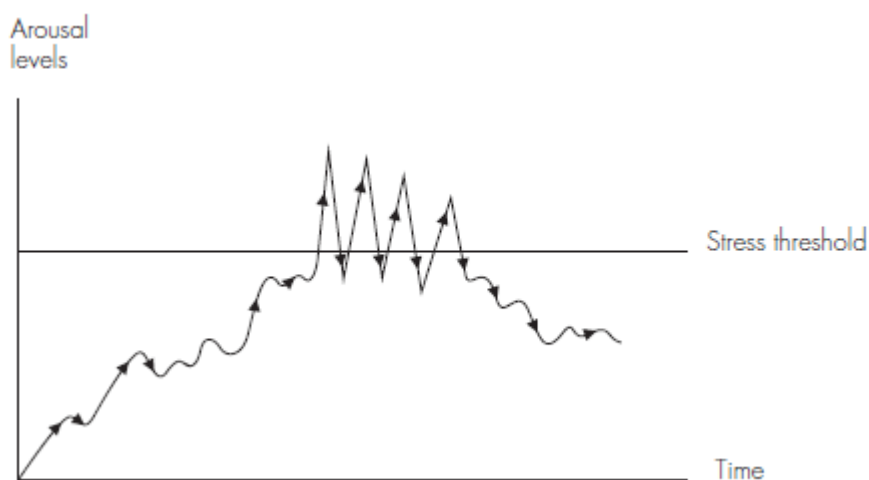


REACHING OUR LIMIT OF COPING

Daily events lead to fluctuating levels of stress for us all. Everyone has a 'threshold' for manageable stress and this may vary from day to day. Above that, responses vary. Some people may experience anxiety and panic attacks, other may overuse substances or withdraw from their families.

We all need to learn how to manage not only the severe peaks (however we experience these), but also the general stresses that are part of life to help prevent such extreme peaks in stress in the future.

The 'threshold' model of stress and panic



Your progress in using any new skill will not follow a straight path: there will be good days and bad days. You might notice that the peaks in anxiety are not quite as large, or occur further apart, or both. Improvements will happen, although you will not feel immediately anxiety-free in the way you may have hoped. 'Setbacks' can be valuable opportunities to refine your skills. Don't be too hard on yourself – this is an important way of helping prepare you for future 'ups and downs'. Ask yourself:

- What happened?
- What helped? What didn't help?
- What can I do differently next time?

And most importantly, when you do manage your stress well, acknowledge this!

Extracted from: Gilchrist, Jemma, 'Stress and Anxiety' in Hodgkinson, Dr Katharine; Gilchrist, Dr Jemma (eds), *Psychosocial Care of Cancer Patients: A Health Professional's Guide to What to Say and Do*, Ausmed Publications (2008, Melbourne), 129.

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