

Self-Managing to Be at Your Best

Being at our best comes from the perfect balance of learning, stretching, and being challenged. To do this, we must be self-aware and be able to adapt.

Research shows that we feel most fulfilled and engaged when we are growing, learning, and stretching ourselves. The goal is to know where we are, where we need to be, and what it takes to get there.

To accomplish this goal, *it is important to strike the right balance between struggle and comfort* (i.e., to push beyond your comfort zone while avoiding terror's edge and its associated burnout). The process is also unique for each individual:

The Donut as a Metaphor for Managing Change

The donut metaphor is a simple, easy (and calorie-free!) way to understand how to get into that sweet spot where you are truly engaged and challenged but not overly stressed.



LEVEL 1-2

Life inside the donut hole is our comfort zone. It is safe, familiar, comfortable, and potentially a little boring.

LEVELS 3-4

Life on the donut is our learning zone. This is where we grow, stretch, and experiment. This is where we feel awake, inspired, engaged, and truly alive. This is also where we struggle, learn new things, and grow.

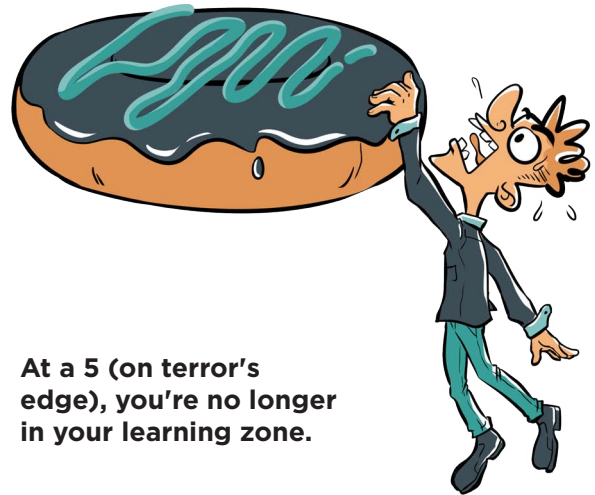
LEVEL 5

The outer edge of the donut is the outer edge of the learning zone. If we spend too much time on the outer edge of the donut—what one might describe as “terror’s edge”—we feel stressed and potentially begin to burn out.

Scaling the Donut

Think about the different parts of the donut on a scale from 1-5. 1 and 2 are within the comfort zone, 3 and 4 are in the learning zone, and 5 is terror's edge.

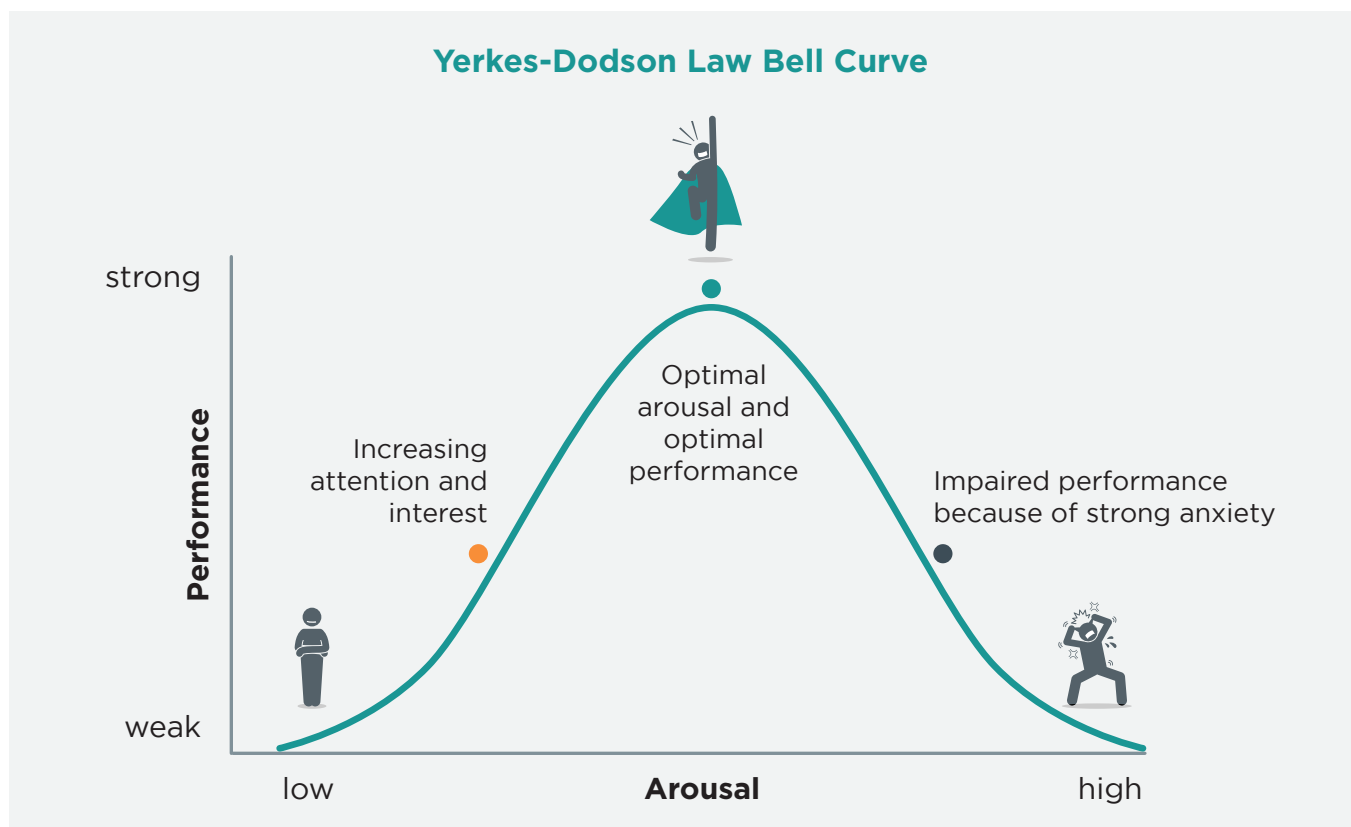
Flow triggers are associated with challenge and happen in the learning zone (at 3 or 4). However, more or higher isn't necessarily better in this case. At 5, your performance quickly begins to dwindle due to exhaustion and terror.



At a 5 (on terror's edge), you're no longer in your learning zone.

The Yerkes-Dodson Law

The Yerkes-Dodson law, a model for understanding the relationship between stress and performance, maintains that for more challenging tasks, moderate arousal can enhance performance (e.g., by heightening motivation). Conversely, high levels of arousal can decrease performance (e.g., because too much stimulus reduces our ability to effectively process information and respond).



Great leaders develop self-awareness to tap into and then gauge stress or arousal. They understand where they are on the donut, and then push or pull back to achieve the right level of stress to achieve what they need to achieve in the moment.

Creating More Flow and Becoming Your Best Self

Creating more flow hinges both on the capacity to embrace a growth mindset and spend intentional, purposeful time living in the learning zone. We cultivate flow by intentionally building the skills, discipline, and grit needed to pursue growth and stay in the learning zone as often as possible. In the learning zone, there is a sweet spot where we are performing at our peak.



Self-Managing with the AIM Process

- 1 AWARENESS**
Where am I, and where should I be to become my best self?
- 2 ACTIVATION**
How do you adjust the heat/intensity you're applying to your goals at different times?
- 3 AGILITY**
How do you pursue your goals in different situations and at different times?
- 4 ACCOUNTABILITY**
What does success look like and how do you know you're moving toward it?
- 5 INTEGRATION/ACCELERATION**
How do you develop a language to engage, discuss, and collaborate with others?

Looking for ways to spend more time in your learning zone and less time feeling stagnant or overly stimulated and stressed? Let us help you and your team start this exploration.

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