

# Perform Under Pressure

Some people thrive under pressure and seek out stressful jobs as ambulance drivers, firefighters or critical care nurses. For most of us though, performing under pressure can be overwhelming.



Health and Wellness

“Working under pressure can be downright paralyzing, especially if you start the day in a chaotic workspace,” says Patty Kreamer, author of *The Power of Simplicity*. “When you finally hit the breaking point, it’s a sign it’s time to examine your organizational and time management skills.”

## Levels of Workplace Pressure

The more you learn about the pressure times and triggers at your workplace, the better you’ll be able to plan for them.

According to Ms. Kreamer, these are the three levels of workplace pressure:

- 1. Sustained pressure.** You have on-the-job pressure all the time. You have more work than you can accomplish in a reasonable amount of time; the work is too mentally taxing or physically strenuous for you; your company is disorganized or you work with difficult people.
- 2. Structured pressure.** Deadlines or work overloads occur at the same time of day, week, month or year.
- 3. Spontaneous pressure.** A pressure situation can pop up at any time. Perhaps other employees don’t show up or you’re often asked to give presentations at the last minute.

Knowing which kind of pressure you’re experiencing can help you cope with it by planning appropriately and prioritizing your work.

## Start With a Plan

If you have no plan when you start the day, you’re under pressure the minute you climb out of bed. With a plan, you can wake up knowing what has to be done and when.

This means not only putting a task list on paper, but also prioritizing the tasks and plugging each one into a time slot in your day planner so you know how your day will shape up.

“You’ll accomplish much more in less time because you have prioritized your tasks,” advises Ms. Kreamer. “It takes only

about 10 minutes to plan your day, a small investment with a high return on investment.”

## Unclutter Your Work Area

It’s easier to work under pressure when you have a clear, or at least an uncluttered, space in which to work. If your work area is a constant mini-disaster, schedule time in your day planner to go through your papers.

“Clutter is nothing more than unmade decisions, so rather than continually putting off the time to decide, schedule time to make thoughtful, fast decisions,” says Ms. Kreamer.

## Respond, Don’t React

There’s a huge difference between a knee-jerk reaction and a planned response to a critical or annoying remark. Reacting by using sarcasm or an angry tone of voice will only add to your stress.

Here are some safe responses to negative comments: “That’s interesting.” “I’ll think about it and let you know.” “I need to get back to work.”

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# Perform Under Pressure *(continued)*

## **Follow a Healthy Lifestyle**

Your body needs high-quality fuel to function under pressure. Plan your grocery shopping so you have healthy food on hand for breakfast and can take healthy snacks to work.

In addition, allow time during your lunch break for a brisk 20-minute walk. The fresh air and exercise will help clear your mind and recharge your energy.

## **Attitude**

Your attitude is totally in your control. Make a decision to have a positive one. Planning for positive thoughts will help you be less stressed.

“You not only have to plan for your work, you also have to plan for yourself,” says Ms. Kremer. “Investing some time up front to get organized can be just the pressure-release valve needed to survive on a daily basis.”

