

The Yerkes-Dodson Curve



The Yerkes-Dodson Curve explains the relationship between how much stress or pressure we feel toward a task, and how well we perform when we execute that task.

The basic idea is that as mental arousal increases, the ability to form a habit or perform a task well also increases. It gives us sufficient motivation. However, too much arousal will cause the task to induce stress, anxiety, burnout, and ultimately, poor performance. The converse is also true: tasks that are too easy bore us. We become unmotivated, and our performance dips.

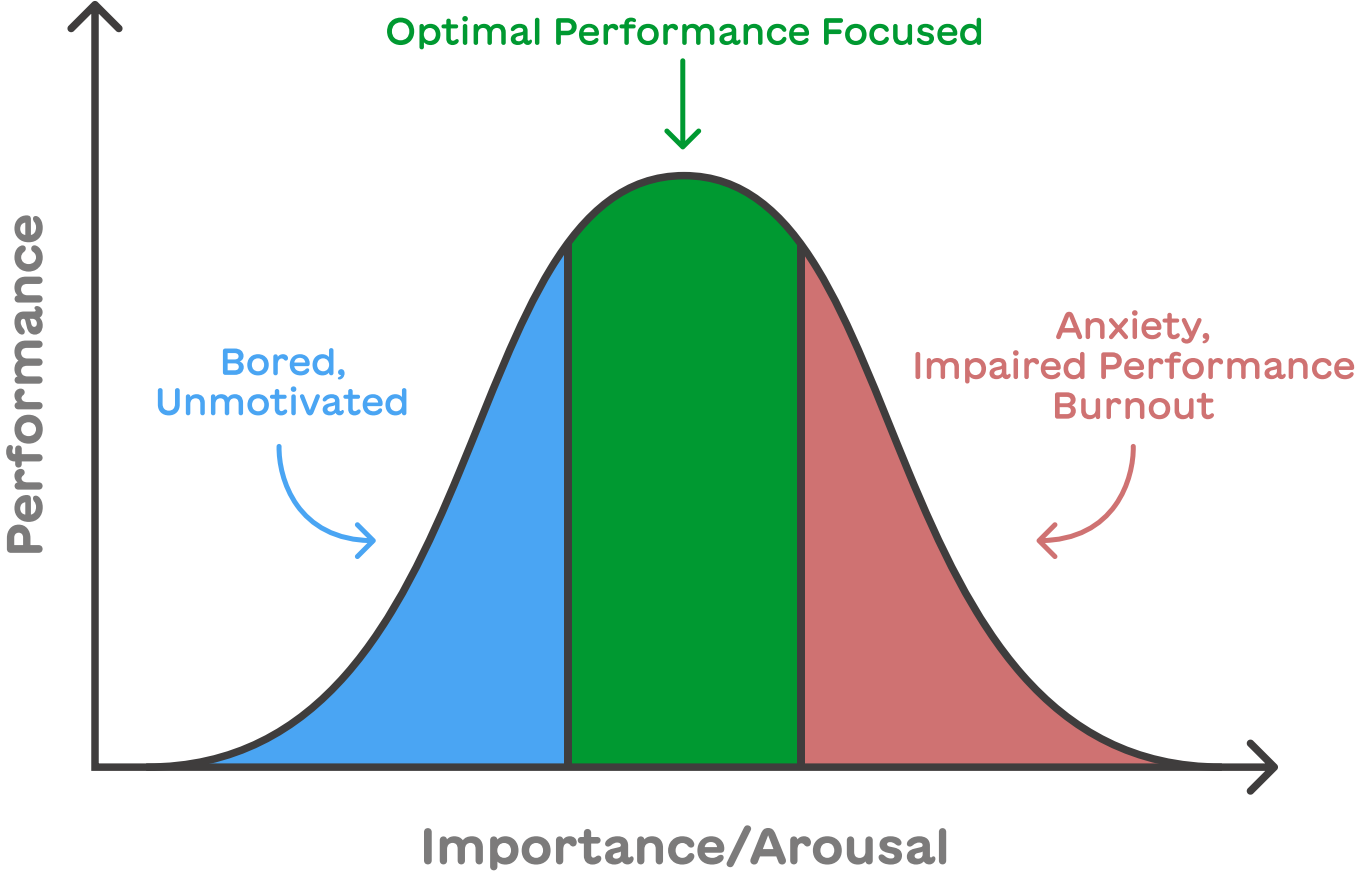
Thus, there is an optimal level of arousal where we perform at our best. This will be different for every person. We can use the visual of the Yerkes-Dodson Curve to help assign ourselves tasks that generate the right amount of arousal for optimal performance.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Identify a task you'd like to accomplish or a habit you'd like to build. Let's use studying for an exam or writing an important paper as an example.
2. Use the Yerkes-Dodson Curve to assess how important the exam/paper is to you. Does it feel too easy or boring? Overwhelming and difficult? Just right? Mark the x-axis in accordance with your assessment. If it's more important, mark farther along the x-axis. If it's less important, mark closer to the y-axis.
3. Next, consider the areas on the curve that your mark corresponds to:
 - a. If your mark lands beneath the **Blue** - you're probably not motivated by studying/writing. Could be any reason, which is okay. Ask yourself, what can you add to the task to arouse your mind a bit more? Can you reframe the task into something interesting? Offer yourself a reward?
 - b. **Green** - Great! Your exam/paper is a task you're motivated to work on, and you're likely to do it well.
 - c. **Red** - Your exam/paper is overwhelming and inducing too much anxiety. If studying/writing feels like too large of a task, consider breaking it up into smaller chunks. Mark these smaller tasks by level of importance/arousal on the x-axis again.

Do the smaller chunks feel less overwhelming? i.e. are they landing beneath the green area? If so, you've successfully created steps that will help you accomplish a task that once felt too difficult! If they land in the blue, you may be chunking up your studying/writing too much. If your smaller chunks land beneath the red again, try chunking these pieces out further and repeating this step. No task is too small!





Cognitive Behavioral Immersion™ Tools

The Yerkes-Dodson Curve

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NOTES:

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