

How to recognise stress in your meetings & conversations



Too much stress stops us thinking creatively, sends us into protection mode, makes us cautious and closed minded. None of these are helpful in meetings or conversations.

If we want to solve problems, share ideas, engage people and find new levels of performance then too much stress makes these goals much harder to reach.

If we can learn the signs of stress we will become more aware of its impact on our conversations, we are able to respond better. If we brush stress under the carpet, or dismiss it as part of the job we risk ignoring its neurological impact.

This guide offers practical advice to help recognise the ways stress can show up in your meetings and conversations – it's not always obvious and the signs can be subtle.

Learn to recognise the signs of stress in yourself and others and become a Conversation Engineer and have better conversations.

In this guide we take a closer look at how the 4 stress responses **Flight, Fight, Freeze and Fawn** play out in our behaviour and conversations at work.

We all can feel stressed at work and say and do things we later regret or wish we had done differently. So, what helps the best communicators to continue to have great conversations despite stressful situations?

Conversation Engineers are able to recognise when stress is having a negative impact on a conversation.

Remember a difficult meeting you had recently; if you saw or heard any of the following in yourself or others, then stress was getting in the way of your conversations.



Flight responses

- Not attending due to being too busy
- Being distracted
- Causing distractions
- Busyness
- Derailing the meeting with a separate issue
- Poor prioritisation
- Over thinking, ruminating to the point of sidestepping decision making

Fight responses

- Looking for blame
- Gossiping about others
- Raised voices
- Power gestures - like finger pointing
- Seeking to win
- Generating drama
- Controlling the conversation



Freeze responses

- Not making eye contact
- Looking out the window
- Keeping quiet
- Limited input - “I don’t know” or “I agree with what she just said”
- Arriving late
- Low energy
- Avoiding issues or topics

Fawn responses

- Yielding to other points of view, even when this goes against your values
- Placating & apologising
- “How can I make it up to you?”
- Being submissive
- Avoiding sharing own views
- People pleasing
- Being a victim or martyr
- Shrugging off praise



A key part of recognising the impact of stress on conversations is to remember that when we fall back on these responses this does not shape our reactions all the time, nor define who we are.

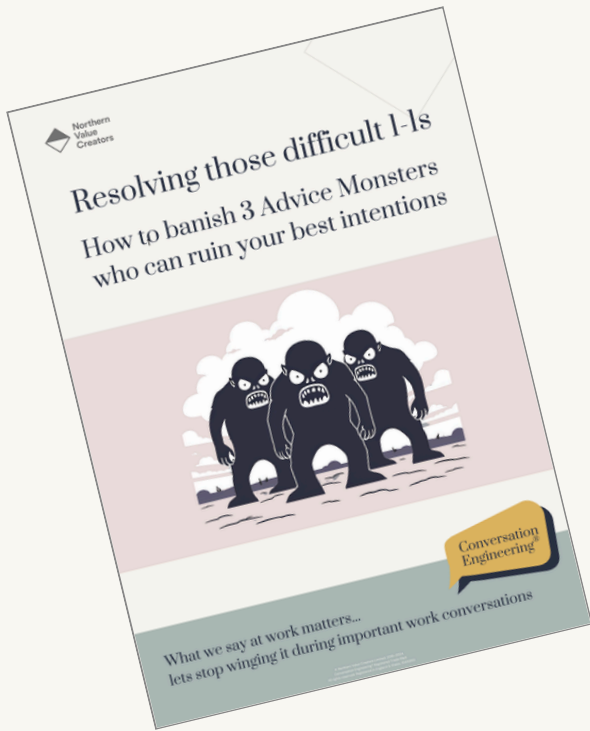
These stress responses are learnt survival strategies when our brains perceive a threat. Therefore, these behaviours reduce when we feel safer.



Helping you master the conversations that matter



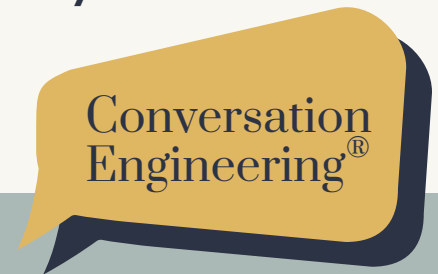
**Northern
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Do you know Advice Monsters could be spoiling your 1-1s?

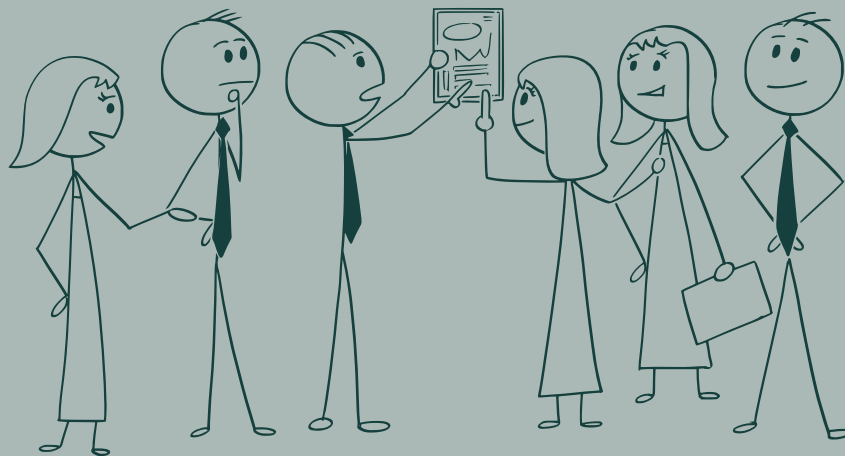
Learn how to banish the monsters from your 1-1s. Get our workbook packed full of practical advice, learning and tools to help you have awesome 1-1s.

Download it today



The conversations you have with your team can change everything.

Conversations can build trust, solve problems faster, and make work better for everyone.



Start small, try something.
You've got this.