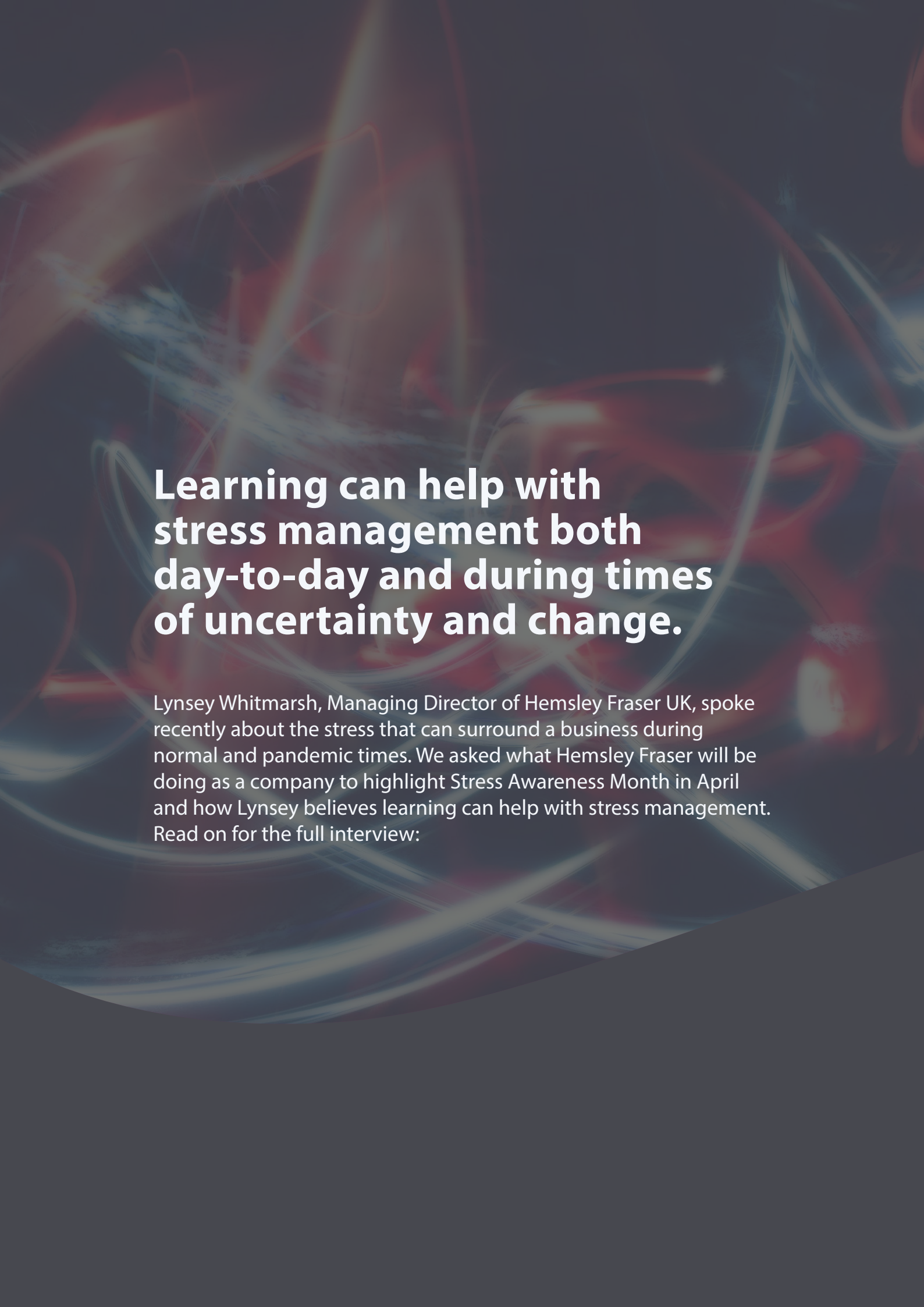


How learning can help with **stress management**

By Lynsey Whitmarsh, Managing Director – UK



Learning can help with stress management both day-to-day and during times of uncertainty and change.

Lynsey Whitmarsh, Managing Director of Hemsley Fraser UK, spoke recently about the stress that can surround a business during normal and pandemic times. We asked what Hemsley Fraser will be doing as a company to highlight Stress Awareness Month in April and how Lynsey believes learning can help with stress management. Read on for the full interview:



What challenges have you encountered as a business both in general, and as a result of the pandemic?

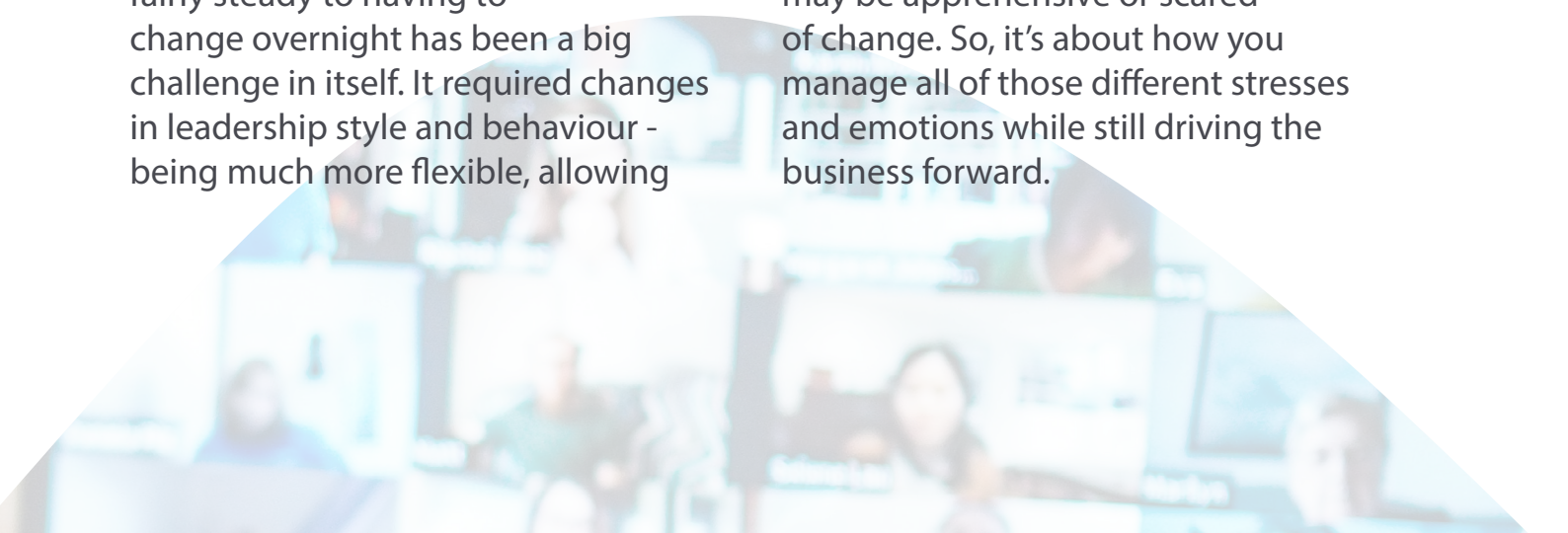
Some of our biggest challenges, like most organisations, centre around how we transform our business in a way that takes everybody along the journey while also ensuring it happens with enough pace to meet the demands of the market. You need to manage this sort of change programme very carefully as it is critical to strike the right balance.

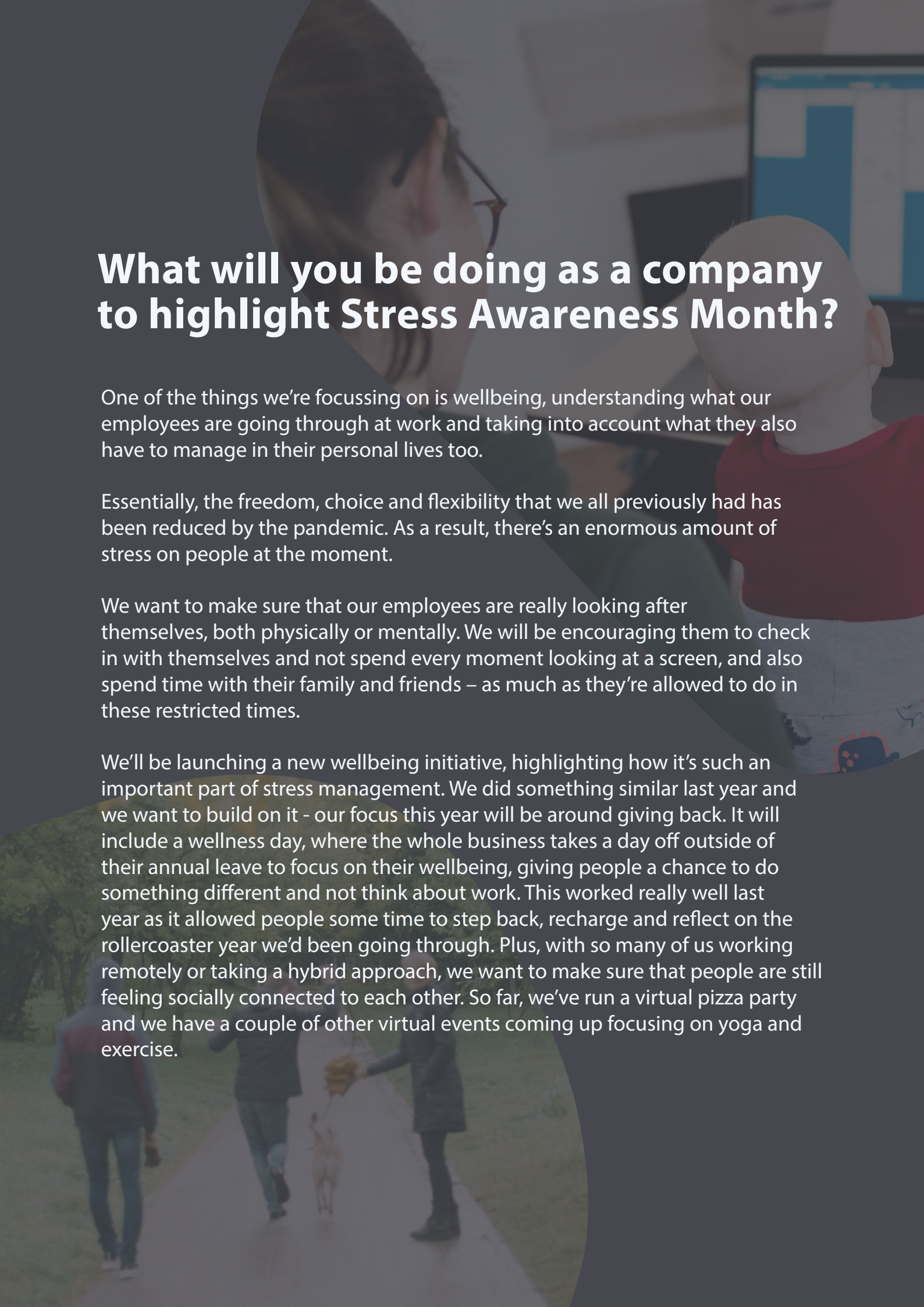
Since the pandemic, our change programme or transformation period has accelerated dramatically. We've had to move quickly as a business - 80% of our business was face-to-face learning and the remaining 20% digital and virtual learning. Overnight, that had to flip to 100% digital and virtual, and we've been unable to return to face-to-face as yet.

Going from a pace of change that was fairly steady to having to change overnight has been a big challenge in itself. It required changes in leadership style and behaviour - being much more flexible, allowing

people to connect with the business and focus on what we need to do. It wasn't about maintaining a steady ship any more - this was about really driving the business through something quickly to enable us to survive.

Looking at the Kübler-Ross Change Curve Model, many people will be affected when an organisation goes through a transformational change. The different levels of stress each individual will go through will depend on where they are within that change curve. As a leader, it's important to understand that you will have people across this whole curve. You need to figure out how you're going to engage with each person, helping them fly the flag for the business and move forward. At the same time, you need to be mindful that some may be apprehensive or scared of change. So, it's about how you manage all of those different stresses and emotions while still driving the business forward.





What will you be doing as a company to highlight Stress Awareness Month?

One of the things we're focussing on is wellbeing, understanding what our employees are going through at work and taking into account what they also have to manage in their personal lives too.

Essentially, the freedom, choice and flexibility that we all previously had has been reduced by the pandemic. As a result, there's an enormous amount of stress on people at the moment.

We want to make sure that our employees are really looking after themselves, both physically or mentally. We will be encouraging them to check in with themselves and not spend every moment looking at a screen, and also spend time with their family and friends – as much as they're allowed to do in these restricted times.

We'll be launching a new wellbeing initiative, highlighting how it's such an important part of stress management. We did something similar last year and we want to build on it - our focus this year will be around giving back. It will include a wellness day, where the whole business takes a day off outside of their annual leave to focus on their wellbeing, giving people a chance to do something different and not think about work. This worked really well last year as it allowed people some time to step back, recharge and reflect on the rollercoaster year we'd been going through. Plus, with so many of us working remotely or taking a hybrid approach, we want to make sure that people are still feeling socially connected to each other. So far, we've run a virtual pizza party and we have a couple of other virtual events coming up focusing on yoga and exercise.

Do you believe that learning can help with stress management?

Learning is a vital part of managing stress, because once you understand more about yourself and what your stress triggers are, you can understand and develop your own coping mechanisms - including key tools and techniques.

Some people might be feeling overwhelmed at the number of emails filling their inbox, for example, or they may not be able to concentrate at certain points of the day. Both of these situations may trigger stress - we can all respond differently to certain situations.

When you identify one of your stress triggers, you need to be able to stop

and think, "OK, what do I need to put in place to make sure I'm protecting myself, and ensure a productive outcome to the situation?"

Learning how to communicate and speak openly and honestly with others around you is also important. Sometimes, people might not realise how much work is on your plate, and all you can see is a mountain in front of you. If you can find a way to communicate this, you will find that others can and will want to support you. Plus, you'll be in a better position to speak out about what you can and can't take on going forwards. These core skills will help manage stress in the long run.

CONTACT US

UK

+44 345 071 2801

hemsleyfraser.com/en-gb

enquiries@hemsleyfraser.co.uk

US

+1 888-559-0074

hemsleyfraser.com

inquiries@hemsleyfraser.com

GERMANY

+49 69 9203 75680

hemsleyfraser.de

info@hemsleyfraser.de

CANADA

+1 250 999 2656

hemsleyfraser.com/en-ca

inquiries@hemsleyfraser.ca