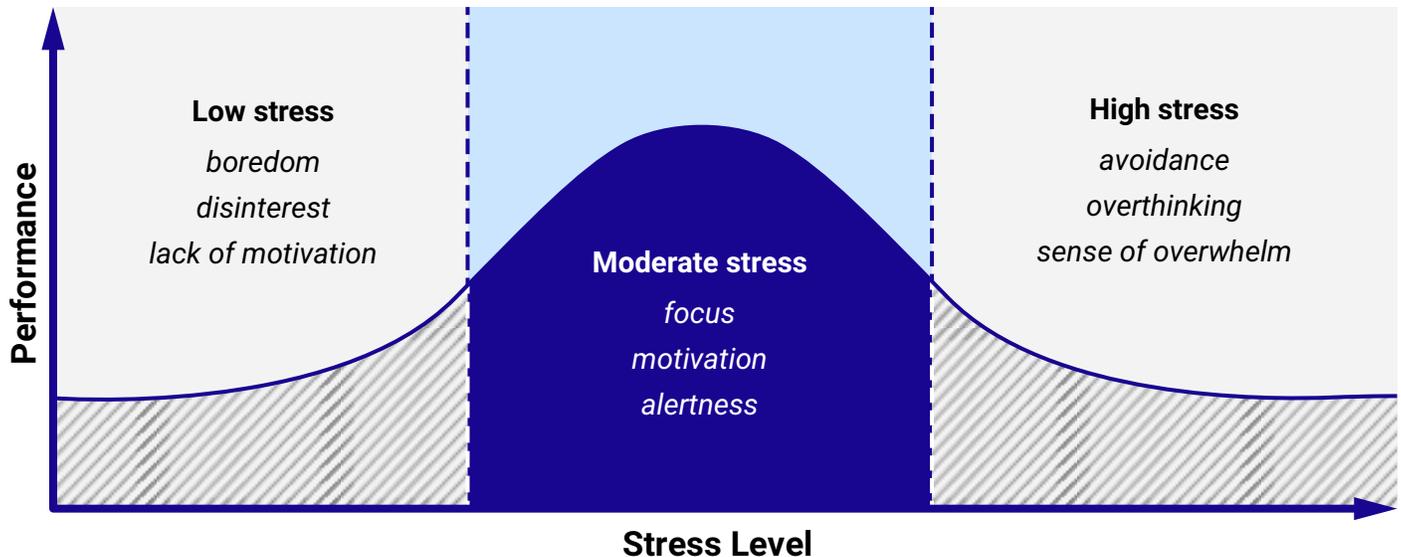


Yerkes-Dodson Law

how stress affects performance

Wouldn't it be nice to be completely free of stress and anxiety? As appealing as it sounds, *some* stress can actually be good for us.

The **Yerkes-Dodson Law** tells us that stress increases performance, but only to a point. Having too much stress is overwhelming—you become distracted by worry and overthink every action. But on the other hand, having too little stress leads to boredom, disinterest, and lack of motivation. In the *optimal zone of performance*, stress can motivate you and allow you to enter a state of “flow.”



Example

Low stress

- You don't care enough to practice or prepare.
- You look disinterested and miss important details during the presentation.

Moderate stress

- You are motivated to prepare, but it doesn't consume you.
- You appear confident and engaged in the presentation.

High stress

- You try to prepare, but feel anxious and procrastinate.
- You can't sleep the night before.
- You rush through the presentation to get it done.

Reflection Questions

- How do you know when you have low, moderate, or high stress? How does each level feel in your body? How do your thoughts change as your stress changes?
- If you are a perfectionist, how could the Yerkes-Dodson law affect how you approach problems?
- Are there times when you would benefit by increasing your stress? How would you do this?