



CACHE CLEARING

A Stress Monitoring System for IT Professionals

Whitepaper created by

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Kamino
Coaching

TL;DR



Abstract

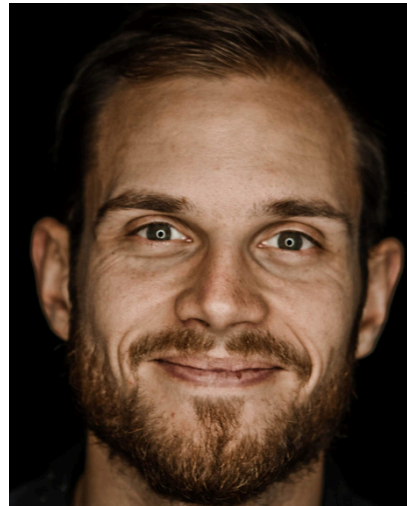
Stress heavily impacts physical and mental health, with mental health issues rising sharply. It's not just a personal issue; both resilience and work environment are crucial in managing stress.

This paper outlines the current stress landscape in the IT industry and suggests actionable steps companies can take to improve their stress environment. It then presents a personal **Stress Management System** that can benefit IT managers and professionals in dealing better with external stress factors.

First, the system consists of a canvas which helps figure out action fields for new ways to deal with stress. Second, I propose a **Stress Monitoring System** that ensures sustainable change through continuous learning, mindfulness practice and a support group.

Thus, this document aims to supply guidance for IT companies in both stress dimensions: external stress context and personal stress resilience. This ensures that mental health initiatives become more effective and avoids accusations of carewashing.

AUTHOR



Thomas Kampka makes stress management more accessible to both tech companies and IT professionals.

Having worked many years in the software world, he relates empathetically to the stress context and supports clients holistically through assessments, workshops and change management.

As a certified systemic coach he also helps in 1-on-1 stress coachings.



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CURRENT STATE OF STRESS IN THE ECONOMY



60%

of contestants
fear burn out

30%

of contestants
had a burn out

15%

increase of mental
sick days

Stress is the new smoking, and much like Gollum with the Ring, we cling to stress-inducing habits even as they harm us. Many people seem to be constantly stressed. On a purely physiological level, this is already disconcerting, as stress can inhibit the immune system and cause various pains and musculoskeletal disorders.

However, its impact on mental health is even trickier. And with the surge of stress in our modern lifestyles comes a surge of mental health issues. A 2024 study by Pronova BKK found that over 60% of respondents feared burnout, with 30% having already experienced it.

The DAK, another German health insurance, declared the recent increase from the first two quarters of 2023 to 2024 of a whopping 15% in mental health related sick leaves ‘alarming’.

Indeed, the current environment of constant connectivity, global politics, and economic and climate challenges is far from calming. The rise in reported mental health issues may also reflect growing openness about these struggles.

Of course, the mere mental health aspect is enough to recognize that action is needed. However, IT & HR managers should also be aware that, on average, every burnout leads to 30 sick days of the employees. Add the impact of stress on the immune and musculoskeletal system, and you might realize how many days your employees are missing on your projects because of stress.

STRESS IS ALSO A FUNCTION OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT



It might seem odd at first, but once you see it, you cannot unsee it. Most stress-related courses and initiatives at work are targeted at the individual. However, the context in which we navigate is equally as important!

An analogy I use is how the plastics industry shifts responsibility for ocean pollution onto consumers instead of stepping up to it themselves. It's similar with mental health: In western societies and companies I see this tendency to make the individual responsible for their own stress and health.

However, there are many external factors that influence stress management, from national politics, marketing strategies to structural discrimination. Many of these should be addressed, e.g. through volunteering initiatives, but don't lie within the scope of this document.

Companies can meanwhile focus on creating healthier work environments through culture and leadership. Studies have shown that focusing only on personal resilience shows little effectiveness, which is why critics are starting to use the term carewashing to denounce this practice as insufficient.

Stress Factors

Especially in IT companies, I see the following factors causing stress:

IT industry-specific factors

- High innovation drive
- Constant change
- Technological complexity
- Legal responsibilities for data security
- Intangibility of work progress and result

Company culture

- Error culture
- Work flexibility
- Degree of participation in decision-making
- Human interaction in the team
- Bureaucratic processes

Management

- Role definitions
- Leadership style
- Corporate communication
- Irregular sales pipeline

JOURNEY TOWARDS A HEALTHIER WORK ENVIRONMENT



In order to improve the stress context in any organization, it is important to identify the stress aspects at play in the organization.

First, non-structural data (mostly testimonials, text, etc.) out of internal performance reviews, online company ratings or other formats can be used. Using the presented stress factors managers and HR can start conversations with employees to evaluate potential for change.

Second, collect data on employee stress through regular surveys. They should include the emerged factors from step

Based on this, the **Deming Cycle** starts:

PLAN

Plan measures on both individual and organizational level to reduce stress

DO

Carry out measures e.g. individual coachings or culture change initiatives

CHECK

Check sickness statistics and data from regular employee surveys

ACT

If the planned effect has not happened, go back to the first step.



WHAT
GETS
MEASURED
GETS
MANAGED

ADVANTAGES FOR IT COMPANIES



Healthy people are happy people

➔ Nicer work atmosphere

Healthy people are productive people

➔ Better work results

Healthy people are loyal people

➔ Lower fluctuation

Every company is different, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Contact me for more information on how I can support your team in managing stress effectively.

MONITORING STRESS LIKE A SERVER

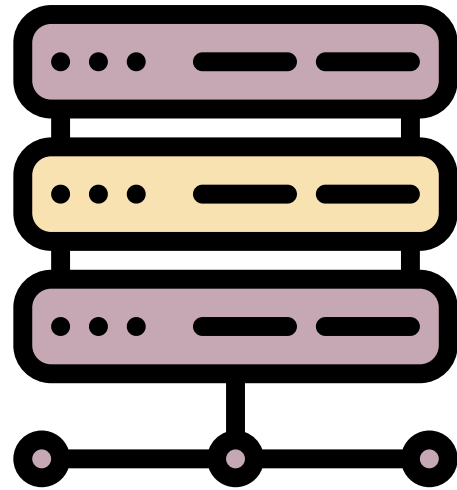
How do servers or networks react to high stress? First, their monitoring system notices it and rings the alarm. Then they shut down preemptively. They close parts of the system to protect the whole.

How do humans manage stress?

First of all, we have to realize we're even stressed. By focusing our attention to signals from the body: Raised heart beat, tight muscles or sweaty hands. However, our focus in the modern age is anywhere but on the body as it gets distracted by messages, emails or news feeds.

This is where mindfulness comes in. It acts as a monitoring system for bodily signals, like upgrading from copper to fiber cables —allowing more information to reach the processor.

It also makes the mind more aware of its own processes: thoughts.



Only when you monitor yourself closely and you become aware of the stress can you do something about it, either by short-term or long-term changes. How to change will be addressed in the next chapter.

This can help in navigating through uncertainties in projects and the complexities of the IT business. Leaders and managers should equally adopt these practices as they play a major role in the external stress factors.

It's more complex than that, but that's one way to see it. And this mechanism triggered by regular mindfulness training grants IT managers and professionals a whole new set of advantages.

ADVANTAGES FOR IT MANAGERS AND PROFESSIONALS



01 Work-related

- Increased stamina for debugging or meeting marathons
- Greater patience in reacting to stressors
- Improved problem-solving processes

02 Body

- Stronger immune system
- Lower resting heart rate
- Deeper sleep



03 Mind

- Improved learning ability
- More creative thoughts
- Sharper concentration
- Better memory



04 Emotions

- Enhanced resilience to setbacks
- Clearer perception of emotions
- Greater emotional stability



05 Social

- More confidence in colleagues
- Greater empathy for others
- More laughter
- Better mood



DESIGN YOUR OWN STRESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

As we have discussed, our stress response is not solely an individual responsibility, but also dependent on the context. No amount of fertilizer will save a dying plant stuck in a dark room. You have to open the curtains, make a new window or ultimately move the plant.

However, the way we as individuals react to the external and internal stressors can also be changed! Our personal ways how we deal with stress can very well be improved, due to a mechanism called *neuroplasticity*.

This basically means that our brain and nerves can adapt to new stimuli and is the basis for all new learning. The good news is: This mechanism works in adults as well.

I propose a **Stress Management System** with two parts:

- the **Stress Management Canvas** for action fields and
- the **Stress Monitoring System** for recurring action.

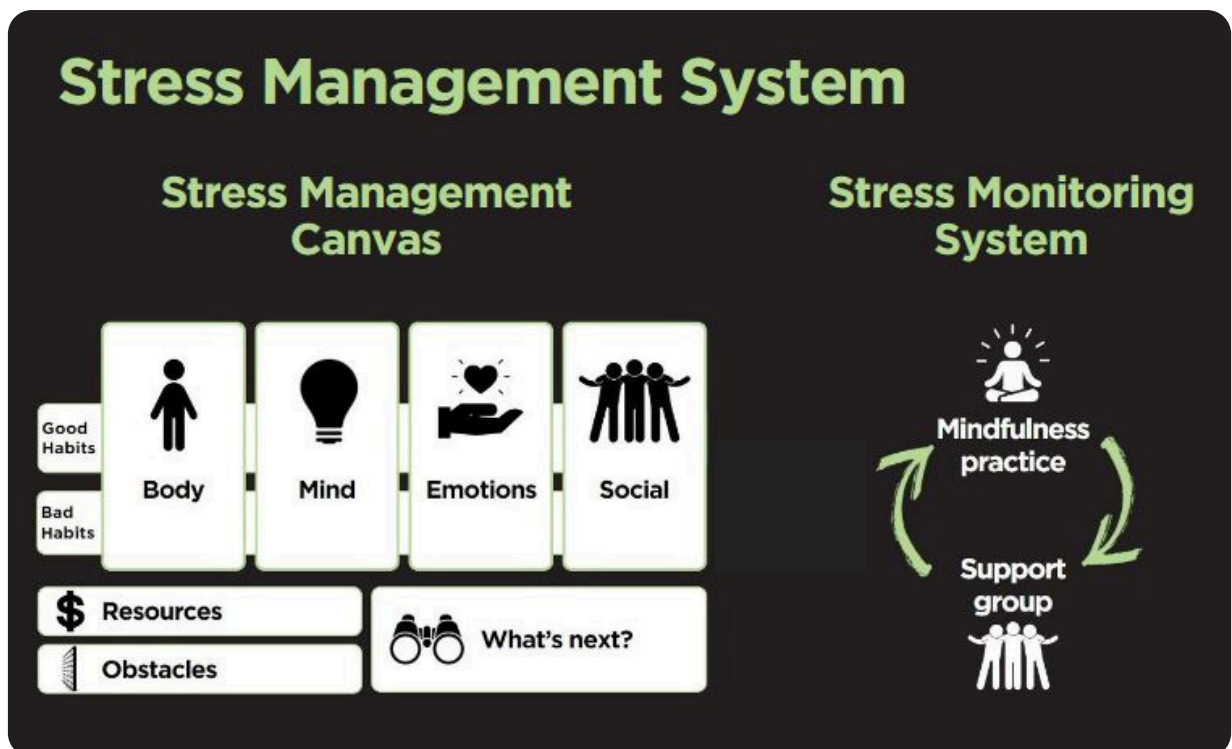


Illustration of the Stress Management System by Thomas Kampka comprised of the Stress Management Canvas and the Stress Monitoring System

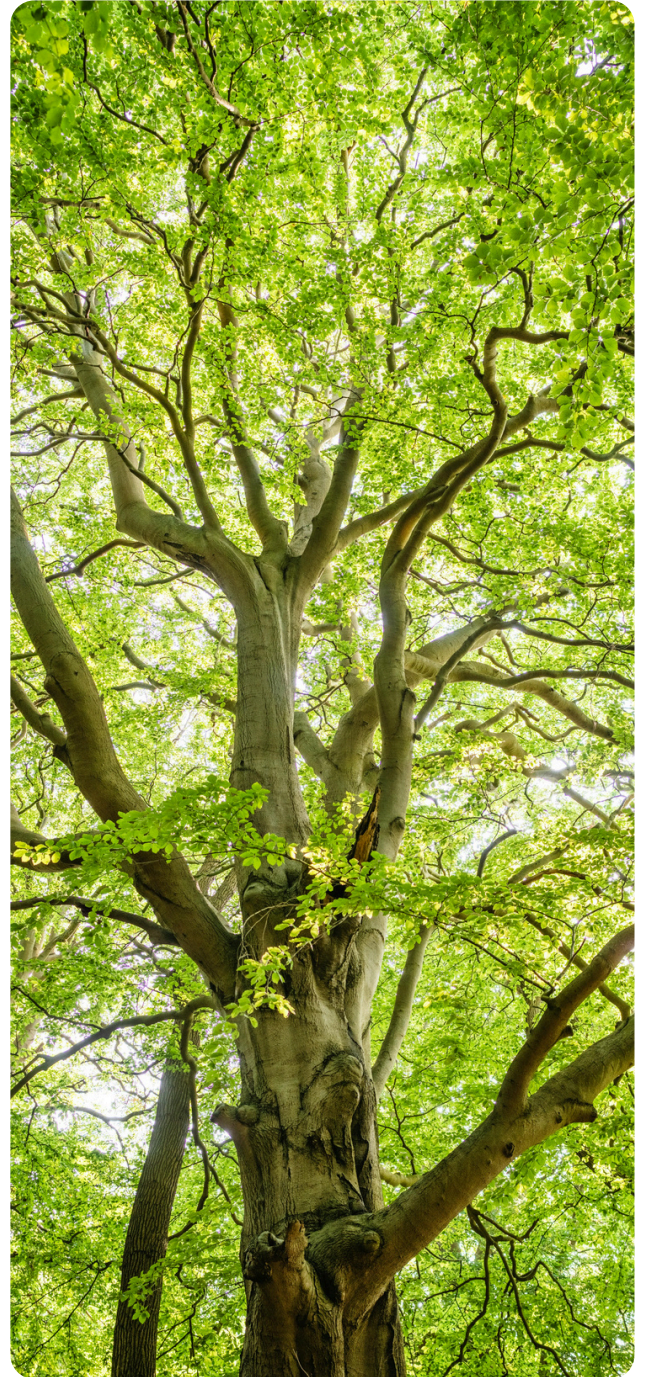
STRESS MANAGEMENT CANVAS

The canvas (see picture above) serves two purposes. The first is to visually inspire the user to think about a certain topic. The second is to structure thoughts and ideas into categories that are known to affect personal stress management, namely the body, mind, emotions and social aspects.

Think of the **Stress Management Canvas** like your character's skill tree in an RPG game. You're upgrading different areas to unlock achievements in stress resilience.

In order to establish a status quo, users in the **Cache Clearing Basic Course** are guided by prompts to reflect about good and bad habits in the four categories. These are behaviors that are largely within the circle of control, knowing that there are certain things outside of it too.

Using change management tools, the canvas then accompanies the users to establish a road forward: The individual path to better deal with stress.



STRESS MONITORING SYSTEM

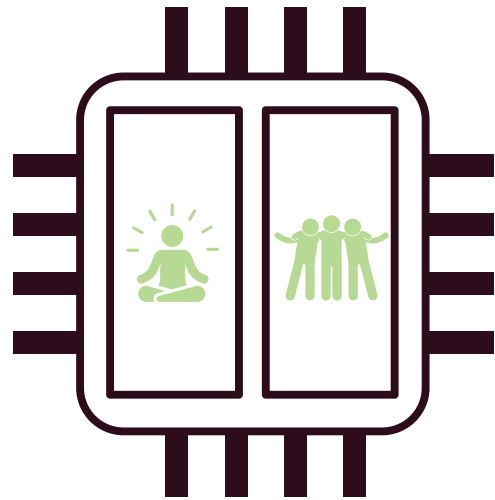
Have you ever had a New Year's resolution? Or otherwise wanted to establish a new habit on your own to lower your stress levels? Then you'll know how difficult it is. The new habits probably had a rough start.

Why is that? First, because the progress might not be noticeable at first, thus leading to frustration. Second and more importantly, because doing something alone is half as fun (and effective) as doing it in a group.

The dual-core **Stress Monitoring System** addresses these issues. The first core of the system is mindfulness practice, carried out both in meditation and in mundane activities. We have seen in the previous chapters, why meditation acts like a monitor for your stress levels.

Just meditation should already lead to higher relaxation, but the sensitized information loop will further enable you to realize the progress (or lack thereof) better.

The second core is a support group. Being able to give each other honest feedback, enhance accountability and supporting each other also in difficult times can be a game changer.



Those who know agile projects will understand this quite quickly. Iterations and a constant feedback loop are crucial in achieving your goals. This is also in line with the Deming Cycle presented earlier, as it continuously feeds back validation or falsification of the objectives.

Even though Coders and hamsters hate it, the **Stress Monitoring System** needs it: an infinite loop, never ending training of mindfulness.

Think of it like a mental hygiene routine: Just like brushing your teeth, stress and mental health should be daily priorities, not to be postponed only for the holidays.

THE CACHE CLEARING COMMUNITY

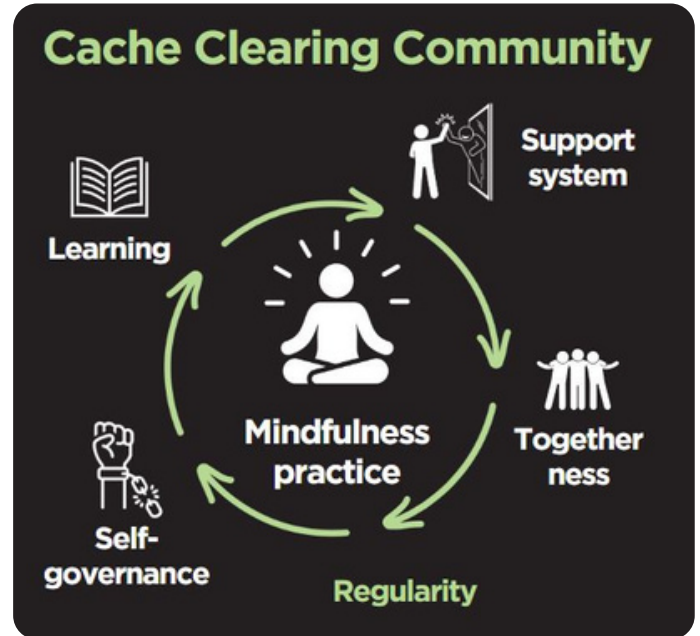
You might ask yourself now: How do I fill in the **Stress Management Canvas**? Where can I find others for the support group?

This is why I have founded the Cache Clearing Community. It combines all these tools and mechanisms in one place and offers a place of continuous learning and support.

In small groups of up to five, users complete a 3-month basic course to establish their personal stress management strategy.

By working through the material together during the weekly 1h meeting, they are guided through the **Stress Management Canvas** step by step. This ensures that there is time to process the information and initiate sustainable change.

However, once the three months and the basic course are over, the community is not.



The community provides continuous social support, reviewing learned content and providing mutual feedback to ensure sustained progress.

If you have ever come back from holidays relaxed and found yourself stressed right after the first week back at work, you know why this is important: spontaneous and irregular relaxation is simply not enough.

Click here to check out more details about the Cache Clearing Community



RECAP



Mental health issues are on the rise leading to more and more registered sick days. While there might be other issues at hand, stress definitely plays a big role in this.

Of course, we must not forget the context and systems we are part of. There are some that I help IT companies tackle on an organizational level such as culture, leadership style or communication. Other external factors must be handled by different actors—or learned to be dealt with.

Then there is personal resilience, that the **Stress Management System** consisting of a canvas, the mindfulness practice and a continuous support group aims to strengthen.

By implementing both organizational and personal stress management practices, IT professionals can significantly reduce stress-related issues and create more sustainable work environments.

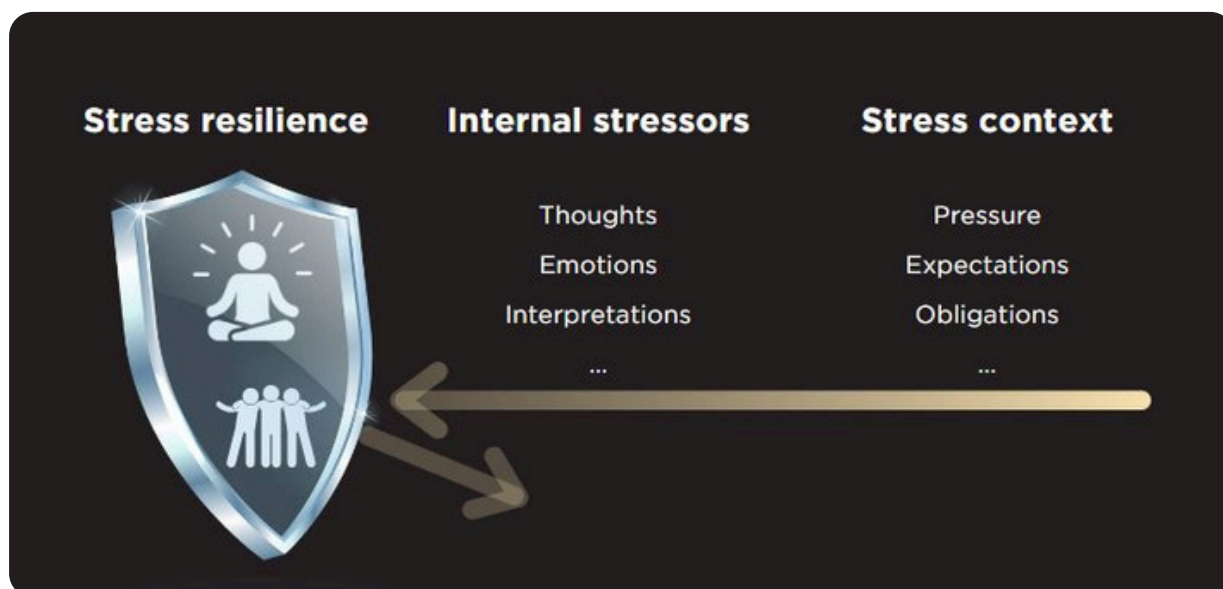


Illustration of the stress resilience versus the internal stressors and the stress context



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THIS, SUBSCRIBE
TO MY LINKEDIN
CHANNEL AND
HIT THE TRIPLE
BELL**

