Catastrophe Scale

One key solution to stress management is keeping things in perspective.

Think about the one thing which really seems to be causing your distress, like having too many things to do at one time, the bank account scraping bottom or having failed at something.

On a scale of 1 to 100 where 100 is the worst thing which could be happening to you, 50 is medium bad, and 10 is a little bad, how bad is it that this thing has happened or will be happening tomorrow? (Remember the scale only goes to 100!)

Rate how bad the problem is on this scale (mentally record or write down a number).

|----------|----------|----------|----------|
0 10 50 90 100
Not bad A little bad Medium bad Very bad The worst

|- 100 World war; death of a loved one; life-threatening illness; permanent paralysis.

|- 90 You have a serious car accident; house burns down; family member very ill; you lose your job; you break your leg ; house burgled.

|- 50 You break an antique vase; you have a fight with a friend.

|- 10 You have a flat tyre.

|- 0

Above is a list of catastrophes rated by severity. While you might not agree with all the ratings you'll probably agree with the ones listed above and just below ninety.

Using this objective scale, where would you now rate the problem which seems to cause you so much stress? Place crosses on the scale where you generally place it and where you now rate it.

A scale such as this enables people to see how, under stress, they blow the stressful event out of proportion and make it worse than it is. We often react to minor stressors as strongly as, if not more than, to more serious events. If you did, join the club. It's human nature.

However, repeated high intensity reactions can harm our physical and mental health. Try to develop, over time, the capacity to detach and look at your problems "from 30,000 feet." Appropriate humour under stress is regarded as one of the most mature and effective coping strategies of all because it involves this oftentimes demanding ability to detach and take life less seriously.