



LEAD NETWORK

NEXTGEN
CHAPTER

How to manage stress

Michelle Stead



At the end of 2021, the LEAD Network NextGen team ran a #Resilience Learning Journey where we explored ways to protect our wellbeing and improve our ability to bounce back. As part of this journey, we asked one of our NextGens, **Michelle Stead**, National Account Manager at **Kellogg Company** to share her experiences and tips on managing stress.

Michelle enjoys exercising, exploring new countries and spending time with friends, family and colleagues. She's a big believer in trying new things, challenging herself and looking for opportunities to grow, learn & have fun!

Tell me a bit about yourself: what you do at work and who you are as a person.

I am National Account Manager at Kellogg Company. Essentially it is working in the sales team, working with our retailers to ensure they've got the right Kelloggs' product and range; And encouraging them to buy more, supporting them in portfolio management – helping them choose the right brands to sell to their customers. Before Kellogg, I worked in the industry, but from an agency perspective. So now it's quite interesting to come in and work directly for a supplier.

I got into the corporate world a little later than some of my peers. After University, I went traveling for two years around Australia and Asia. And then it got to the point where I was, "right, time to come home, Michelle, and start building your career!"



Travel is still a big passion of mine. I will travel within the UK or to another country to learn about another culture when I can. I am a keen gym-goer. I've just started cross-fit. The gym is one of my big methods of controlling stress pre and post-work and just my release.

Why does NextGen resonate with you?

Normally we as NextGens learn from the people who have been in the industry for a long time and have a lot of experience. But I love the idea of educating them from NextGen's perspective about how to empower NextGens because they have got gaps in terms of how to approach NextGens. If we learn from each other, we will move forward collaboratively. The idea of influencing them and working with them to get to a point where it works for all of us excites me. It's pretty rewarding to be part of that NextGen Voice.

What is causing most of your stress at work?

For both in & out of work - it's overthinking. In every scenario – it's overthinking. Was this the best way? Was this done correctly? I am doing it the right way, or do "they" think it's the right way? It creates momentum and stress.

When I look at all of the stress indicators and boil it down to the root cause – it's me overthinking and internalizing.

How do you handle stress?

There are two ways I see I try to alleviate the stress; one of them is self-talk. I put away my laptop and say: "Right, Michelle, let's look at the bigger picture, let's rationalize the goal and prioritize the steps to it. I'm sure you can do it". The other is speaking to my peers. I am lucky in terms of my peer group. I feel I can talk to them off-the-records. I can say, " Hey, I've got this and this situation." More often than not, they will have been through something similar, or we can talk it through. And I feel a million times better right after. And it's great for stopping overthinking. You quickly realize everyone has been through it, everyone is doing similar things, and you feel you can deal with it. So my recipe is - trusting in yourself and supporting yourself, and talking to people around you.

What else do you do post-work to bounce back?

Exercise is one – it gets me going in the morning. And in the evening – it's meditation and journaling. Having that quiet space to lose the thoughts, wind down. It's great people are more open to that now, and it massively helps.

So you have nicely laid out what we as NextGens can do to bounce back better. What about Managers and Leaders: how can they help us?

It has started to happen more recently at Kellogg's because of the pandemic. More leaders have begun to show the feelings and emotions they go through. And I know it can be difficult for some of the more senior leaders out there because they have been seen as great business leaders, really strong, really powerful. However, when they show their human side, they are more vulnerable and share their experiences. It makes us NextGens see that it's quite normal to have worries, concerns, and stresses. It makes us easier to open up and creates a safe space.

Who is an awesome NextGen leader for you, and what he/she has done that feels right to you?

A senior leader within our business organised a session where we could all share our limiting beliefs. He started the session by sharing his and how that makes him feel – this then created a safe space for me to feel comfortable sharing mine and opened up the conversation for the rest of our team. As a result of this session, I now feel much more comfortable to open up when I have doubts about something and feel comfortable to raise this with the Senior Lead without fear of judgement.

Great example, Michelle. What about line managers? What can they do to support NextGens?

My line manager is really good at it. He identified that myself and peers didn't always feel comfortable speaking up & feeding back in large forums with more experienced colleagues so created smaller Booth Sessions to allow us all to feel comfortable in getting our point across or asking questions that we may not have raised if we didn't have this more personal, safe space.

What is THE one piece of advice you'd give to NextGens when they are feeling stressed

Every individual is different. NextGens pay more attention to that; they know, "this is me. This is how I work". For NextGens – understand what works for you. Gym and Meditation work for me. Figure out what works for you. And have the confidence to talk and say they – it's not a weakness, but a sign of emotional intelligence, consciousness, and awareness.

Check out our [webinar](#) or tune in to the [podcast](#) for insights from our authentic guests and speakers on becoming more #Resilient.

Join the LEAD Network NextGen Chapter

We are a dynamic new Chapter, representing the industry leaders of tomorrow. We want to empower NextGens to grow their careers, and to connect and share experiences along the way, for example through our #LearningJourneys events. We'd love you to be a part of it. Join our [community](#) to stay tuned!

About LEAD Network

LEAD Network Europe is a non-profit and volunteer-led organisation whose mission is to attract, retain, and advance women in the consumer products and retail sector in Europe through education, leadership, and business development. The LEAD Network is run by and for its members, women and men, and we value every individual for their unique perspective. With a primary focus on promoting gender equality the organisation strives for the advancement of women of every race, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, educational background, national origin, religion, physical ability and lifestyle. Its vision is of a fair, diverse and vibrant industry where everyone can thrive. A diverse workforce where both men and women are enabled to contribute their full potential and lead their organisations to the next level of value creation. LEAD Network accounts for 13,000+ members – both women and men – from 81 countries.

For more information, please visit www.lead-eu.net