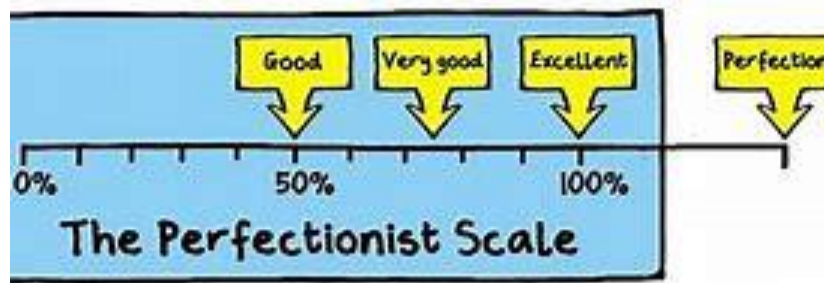


# Dealing with Roadblocks – Managing Setbacks, Stress and Perfectionism for PGRs



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# Stress Response

- Our body's response to pressures from a situation or life event (a perceived threat), which could be a 'roadblock'
- Something we all experience
- Physical and psychological – 'fight, flight or freeze'



# Recognising Stress 1

## Physical

- Headaches
- Tension
- Sleep disturbance
- Digestive problems
- Sweating

## Emotional

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Anxiety/worry/fear
- Lowered self esteem
- Low mood, apathy
- Irritable



## Recognising Stress 2

### Behavioural

- Withdrawal
- Increased drinking or smoking
- Risk taking
- Eating disturbances
- Procrastination

### Cognitive

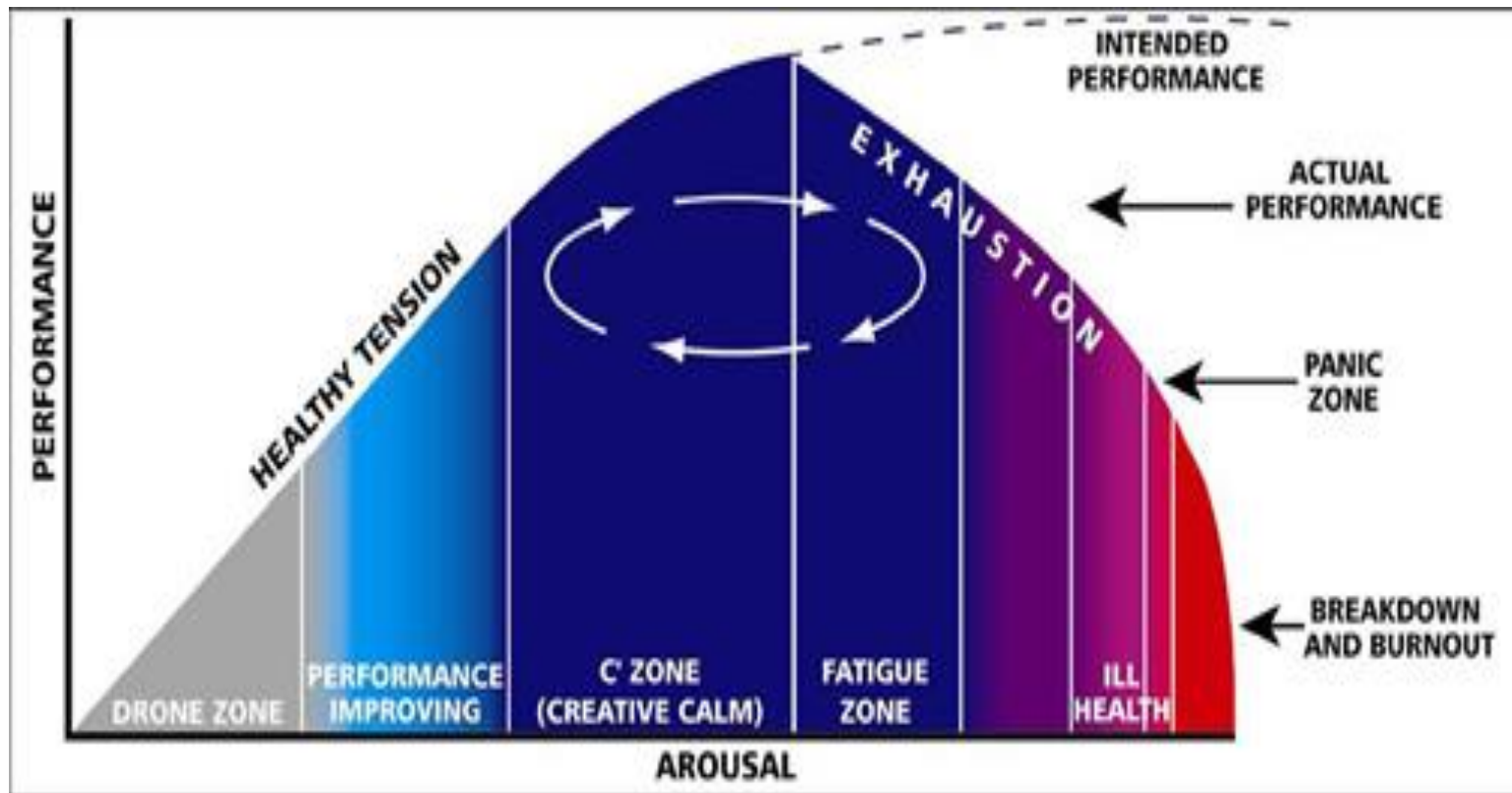
- Rigidity
- Memory lapses
- Poor concentration
- Inability to set priorities
- Impaired decision making







# The Human Function Curve



The Human Function Curve (Dr Peter Nixon) from [workingforwellbeing.co.uk](http://workingforwellbeing.co.uk)



## Building **resilience** to stress

- **Reactive or ‘In the moment’**  
- knowing how to induce the ‘relaxation to combat the ‘stress response’ e.g. deep breathing, muscle relaxation, distraction techniques:  
[Apps, podcasts, TED talks and relaxation recordings | The University of Edinburgh](#)  
– knowing how to challenge our NATs – ‘negative automatic thoughts’
- **Proactive or ‘Over the long term’** - having regular and recognised daily/weekly self-care habits in place e.g. mindfulness, balanced life (‘work, rest and play’), ongoing ways to ‘manage your mind’. See ‘Five Ways to Well-Being’:  
<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>



## Exercise 1

**For 'over the longer term':  
Mapping your support structure  
exercise**





## Unhelpful Thinking Habits

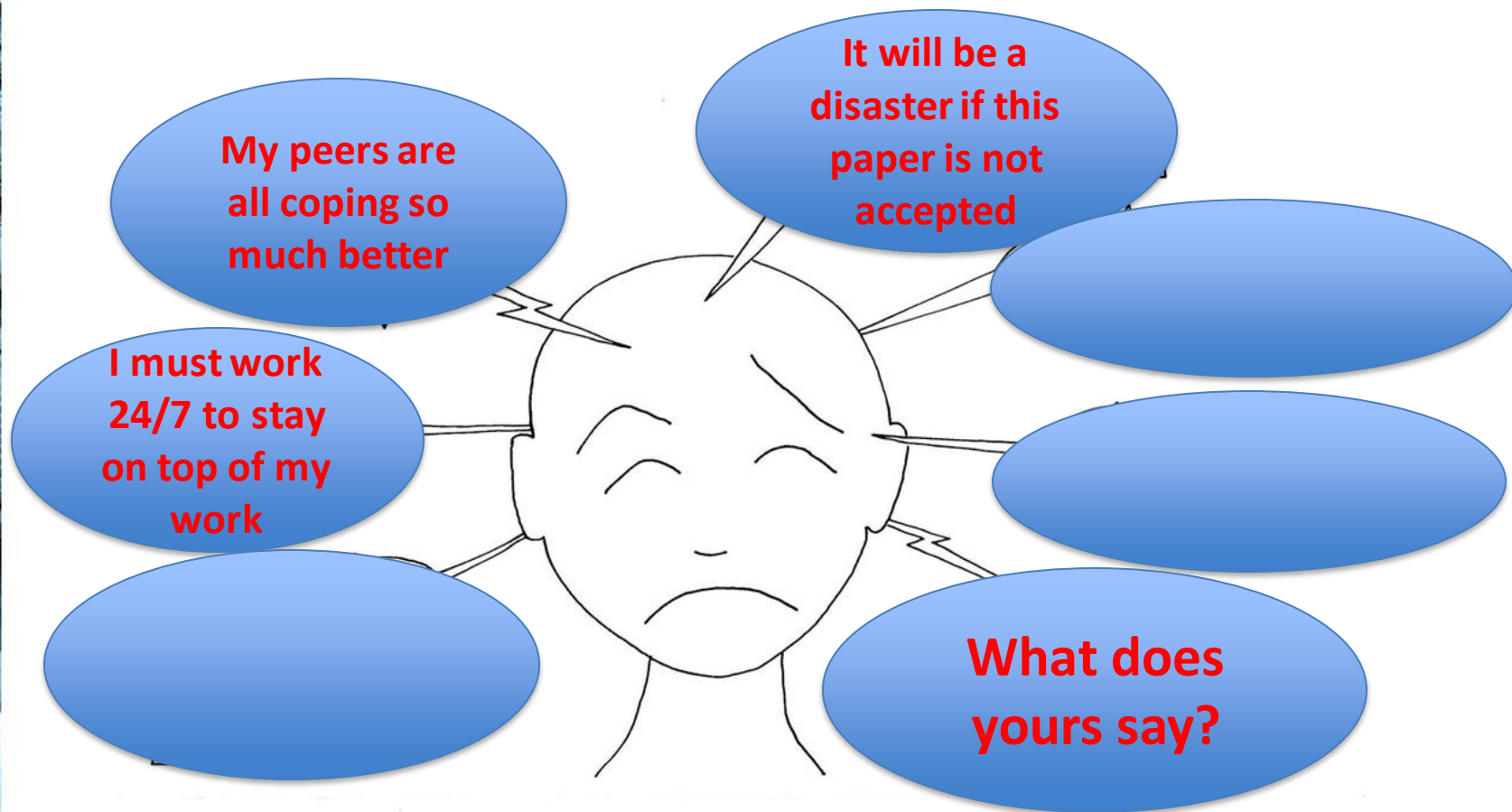
On coming upon 'roadblocks', see handout on some of the common thinking habits that don't help us! e.g.

- **Mindreading**
- **Catastrophising**
- **Critical self**
- **'Should'/'Must' rather than 'Want'**





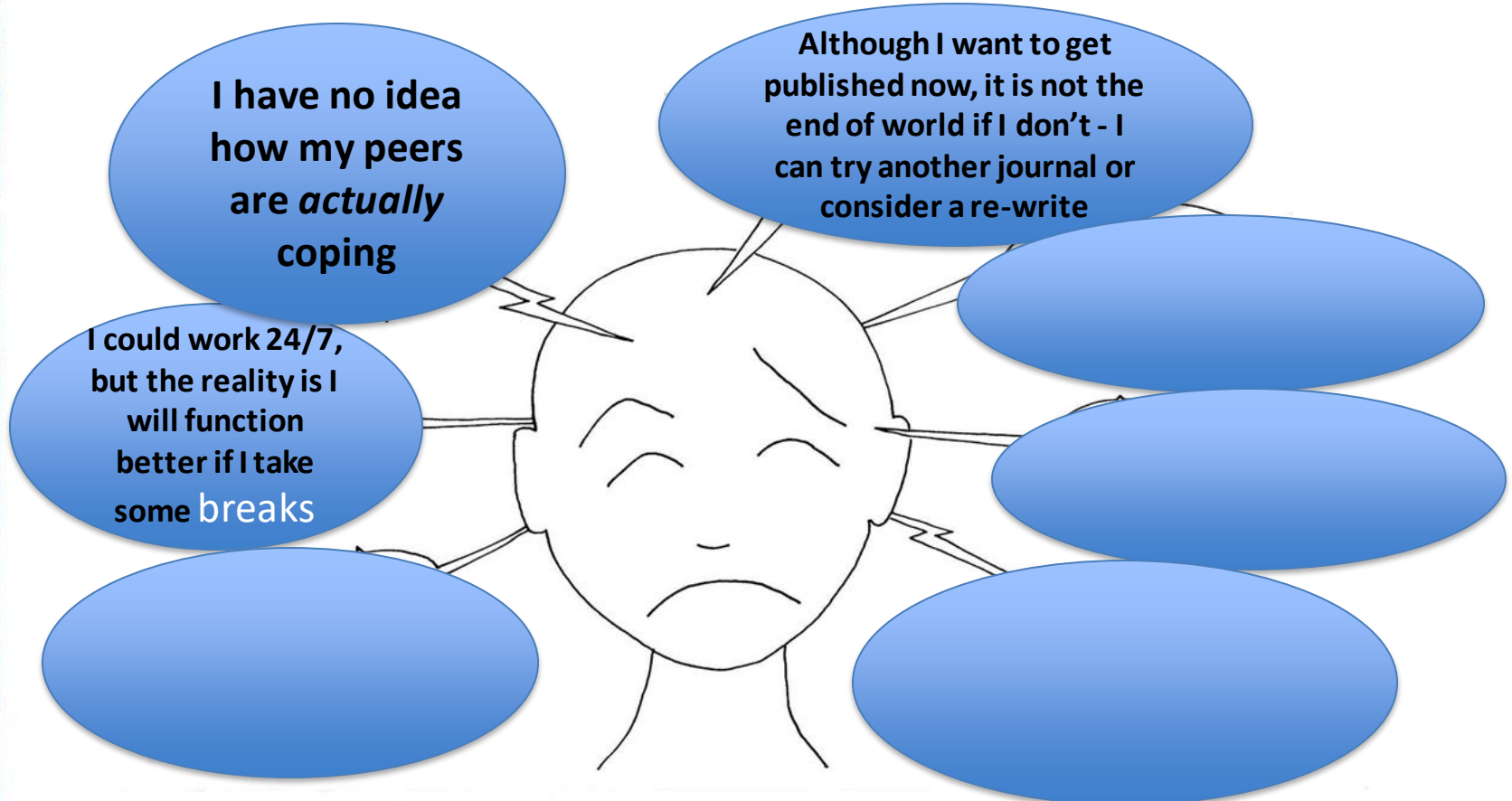
## Exercise 2: Exposing the unhelpful thoughts of our inner critic





## Exercise 2:

# Challenging the unhelpful thoughts of our inner critic







## Exercise 3: Pluses and Minuses of Being a Perfectionist

Positives – what it gives me	Negatives – what it takes away from me





# Perfectionist V Healthy Striver

<b>Sets standards well beyond reach and sense</b>	<b>Sets high standards, just beyond reach</b>
<b>Focuses on the end <i>product</i> or outcome and does not enjoy the process</b>	<b>Enjoys the <i>process</i> as well as the <i>outcome</i> of any action</b>
<b>Becomes depressed when experiences failure and disappointment</b>	<b>Bounces back quickly from failure and disappointment</b>
<b>Is overly concerned with fear of failure and disapproval – depletes energy</b>	<b>Retains a healthy fear of failure and disapproval - uses them to <i>create</i> energy</b>
<b>Sees mistakes as evidence of uselessness and unworthiness</b>	<b>Sees mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning development</b>
<b>Becomes highly defensive when offered criticism</b>	<b>Reacts positively to criticism</b>



## Rainbow of Managing Perfectionism

- **Realistic goals:** Set realistic and attainable goals. This will enable you to achieve, and also will lead to a greater sense of self-esteem.
- **Try for less than 100%:** Choose any activity and instead of aiming for 100%, try for 90%, 80%, or even 60% success. This will help you realise that the world does not end when you are not perfect.
- **Be Selective:** Learn to discriminate the tasks you want to give high priority to from those that are less important to you. On less important tasks, *choose* to expend less effort.
- **Focus on process:** Judge your success not only based on what you accomplished (product) but also in terms of how much you enjoyed the task (process).
- **Check your feelings:** Use feelings of anxiety and depression as opportunities to ask yourself, "Have I set up impossible expectations for myself in this situation again?"
- **Celebrate your mistakes:** Recognise that many positive things can only be learned from making mistakes. When you make a mistake ask, "What can I learn from this experience?"





# How can I follow up on today's session?

**Various options!**

- Review what we have done and think more about myself
- Talk to my loved ones and/or peers about myself to get feedback
- Look at some self-help materials available
- Feedback to Michael Gutmann about other useful inputs that could be provided to the PGR community
- Talk to a counsellor in the Student Counselling Service (confidentially)





## Further Resources

- Useful resources to follow up on from a psychological perspective on topics such as stress management, perfectionism, managing setbacks:
- [What is SilverCloud | The University of Edinburgh](#)
- [CCI - Self Help Resources for Mental Health Problems](#)
- [About LLTTF | Living Life to the Full](#)
- [Self Help | The University of Edinburgh](#)



# Student Counselling Service

Supports the mental health of all students (pt/ft, ug/pgt/pgr/ODL, studying or on interruption)

Free brief therapy: [Self-Referral Form | The University of Edinburgh](#) and referral to other services

Immediate access self-help resources, including apps and further workshops: [Student Counselling | The University of Edinburgh](#)



# Thank you!

- AOB or questions?