

- ① Stress is a positive force that improves our performance. When we are crossing a busy road we are likely to feel slightly stressed, alert, vigilant and aware of the danger and hence we cross in safety. If we were not stressed by the traffic we might be a danger to ourselves. Stress is rather like an electric current, it gives us energy but if the current is turned up too high it can produce unpleasant effects and cause a deterioration in performance.
- ② The Yerkes Dodson Law states that a certain level of stimulation or stress improves performance, but performance begins to deteriorate if stress is excessive. For example, if you are asked to separate coloured counters into different bottles under the following conditions your performance would vary as indicated on the graph.

Condition A – with no time limit or incentive.

Condition B – a financial reward related to speed and accuracy.

Condition C – a punishment of an electric shock if performance is poor.

Performance is likely to be best, or at its optimal level, under condition B. Under condition A there is likely not to be enough stimulation to improve performance and under condition . . . the threat of the shock puts a great deal of stress on the person causing them to get nervous and fumble. In our lives we all have to identify our optimal level of stress and be aware of being pushed past it so that our everyday performance does not deteriorate.

