



RISK FOCUS >>

Calm in the Storm

How to Protect Psychological Safety in a Distressed World

The current global uncertainty, marked by ongoing conflicts, climate crises, economic instability and political polarisation can have a detrimental impact on psychological wellbeing and create a pervasive sense of helplessness and hypervigilance.

Constant exposure to alarming news and social media feeds can trigger vicarious trauma, where individuals absorb the distress of distant events as their own, leading to chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, sleep disruption, and heightened anxiety or numbness over time.

This cumulative load disrupts focus, strains relationships, and fosters burnout or compassion fatigue, as the brain remains in a prolonged fight-flight-freeze state, impairing decision-making and resilience even for those not directly affected.

Recognising these impacts is the first step to reclaiming control amid the chaos. By understanding how global uncertainty seeps into our mental space, we can **shift from passive absorption to proactive protection**, building resilience that safeguards our wellbeing without denying the world's harsh realities.

The Stress Bucket

Created in 2002 by Brabban and Turkington, this tool helps visualise stress vulnerability and coping capacity. It allows us to identify practical, everyday strategies to manage this global psychological strain effectively – helping us stay calm *in the storm*.



Let's look at how to use this tool step by step:

- ➊ **Step 1:** Understand your unique Stress Signature. Everyone carries tension differently and your stress signature is the unique cluster of signals (physical, emotional and/or cognitive) that flare up when tension and pressures start to build.
- ➋ **Step 2:** Track your stress signature by scanning your feelings, thoughts, body signals and behaviours on a daily basis, noting deviations from your calm baseline.

- ◆ **Step 3:** Draw a bucket on a piece of paper. The size of the bucket will be determined by your level of stress.
- ◆ **Step 4:** Identify and list inside the bucket all the global stressors that contribute to filling it and what sources they are coming from (social media, news, work, friends or family). If helpful you can also include everyday personal and professional stressors for a broader analysis. If these stressors exceed your capacity to cope with them, your bucket overflows, resulting in the symptoms of stress.

Step 5: Map your taps. The goal of reducing stress is to keep your bucket from overflowing by regularly emptying it using your taps which represent your Coping Strategies.

Some examples may include:

- ✓ Proactively limiting engagement with negative news and social media
- ✓ Ensuring you are engaging daily in activities which bring you joy
- ✓ Mindfulness and physical exercise
- ✓ Regular check-ins with friends and family
- ✓ Seeking professional support if needed

Step 6: Implement, monitor and review regularly. Make this 5-minute check a habit. This will help you name and identifying stressors, spot spills early, and open taps/integrate coping mechanisms proactively, allowing you to reclaim clarity to interact, connect, and adapt to the global context around you without burnout derailing you.

In a distressed world, the stress bucket isn't just a sketch, it's your daily map to stay ahead of global drips overwhelming your capacity, increasing your ability to stay calm in the storm.

At ILS, we support organisations and individuals to develop and reinforce mental wellbeing practices ensuring psychological safety is central to Security Risk Management and Duty of Care.

👉 Let's talk. If you or your organisation are looking for advice and support on Psychological Wellbeing we'd love to hear from you.