

## Logic Under Pressure

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Over the entire rap industry, it may be difficult to find a charting rapper that prioritizes his personal connection to his fans as much as Maryland rapper Logic, according to publications like Forbes. His motto is “peace, love and positivity”, and he has gone door to door with this message to his fans — even literally. His best charted song to date, “1-800-273-5255”, featuring Alessia Cara and Khalid cathartically and openly talks about topics like depression and suicide to reach his listeners with their own mental health struggles. This empathy is the source of Logic’s appeal. He is an MC with the ability to introspect, and this introspection reveals a great emotional awareness in his songs that his fans relate with. Logic raps from the depths of understanding: not just of himself, but of the struggles that he and his fans have in common. In the process of his rise in the last few years, the work he has put out serves as an analogue for hip-hop’s power to reach the most psychologically authentic places. One of his most memorable tracks in this regard stretches back to 2015 — the title track of his debut album, “Under Pressure”.

“Under Pressure” is about exactly what it sounds like: it is a record built from the various pressures in his life. The condition of stress is a byproduct of situations of obligation and responsibility, which is universal especially in young adults. People under stress crave to be understood, to feel supported, to feel related to — support groups, for example, are based on this principle. In “Under Pressure”, Logic explored this stress artistically with his lyricism and music, in a way that reflects his personal experience with stress and how he dealt with it. For listeners like me, this song is therapeutic in the common ground between what Logic portrays from his own life and what we experience in ours. The art in “Under Pressure” paints a picture of the reality of pressure, and understanding Logic’s perspective articulates the conversation about the mental health danger it represents.

Clocking in at nine minutes, Logic’s “Under Pressure” is divided into two sections, each with a different tone and attitude. The first section is more intense and emphasises a more confident, ‘pumped’ outlook. The charged instrumental consists of a sharp, aggressive drum break playing over heavy sub-bass and a looped vocal sample; according to a study in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, bass-heavy instrumentals like this make listeners feel powerful, and this song fits the pattern.

Enthusiasm and intensity is related to an attitude of confidence in the face of pressure, and in this way the first section can motivate listeners by inducing self-efficacy in them. The second section, in contrast, reflects Logic's more vulnerable persona in handling this pressure — this manifests in the softer guitar sample and synth pad over the same beat, which provokes more mindful, passive emotions. This vulnerability leads to greater empathy between the listener and Logic, especially as the more vulnerable perspective isn't easy to talk about. Logic's lower pitch here compared to the first section's more emphatic tone contributes to the same outcome. Here, he uses the emotional contagion power of the voice to create emotional context, in a similar manner to the instrumentals. This contrast between these sections is essential to this song's emotional capacity, because it demonstrates both attitudes side by side, assertiveness and vulnerability coexisting in spite of each other. This makes the song even more inspiring, almost like Logic is showing confidence in spite of a deeper emotional cost.

Logic's personal pronoun usage also serves to linguistically emphasise the two tones of the song. According to a study on self-focused attention's role in depression, the relative use of objective, passive pronouns like "me" or possessive pronouns like "my" could be a precursor to depressive symptoms in an individual. Unmanaged and unmitigated stress can be a pathway to depression, so this trait is fairly significant in qualitatively understanding how stress affects a person. Logic's (perhaps unintentional) incorporation of that in his lyrics works with the contrasting attitudes in "Under Pressure". In the first section, the content is oriented around active phrases like "I'm the king", "I thank God" or "when I murder the rhyme", which use the pronoun "I" to denote activity and in the process a mentally strong outlook. But in the second section, there is a more noticeable use of "me" for personas that are undergoing emotional stress, like his sister, indicating a passive vulnerability to things happening to her. Similarly, while Logic has already reflected an active perspective for himself, in this section his use of "my" increases to illustrate the various influences or responsibilities he has to keep track of. The pronoun usage trend in this song has the potential to influence cognitive behaviour at a subconscious level, as listeners may habitually make their thoughts more active-oriented. In the process, it would establish a sense of control, a much needed coping mechanism for anyone under pressure.

Another special feature of Logic's exploration of pressure in this track is his ability to portray entirely different perspectives to his own by including the voices of his family. Doing this reflects a more universal psychosocial understanding of personal stress and how others close to him experience it, as well as the effect that their stress has on him.

Logic outlines these perspectives either through including voicemails directly or by paraphrasing the content of the voicemails in the form of a verse — like his sister, for example. In his sister’s case, he details a different world of stress to his own, alluding to family issues (“it feel like my children hate me”), trauma from sexual violence (“vivid memories of the man who raped me”) and failed, abusive relationships (“that relationship been to hell and back”). These triggers illustrate the fragility of mental health where severe stress like this is involved, and the fact that she is reaching out to Logic demonstrates the healing ability of interpersonal connection at these times.

But what is striking about Logic’s sister’s case is that another source of stress seems to be Logic’s own unavailability when she needs him. With phrases like “you’re busy, I get you”, it seems that she is being polite and giving him space. But at the same time, it is clear that Logic is close enough to be her support system from “insist you call me back cause I miss you” and “Promise you won’t forget me, that you’ll always be with me”, among others. This is a rather moving conflict between the facade to not attract attention, and the reality that she truly needs her brother’s attention to cope. Logic artfully encapsulates this conflict with one phrase: “I wish you well, well I wish you would call”. The wordplay is a near reversal of the words, which has a linguistic effect of backtracking on her own thoughts and broaching the facade to her real feelings of loneliness and pain. This facade is another relatable concept for a listener, as many people under stress adopt that as a protective mechanism against disappointment and further stress. At a larger scale, the fact that Logic included this perspective at all highlights how these pressures in his sister’s life impact him. His separation from his sister had gotten to the point that he couldn’t pick up the phone when she needed him, and this significantly represents a change in priorities that led to the neglect of those closest to him. As it added to his guilt, he felt even more pressure to preserve his relationships with his family. Meanwhile, more extreme stress passes on to him because he cares about his sister and all she went through. This transferred effect of stress is **emotional contagion** in practice — someone else’s stress worries you, and it adds to your own pressure to support them. This kind of contagion is a phenomenon that anyone with Logic’s Section 8 background has to face, because of the ubiquitous adversity in their community and their reliance on an interpersonal support system to deal with it.

To further develop this song’s meaningful exposé on pressure, Logic also referenced the mechanisms people use to cope with stress, in both his own and the listener’s communities. One of these is drug use, alleviating the stress with temporary relief. This continues to be a threat to the fragile mental state of those under excessive stress,

which Logic recognises and incorporates in this song with contextual references. “Buy it, break it, roll it, light it, smoke it, inhale it” reworks a line from Daft Punk’s Technologic (a pop culture phenomenon) to represent casual marijuana use that many artists include in their process to operate under creative pressures, and others in a broader sense use to relieve themselves in a time of great stress. Meanwhile, Logic also talks about his proximity to ‘hard drug’ usage in his life through his sister and father. His sister, as a result of Logic’s unavailability, turned “to the pills” to help her cope and make her “gone”, slang for a state of intoxication where she’s ‘gone’ from her stressed baseline. These pills were revealed to be “e” or ecstasy when Logic responds by telling her to “stop resorting to the vowel” — a clever double entendre to draw attention the message that she shouldn’t have used drugs. Similarly, his father’s former drug addiction features in “two years clean, no longer a fiend [a frequent user]” — Logic’s father used ‘crack’ cocaine in Logic’s childhood, and Logic raps about it multiple times on the album as part of a damaging environment that contributed to Logic’s own stress growing up. His father on a voicemail even talks about “an AA meeting” where his friend was “celebrating four years”. This refers to Alcoholics Anonymous, an example of the interpersonal support group mechanism that many former users employ to cope with the pressure to quit substances like alcohol. Four years clean is a significant achievement in the face of this pressure that deserves celebration. The drug discussion in this song clarifies how stress may become a pathway to drugs, and Logic's own experiences around it delivers context for many people that are susceptible to the temptation.

Another therapeutic construct Logic incorporates is more psychosocial than physiological — religion. The effect of religion is twofold: firstly, it provides a support system of guidance through the moral content in their scriptures, which help people navigate their pressures; and secondly, religion gives someone faith in the future, which is important because of the close relationship between stress and the future focused emotion worry. Logic peppers his song with his faith through statements like “I thank God, I thank God” — his Genius annotation reveals that this was a general communication of gratitude for “blessing” him, another signal of his relationship with God. Biblical allusions like “even Jesus had haters” and “tell them jealous Judases who this is” draw on the scripture with modern language to communicate his message to a modern audience: don’t worry about detractors and be confident. Even his sister’s representation, an extreme case of stress, shows a reliance on spirituality to guide her, through “I been searching for God” and “I can feel the devil around me as they all applaud”. These particular lines could actually apply to both Logic and his sister. Logic is hyper-aware of the pressures of his environment, having found success and alongside it various temptations (all the work of

the devil) that could take it away. But in his sister's case, she sees all the troubles in her life as the devil's presence, while everyone around her is oblivious to her hardship — meanwhile, she “searches for God” to reflect that her faith in higher meaning is one of the only comforts she has, like it is for many sufferers of acute pressure.

Finally, the coping mechanism in Logic's own life goes not around, but through the stress — workaholicism. Logic puts his all into following his musical passion, and this drive permeates the song's attitude. The first section is full of this dedication. He describes being “motivated, under-educated and hated/But finally getting cake” to frame the pressures he had to work through in order to be successful and get “cake” (money). When he says “this is everything I ever wanted, I can't pass it up”, he is acknowledging that his dreams of success and a better life have finally materialised — and in the face of this, he is just motivated to work harder and not “pass it up” because of hesitation, rather breaking through the barrier of pressure by succeeding more. He even posits the same to his audience (“hold on to your dream, don't ever give it up”) in defiance to the pressure of adversity. This is a comparatively healthy mechanism to deal with stress, as it results in greater self-image benefit for the person; it demonstrates how he took the pressures of his life and found a productive outlet for them, creating something bigger in the process. However, the flipside of this mechanism is shown from the first line of the hook: “work so f\*\*kin much my greatest fear is that imma die alone”. His drive to cope with stress is often at the expense of his personal attachments, a theme throughout this song. He tackles this flipside in the second section especially, where he talks about how his “time been inconsistent” leading him to neglect important moments with his family because he was just too busy. He even uses the idea of writing a letter through this song (“this letter to the ones that I love”), demonstrating just how much he has missed for the sake of his music. There is often a trade-off between success and family, and that imbalance is the pressure that Logic is the most familiar with as an artist: “This is everything I love, this is everything I need, never sacrifice this feeling even though my heart it bleed”.

Logic's best content always seems to reflect his most authentic self. He is a man made of the experiences he had, the environments he has been in and the pressures he had to overcome — and on top of that, he is a rapper who can frame those attributes to entrance the listener. “Under Pressure” is one of those songs; it presents a multifaceted version of Logic, a Logic that his listeners can trust, and as a result a Logic that has the artistic power to open conversations like these about how the pressures of his world affects his mental state. Through the art of hip-hop, he can build his world for the

audience to comprehend, and furthermore he opens the dialogue about stress and mental health for his listeners. He is a representative of the best impact that hip-hop can have as a medium — a tool of empathy, influence and mental change. All that is left for society is to acknowledge it and validate it. Hopefully, the information in this piece pushes the boundary in that direction.