



## The Big Blue Box Ltd

### Stress - Breaking the Cycle

Stress causes noticeable deterioration in performance, in judgement, in relationships, in flexibility and speed of response, in learning and objectivity and in awareness and care for oneself, errors and irritability increase and a cycle begins.

The honesty, objectivity and confidentiality of the coaching conversation can help to break the cycle.

#### The Background

B arrived a little late for the coaching session and we took a few moments to settle, catch up and recap on the previous conversations.

B had previously postponed this session due to a sudden urgent issue.

B was uncomfortable sitting still and he had to stand up and walk around the room. He explained that he had been suffering from back pain for a few weeks.

#### The Process

B began:

*'I'm grappling with a longstanding people and leadership performance problem in one of my teams, it doesn't seem to be getting better ...I may have to make a decision.'*

*'How can I manipulate things? I'm spending a lot of my time there supporting (the regional manager), he's not that bad but he even said to me on more than one occasion "Perhaps I should think about my own position here?"'*

*I don't really know what to do... I'm feeling very frustrated.'*

We examined the situation with a longer historical perspective. B was encouraged to look back and compare his current performance with his own approach of a year ago.

*'Oh gosh, it was very different, for example a year ago I had the year plan agreed already – we haven't even started working on the plan for next year yet!'*

*I wasn't head down in the detail like I am now, I was managing the team and delegated the planning to them.*

*I was ahead of my boss, now I'm playing catch up.'*

Further questioning drew from him several other comparisons. B could begin to see how he was exhibiting very typical behaviours of someone who is stressed.

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He was:

- clearly not planning and his time horizons had reduced from years and months to days and hours.
- his interpersonal and rational behaviours had deteriorated
- his trust of his colleagues had reduced
- he was not communicating

### **The Outcomes**

This session had given B justification to stop and reflect.

His own self assessment, shared experience from the coach and some challenging questioning enabled B to see how stress had changed his performance.

He saw clearly how his habitual, unconscious style of leadership had come back into precedence:

*'Oh yes I'm a real procrastinator, I don't make decisions and I want to do the best for people! ...*

*I can see what I've been doing over this last period... I need to get back to making those decisions, delegating...'*

*'It's not good!'*

We made a plan, after which B noticed:

*'Oh! My back is feeling a bit better!'*