- or EMOTIONAL to face a personal situation involving strong emotions.

From this definition, it's easy to understand that while dealing with such situations, our body and brain need a lot of rest to recover and prevent exhaustion.

The quantity of energy needed to cope with this, but also the perception of this quantity of energy needed is related to several parameters:

- Am I «equipped» to deal with it either physically, mentally, or emotionally?
- Can I easily find options and resources to gain additional energy to cope with it or waste less energy in the process?
- Did I choose to confront the situation? Or was it imposed on me by the context?
- Did it appear suddenly or did I have some time to «adapt», consider and cope with it?
- Everyone, depending on his personal background, will have different levels of such specific energy.

While facing what I would describe as “TOUGH SITUATIONS”, the body will show, under the reptilian brain command, a certain number of signs, like:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ↳ an increase of breath rhythm, | ↳ muscles tensions, |
| ↳ increase of hearth beats, | ↳ body shaking, |
| ↳ sweating, skin becoming red, | ↳ vertigos and so on... |

Note: These reactions can sometimes help us like, sweating when it's very hot regulates body temperature.

ALARM PHASE; RESISTANCE PHASE; EXHAUSTION PHASE

There are **3 basic steps** available taking more or less time depending how well I am «equipped» to face the situation:

THE ALARM PHASE:

- Use my different skills and call upon my sensations (through my senses: sight, touch, smell, taste, and physical sensation) to reach a given outcome.

THE RESISTANCE PHASE:

- My adrenal glands produce cortisol increasing my resistance and willingness to fight.

THE EXHAUSTION PHASE:

- After a given variable amount of time, fatigue will show up and sometimes, demotivation, diminishing tolerance even sickness could appear.

STRATEGIES

There are **a number of available strategies** to cope with such issues, and we need to experiment in order to know which one works best for each one of us, favouring those easy to implement or to repeat.

→ WE CAN ACT ON 2 LEVELS:

↳ **The Stressor:** not always possible.

↳ **Ourselves:** finding solutions to lessen the impact of such stressful situations will help us feel more comfortable with increased awareness to deal with such issues, to manage and address them with increased motivation or on the contrary to decide to escape or avoid them (sometimes it's way better, safer and wiser to escape).

→ Sometimes INVOLVING SOMEONE ELSE IN THE PROCESS by sharing what we are living helps us feeling supported and not alone.

→ In other occasions CHANGING OUR BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDE or the way we «approach» the situation will come handy.

In all cases, appropriate rest is paramount to reinstate lost energy levels and relaxation methods will help us in the recovery, as well as many other advantages we will explore later.

You can find in the "Material" chapter a document called " LIST OF LEVELS OF STRESS"
helping locate what is at any given moment your actual position on the scale

For a pilot as for anyone else, remember that it's not the stressor which is important, it's the way we perceive it according to our emotions, feelings, competencies, hopefully giving us confidence to face and cope.

As an example:

If as a pilot, I have to take a flight test, or fly an unknown programme in a competition:

- **Either I am confident** that I have the necessary resources, mastering all the procedures and being in control of the situation with options, or I know perfectly my programme, boosting my fight attitude and motivation with a lot of enthusiasm.
- **Or conversely I lack confidence** in my resources to deal with procedures or programme, then I will be in an escaping «fly away» mode, finding excuses to retract and not fly or for example lacking the motivation to even walk to the plane and so on...
- **Or I can also adopt a “Freezing attitude”** being afraid to make an error or hesitating between several options eventually giving up, with detrimental consequences on the outcome of what I am undertaking.

These 3 different attitudes will always come up whatever the situations, like talking in front of an audience, taking a written exam, flying in a world championship contest or having to deal with an emergency situation in flight.

THE “ MENTAL PREPARATION”
will help you recognize what is your prevailing attitude and
to change if necessary to a positive fight attitude.

Thanks for watching

And make sure to check the websites [Academy Of Aerobatics](#) and [Aero-Safety First](#)

See you soon 😊



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