

The Traffic Light

Category of Competencies: Stress Management Skills

Description:

The Traffic Light activity is designed to help participants manage stress through a technique that uses three steps: identifying emotions (red), reflecting on possible responses (yellow), and acting constructively (green).

Activity Categories:

Group or Individual Activity, Easy-to-prepare

Main Competencies Involved:

Dealing with Complexity, Decision-Making, Emotional Self-Regulation, Perseverance, Problem-Solving

Other Competencies (Different Category):

Adaptability, Assertiveness, Creating Positive Learning Environments

Resources Needed and Practical Considerations:

List of specific stressful situations (presented on cards or slides), sheets of paper or digital format for responses.

Optional: In a group format, a debate can be encouraged around each scenario to discuss various stress management strategies and perspectives.

Estimated Time:

25 minutes

Description of Activity:

Step 1: Introduce the Traffic Light technique, explaining each step.

- **Red:** Stop and identify the emotion you are feeling.
- **Yellow:** Reflect on possible responses to the situation.
- **Green:** Choose and act on the best option for managing the situation constructively.

Encourage participants to ask questions to ensure they understand the technique.

Step 2: Explain that participants will encounter a series of stressful situations, each one providing an opportunity to practise the Traffic Light technique. Mention that they will follow the steps for each scenario to identify, reflect, and act.



Step 3: Present each scenario one at a time, allowing participants approximately 3 minutes per scenario to complete each step of the Traffic Light technique. Participants should write down their responses for each stage (red, yellow, green) for each situation.

Step 4: After working through the scenarios, provide time for participants to reflect on how effectively they managed each situation. Assess whether they could identify their emotions accurately and respond constructively. If in a group setting, discuss each participant's strategies and how they transitioned from red to green.

Explanation of the Traffic Light Technique



“Emotional traffic light technique helps people manage their emotions in stressful situations using three steps: red to stop and identify the emotion, yellow to reflect on possible responses, and green to act by choosing the best option.”

Red: Identify the emotion.

When you feel a strong emotion, stop. Take a moment to recognise what emotion you are experiencing (e.g. anger, anxiety, frustration).

Yellow: Think of possible responses.

Reflect on the situation and consider how you can manage the emotion. Ask yourself, “What is causing this emotion?” and “What options do I have for responding?”

Green: Choose the best course of action

Take action based on your reflection. Choose a constructive response that will help you manage the situation effectively.

Stressful situations examples	Possible responses
-------------------------------	--------------------



1	You receive a bad review from a superior	Red: Feeling angry/sad/insecure
		Yellow: Reflect on the criticism and assess whether it is valid/Ask yourself what you can learn from the experience/Consider whether the criticism is based on a misperception
		Green: Thank the feedback and request specific examples/Establish a plan to work on the mentioned areas/Consult a colleague for a second opinion
2	Multiple deadlines in one day	Red: Feel anxiety/overwhelmed/frustration
		Yellow: Make a list of tasks and prioritise them/Reflect on how to manage time more effectively/Consider asking a coworker for help.
		Green: Create a realistic schedule with time blocks/Break tasks into smaller steps/Inform a supervisor about the workload and discuss priorities.
3	A conflict with a coworker	Red: Feel frustration/Resentment/Distrust.
		Yellow: Reflect on how the conflict arose/Consider the coworker's perspective and why they might act that way/Think about how the situation affects the work environment.
		Green: Approach the coworker calmly to discuss the issue/Propose a solution that benefits both/Seek mediation from a supervisor if necessary.
4		Red: Feel anxiety/ Frustration/ Helplessness.



	An unexpected change in a project	Yellow: Reflect on the reasons for the change and its impact/Consider the alternatives that can be implemented/Evaluate the team's reaction to the change.
		Green: Communicate the change to the team and adjust the plan together/Identify any additional resources needed/Establish new deadlines and realistic objectives.
5	Being ignored by other colleagues	Red: Feeling frustration/insecurity/detachment.
		Yellow: Reflect on whether being ignored was intentional or accidental/Think about how to respond assertively/Consider the group dynamics and the best ways to connect with others.
		Green: Find an appropriate moment to express how you feel/Approach a colleague to discuss the situation and seek support/Suggest team activities to strengthen communication.
6	Not being recognised by the work team	Red: Feeling unmotivated/disappointed/frustrated.
		Yellow: Reflect on the expectations for recognition/Consider the different reasons for the lack of recognition/Think about how to express a need for feedback.
		Green: Talk to the team leader to share feelings and request feedback/Respectfully express to colleagues the importance of recognising collective efforts/Propose a feedback meeting to improve team communication.

