

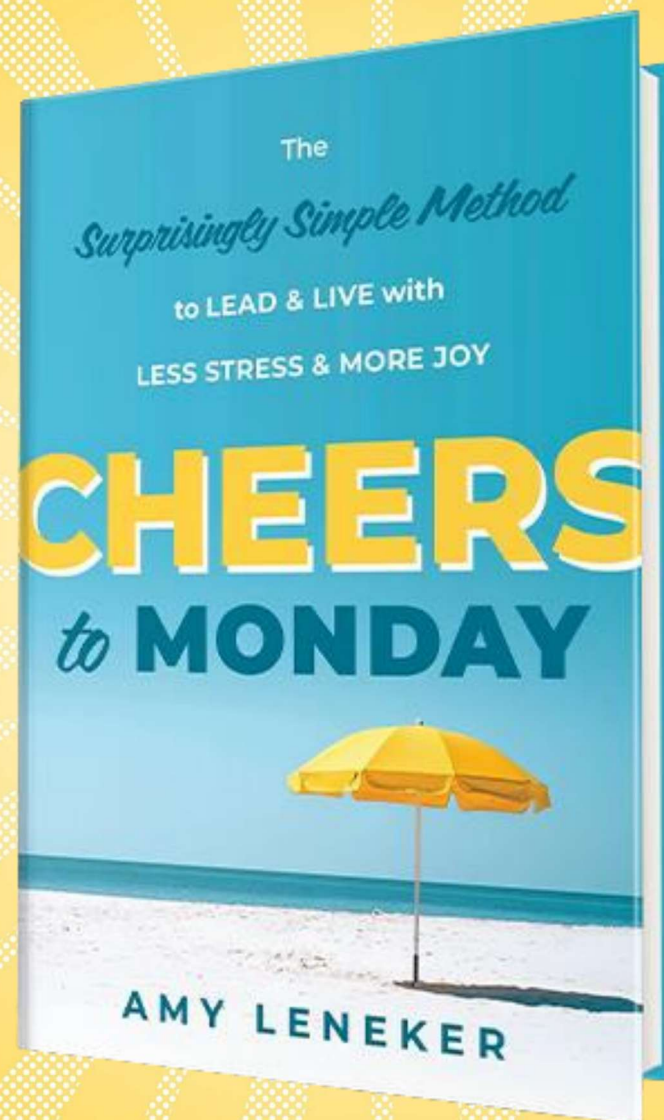


This slide deck is being shared as a follow up resource.

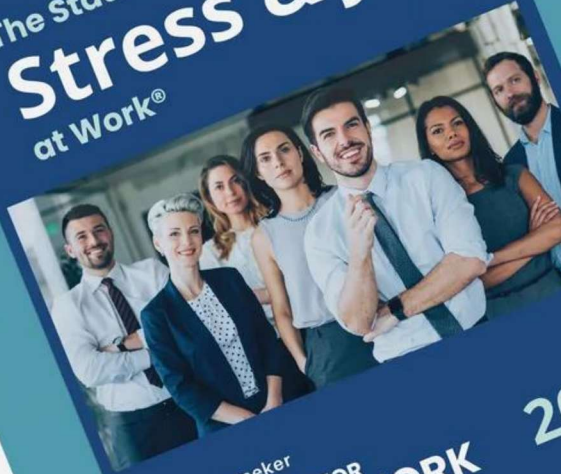
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The State of Stress & Joy at Work®



Amy Leneker
THE CENTER FOR JOYFUL WORK

2026

helps them better cope with stress.

work performance and engagement.

Statement	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	NA - I've never experienced this
I expect work to be joyful.	33%	42%	17%	3%	1%	
My level of trust in coworkers changes noticeably depending on whether I'm feeling stressed or joyful.	33%	38%	22%	3%	1%	
I expect work to be stressful.	21%	38%	19%	9%	2%	
My manager's style without consequences.	23%	35%	18%	9%	3%	
to reduce stress resources at work.	25%	32%	21%	8%	3%	
at support systems at work that helps me age stressful periods.	24%	33%	23%	10%	2%	
I expect work to be joyful.	21%	34%	25%	13%	9%	1%
My level of trust in coworkers changes noticeably depending on whether I'm feeling stressed or joyful.	19%	38%	20%	14%	8%	
I expect work to be stressful.	14%	32%	29%	13%	4%	

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TO THE CENTER for Joyful Work® National Research Study of Stress and Joy at Work® provides practical, actionable insights.

For decades, workplace culture has normalized stress and dismissed joy at work as frivolous. The data in this study shows that true for American workers.

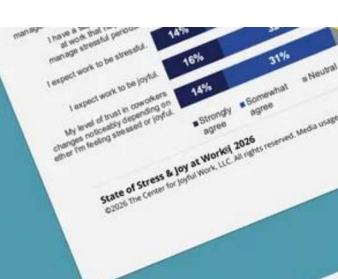
The findings in this study point to a hard truth—and a hopeful one: stress is systematically undermining success, and joy is part of the solution.

Why Studying Stress and Joy Matters Now More Than Ever

Stress isn't just a performance problem today; it's a leadership problem for tomorrow.

Stress is reshaping careers and leaving leadership pipelines at risk. Large numbers of working Americans are opting out of leadership altogether due to stress.

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- Nearly half (44%) report avoiding a promotion because they did not want additional stress.**
Promotions are a primary mechanism for developing leaders. When stress deters advancement, organizations lose momentum. In leadership development and succession planning, high performers may remain in roles that underutilize their capabilities, while leadership roles become harder to fill with prepared candidates.
- Nearly half (45%) say work stress has caused them to lower their career goals.**
This is an early warning signal for leadership supply. Over time, fewer employees pursue stretch roles, cross-functional experiences, or leadership pathways. The leadership pipeline narrows not only because people leave, but because those who stay have lowered career aspirations.
- A majority (61%) report staying in a job longer than they wanted because stress made it hard to make a change.**
Chronic stress reduces perceived mobility by draining the energy required to search, interview, and transition to a new position. This creates a stagnation within organizations: people remain in roles that no longer fit, but while also limiting growth and development slows.



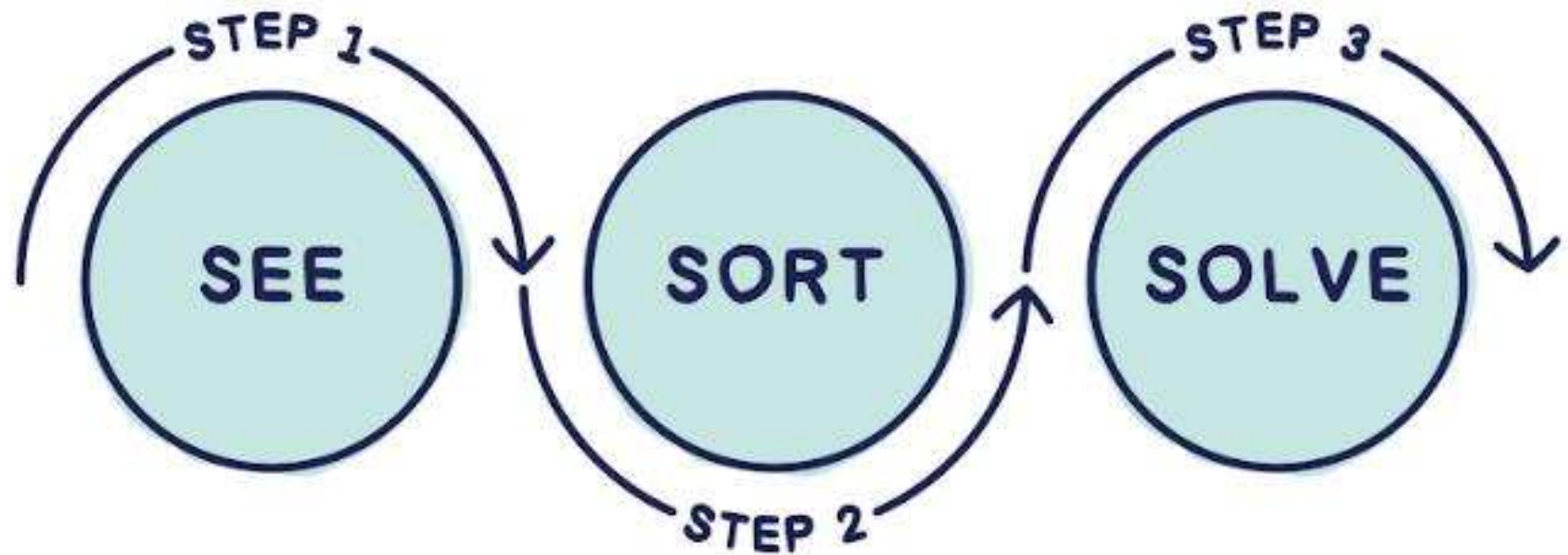


Stress is undermining success;



is part of the solution.





Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)





STRESS RULER

HOW CHALLENGING HAS YOUR STRESS BEEN?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

NOT AT ALL
CHALLENGING

A LITTLE
CHALLENGING

SOMEWHAT
CHALLENGING

VERY
CHALLENGING

EXTREMELY
CHALLENGING

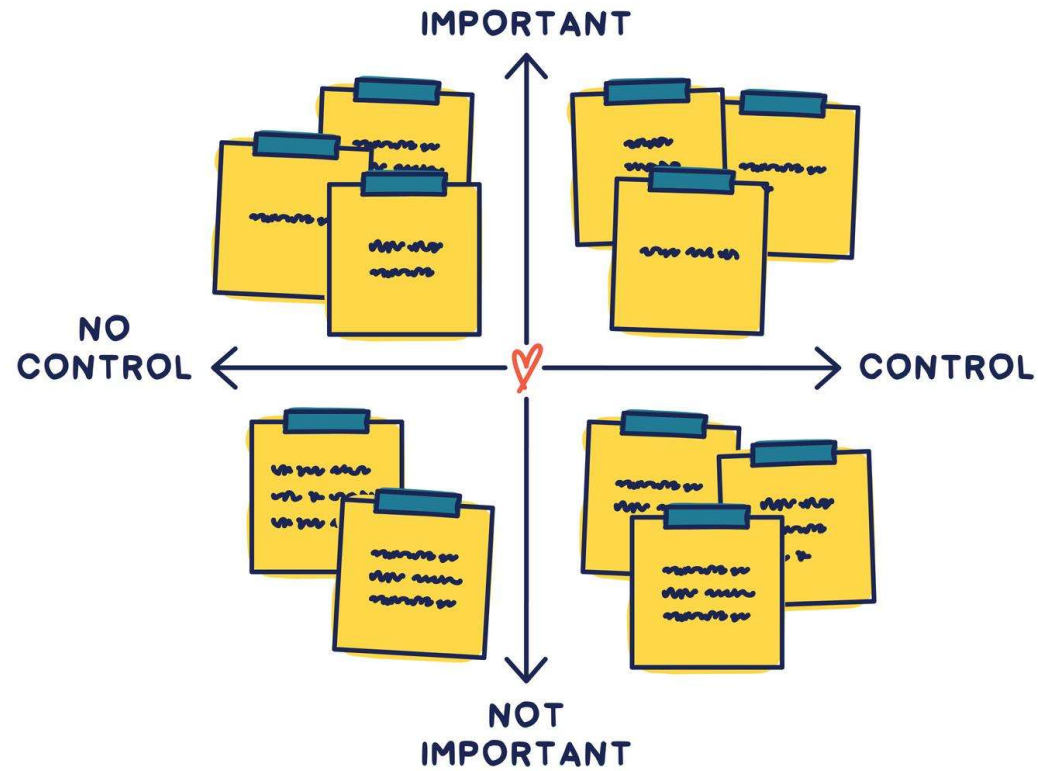
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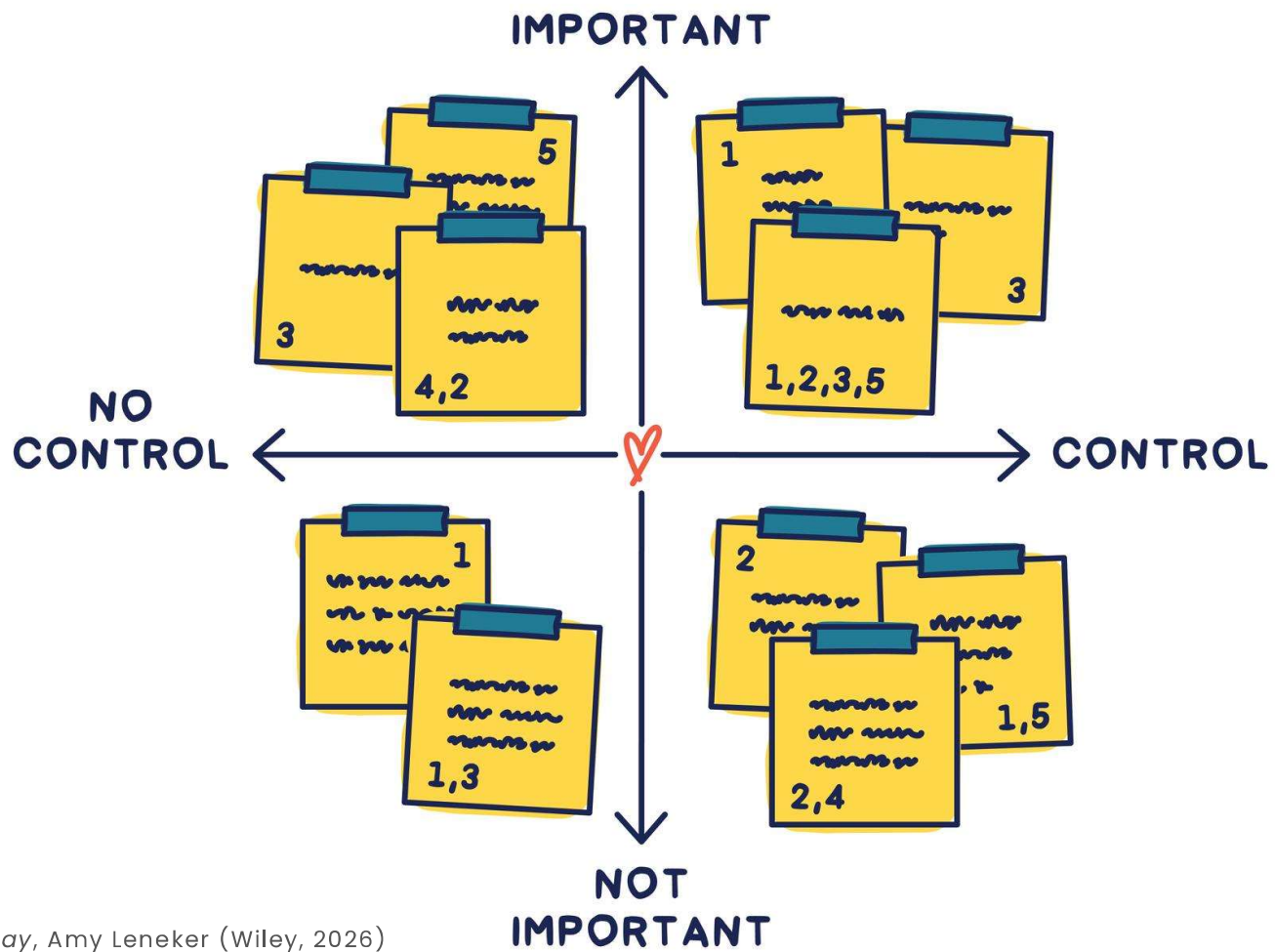
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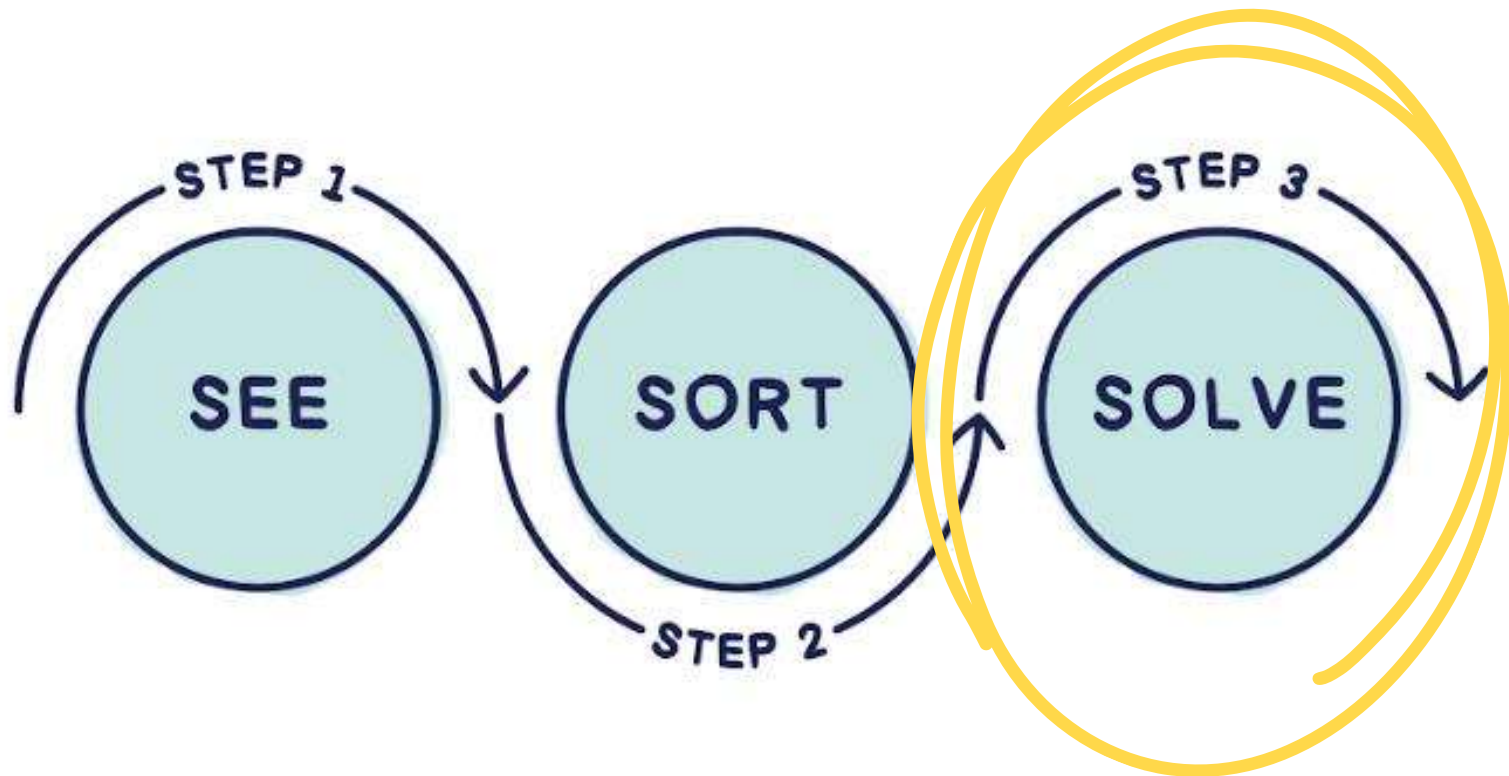
THE UN-STRESSING METHOD™



Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)



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Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)

Workplace Situations That Prevent Joy Once a Week or More



Source: *The State of Stress and Joy at Work*, Amy Leneker, 2026.

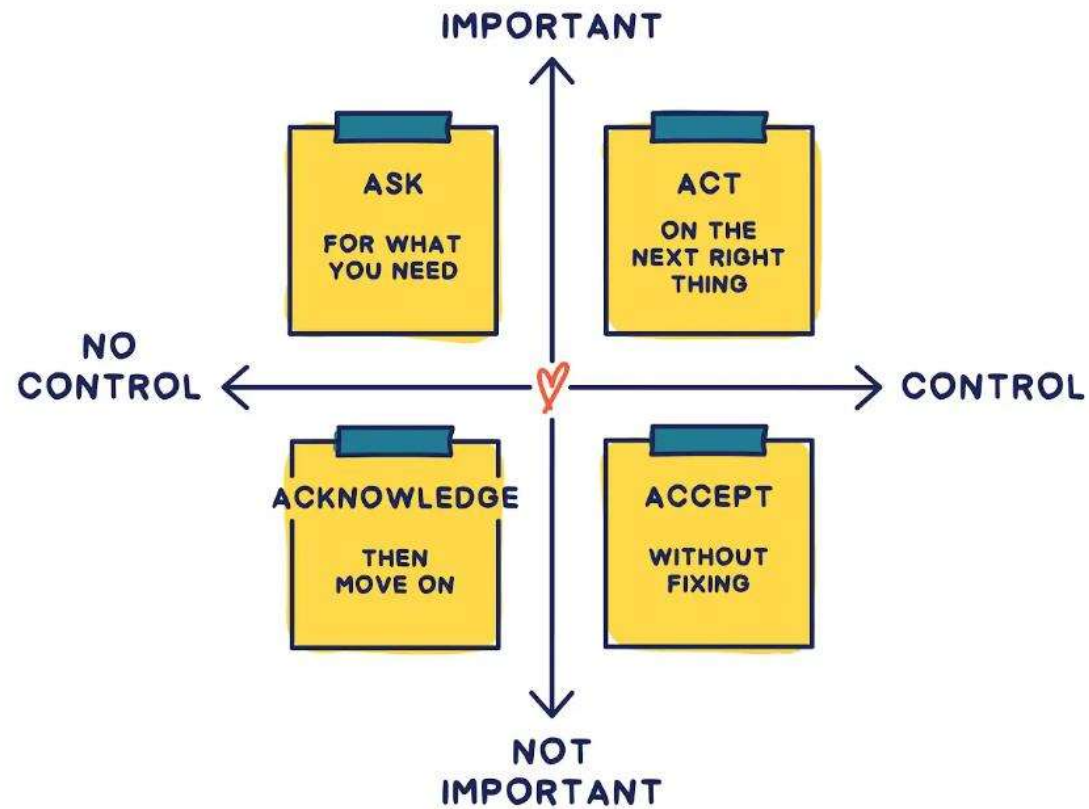




**75% of Working Americans:
Joy helps me cope with
work stress**



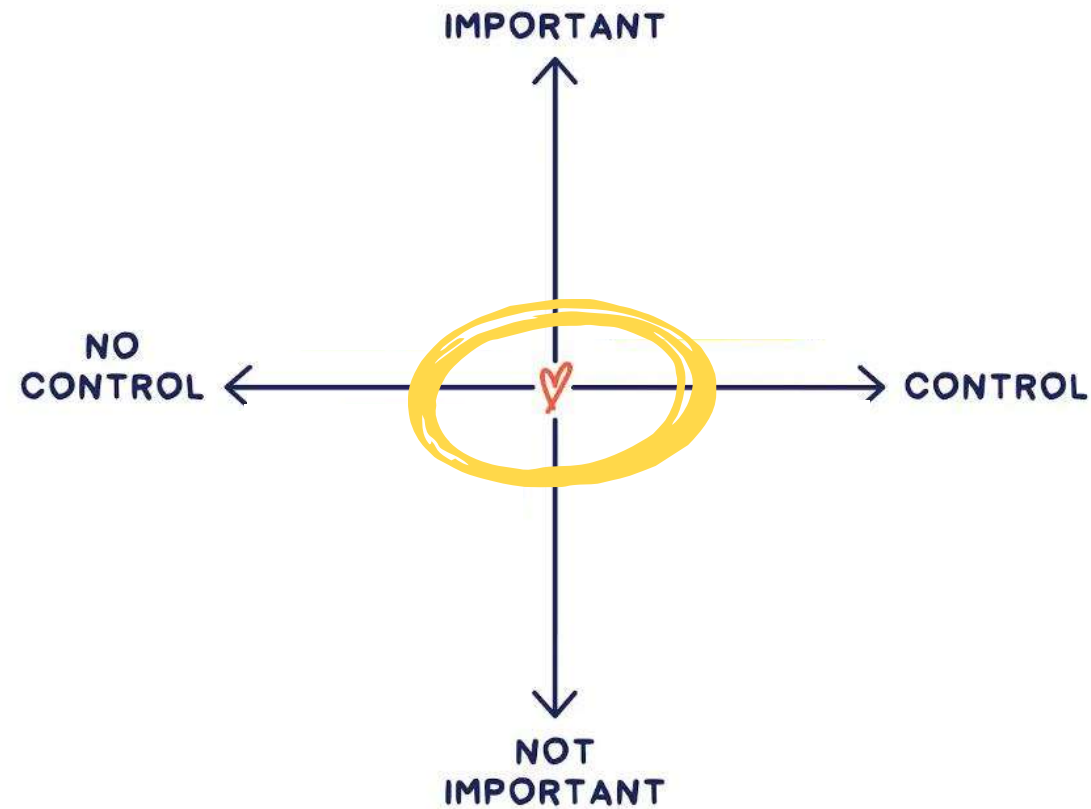
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Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)



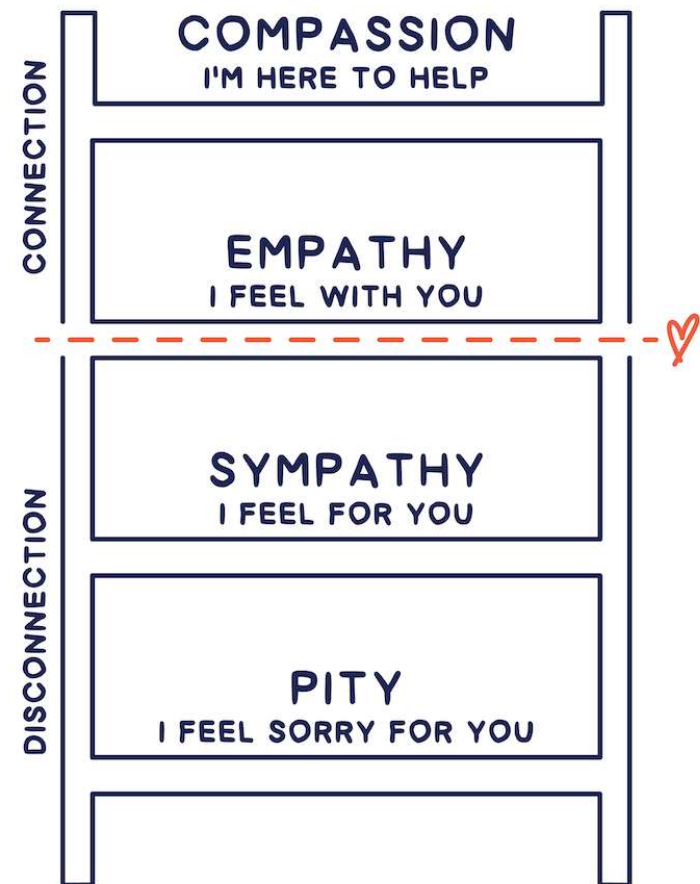
THE UN-STRESSING METHOD™



Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)



Ladder of Connection



Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)
Research from Harvard Business Review, [Rasmus Hougaard](#), [Jacqueline Carter](#) and [Marissa Afton](#), Dec. 2021





**Stress thrives in isolation.
Relief comes through connection.**

Source: *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker (Wiley, 2026)



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