

What is Stress?

- Stress is a feeling of being overwhelmed and under a lot of pressure. You may get feelings like everything is getting too much and that you cannot cope.
- You will often feel this way when under a lot of pressure, whether this is pressure you have put upon yourself, or is in response to your environment.
- Stress is a completely normal and healthy feeling to experience, and with the right strategies it can be managed.

Symptoms of Stress:

Identifying the symptoms of stress will help you realise that you are under stress. If you feel that these symptoms are present for a longer period of time and is affecting your health and wellbeing, it is recommended that you talk to your GP. Your GP may then recommend you engage in a talking therapy to help you develop skills to manage your stress.

There are two main types of symptoms you will experience when stressed:

Physiological:

(How stress impacts the body)

- Tiredness and fatigue
- Heart palpitations/a rapid heart rate
- Dry mouth
- Tensed muscles
- Fidgeting
- Sleep difficulties
- Changes in appetite
- Sweating



What causes stress?

- Work/school/unemployment
- Relationships (e.g. arguments, family crises, illness, bereavement)
- Financial difficulties
- Anything that you find difficult
- Unexpected events that challenge you

Psychological:

(How stress impacts the mind)

- Anger and/or impatience
- Anxiety and negative automatic thoughts
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Difficulties in concentration
- Lowered productivity
- Irritability and restlessness
- Mood swings
- Low self-esteem



How can you manage stress?

1. Identify the cause of your problem.

2. Review your life:

- Are there too many things present in your life that challenge you?
- Is there a way of cutting out some stressors?
- Could you seek for help?
- Could you delegate some tasks to anyone?
- Could you incorporate activities into your lifestyle that make you feel good?
- Could you take on some hobbies?
- Could prioritising certain things help you feel less stressed?
- In the past, what has helped you when you were under stress?



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Exercise

- Exercising regularly can be really helpful for your mindset and can boost your mood. Through regular exercise, you can reduce your body's natural stress hormones (including adrenaline and cortisol).

Have A balanced diet

- In the same way that exercise can help reduce adrenaline and cortisol levels, so can eating the right foods. This can include fruits, nuts, legumes and vegetables. Ensuring to stay hydrated is also important.

Sleep

- Getting at least 7-8 hours of sleep at night is essential for supporting our physical and emotional health. For adults, less than 7 hours sleep on a regular basis has been linked to poor health, including weight gain, high blood pressure and depression.

Self-Care

- Make sure you take some time for yourself, such as by reading a book, practising your hobbies or going for a walk in nature.

Engage in a talking therapy

- By externalising your worries in a talking therapy with an experienced mental health professional, you help to build up your tolerance to stress by developing the skills to process these thoughts in a more rational and logical way. This will help you to feel less overwhelmed by stressful situations and feelings.

Stress Management Practices



Mindfulness

Mindfulness can have many benefits when it comes to stress management through teaching your brain skills of concentration and relaxation. It reduces activity in the amygdala (a part of the brain which activates the stress response) when faced with a stressful stimuli.



Yoga

Practising yoga can enhance your mood and overall wellbeing.



Deep Breathing

Deep, deliberate and controlled breathing can help you to regulate stress as it is soothing and relaxing. It can help to distract from negative thoughts as when you are concentrating on your breathing you are not focussing on your stress/worries.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique involves going through each muscle group, tensing them individually, and then moving onto the next. This method goes through the body to progressively relax all the muscles, putting you in a calm state.

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