Twitter Thread by Dr Emma Kavanagh

Dr Emma Kavanagh
@EmmaLK

Another day, limped through. What I'm noticing recently is that I'm getting so frustrated w/ myself. My brain works properly for a v small window of time & then I just can't seem to think. I forget my kids names (although honestly, that's nothing new). By afternoon I'm useless!

I'm beating myself up for not doing my job properly, for not homeschooling properly (*laughs hysterically*). I am SO clumsy! Okay fine, I'm always clumsy. But this is worse. I'm so damn distractable. And let's be honest, there are so many distractions around.

I want to be myself. I want to focus and feel like I can recite the alphabet without wandering off halfway through because I've spotted something shiny.

HOWEVER (you knew this was coming, didn't you?), psychological science, as it so often does, has something to offer. We have been living under conditions of extreme stress for a long, LONG time. We are officially chronically stressed.

And chronic stress is not overly kind to our brains. It uses an awful lot if our resources, to begin with. We are currently more focused on basic survival than on writing the great British novel (sorry, @fpathak!). Creativity relies on our prefrontal cortex. Our prefrontal cortex

However, does not like stress. At all. We CAN be creative when we are under pressure, but it will take a whole hell of a lot more cognitive energy than it would normally. So likely you will be MUCH more tired in the aftermath.

Chronic stress does a couple of other things too. It compromises the way in which your working memory works, so you find it harder to recall things. We aren't as good at making decisions, struggling to balance rewards against risks.

There is also research indicating that it affects our spatial awareness. Hence the clumsy. Although based on this logic, my dog must be insanely stressed.

So, in summation, what I am saying is, I need to lower my expectations of myself and remember that currently my brain is not my brain, rather my brain under an awful lot of stress. And the fact that I mostly remember my kids names, is, by that measure, pretty damn impressive.