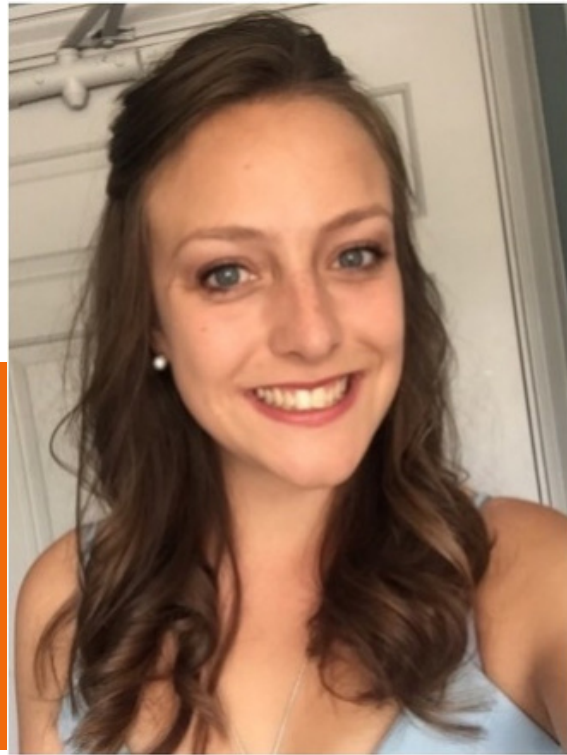




LEAD NETWORK  
**NEXTGEN**  
CHAPTER



# How to manage stress

Laura Coggins

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, **Laura Coggins**, Import/Export Team Leader for UK and Western Europe at **Kimberly-Clark**.

Laura enjoys exercising to relieve stress, is a big advocate of flexibility in the workplace and enabling people to reach their personal potential to achieve as a team.

**You are highly engaged at NextGen Initiative, so I don't have to tell you much about why we are doing this. So let's start at what's causing most of your stress at work?**

I guess it's my team. I have 12 people on the team now, and because there is a lot of external stress at the moment in logistics, their stress gets onto me.

**Tell me more: where does the external stress come from?**

The whole situation in operations is quite challenging, with ocean freight being a mess and Brexit doubling the number of customs. Sometimes you have to rebook a container five times and have the customers call you and ask how you can speed up the process, and all the customers need it urgently. So that creates a lot of pressure on the team.



### **Wow, that sounds tough. How do you handle it, then?**

So what I did was a few things: Holding mental health days and just talking about the stress as a group and accepting it's normal and we are all going through it. I also tell my team to log off at five and not log on over the weekend.

### **And what are you doing to help yourself bounce back?**

I try to take my advice. I make plans for the evening, so there is a reason to log off at 5 (laughing). And I also go jogging. It was hard for me with the lockdown in London when I couldn't go running in the evening. I told my manager about it, and she suggested I go running at lunch. That helped a lot.

### **It looks like you have a good manager. Have you also seen some bad managerial behavior that doesn't help NextGens?**

Yeah, I have a good one. But I have seen NextGens from another company (audit & consulting) that gets very tight deadlines. She can get a request at 5 pm to be completed by noon tomorrow, and because she doesn't have kids, she will go, "ok, I guess I have to do it overnight." For now, she needs this job to get into a specific sector, but it's unlikely she will stay long with the company.

### **Ok, and now some good examples. Who was that very inspiring leader for you, and what did he/she do?**

Jane Pope, I was reporting to her after my graduate scheme. She would give me a lot of responsibility early in my career, let me decide the path I wanted to take with my suppliers, move me up the ranks, and give me opportunities even though I was pretty young.

### **That sounds awesome! And is there a senior leader you look at and say, "yeah, this is an inspiring one"?**

Yes, I have someone in mind. She was my mentor during my grad scheme. The special thing about her was that even though she was quite high in the hierarchy. She was approachable – I could ask for her advice when it was important to me when deciding upon my first permanent role. And she would not let all the stress she was handling because of her position come in during our discussions.

## And if we look across your organization, what is that one thing that's missing, but would help you as NextGen bounce back better?

It's the recognition that it is tough, at the moment; beyond my team and for the business as such. People are just exhausted and need to hear that it's ok they feel this way. I guess it needs to come as a message from senior leadership.

## What is the one piece of advice you would give to NextGens who are finding it hard to bounce back now?

Create a network. It's easier for me to handle stress because I talk to many people and people know me. We can be open and support each other.

Another piece is about your career. You don't need to run hard after your next role. You won't be able to run so quickly all your life, so take care of yourself and feel ok to stay and do the job you do now if you have other priorities in your personal life. That's what I did. I decided not to go for my next role before my sabbatical next November and do well at what I do now.

## Hey cool, where is your sabbatical going to take you?

Central America, Mexico, Guatemala, and downwards

\*\*\*\*\*

Check out our [webinars](#) 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 14,000+ members – both women and men – from 81 countries.

For more information, please visit [www.lead-eu.net](http://www.lead-eu.net)