STRESS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Psychology Associates

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a feeling of pressure that can occur in situations that we don't feel we can manage or control.

It is a natural feeing and in moderation can be helpful when well managed.. But, it can be problematic if it impacts how you live day-to-day.

WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

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

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

We all feel stressed at times. However if it becomes too intense or regular, it can be damaging to our wellbeing.

Stress affects everyone diffierently however the following are common symptoms to look out for in yourself and others:

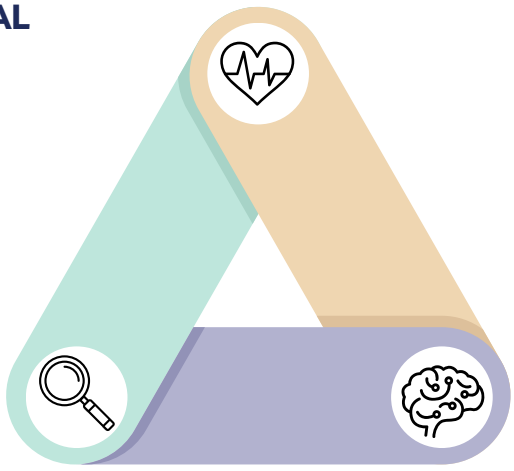
POTENTIAL PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Headaches
- Tiredness/fatigue
- Racing heartbeat
- Dry mouth
- Sweating
- Upset stomach

These symptoms can feed off of, and cause, one another which can make you feel even worse. For example, constant worrying may lead to sleep difficulties.

POTENTIAL BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS

- Fidgeting
- Irritability
- Sleep difficulties
- Changes to eating habits/diet changes



POTENTIAL MENTAL SYMPTOMS

- Anxiety or automatic negative thoughts
- Difficulties concentrating
- Low self-esteem
- Mood swings
- Feeling overwhelmed

Identifying the cause/triggers of your stress is a really helpful first step in tackling it. This can be caused by one main issue or a build-up of many small issues. Taking a moment to reflect whenever you notice feelings of stress can help you to pinpoint where they come from and allow you to think about what might help resolve the root causes.

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TIPS TO BUILD YOUR RESILIENCE AGAINST STRESS

Exercise

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

A balance diet

- Aiming to eat a diet rich in vitamins and minerals including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and omega-3 fatty acids can help support your body.
- Ensuring to drink enough water is also key.

Sleep

Aiming to get at least 7-8 hours of restful sleep is essential for our physical and emotional health and can help us feel more prepared to deal with stress.

Self-Care

- Ensure to make time for yourself to do things that you enjoy and that relax you.
- Remember to be kind and patient with yourself as this will help you avoid falling into a negative headspace.

Talking therapy

Speaking to a skilled and qualified professional can help to build up your tolerance to stress by developing skills to process these thoughts in a more rational and logical way.

HEALTHY STRESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

One step at a time

Focus on what you can control and then start off small by tackling little steps at a time to help you build in confidence and motivation and to make the bigger tasks less intimidating.

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 focusing on your stresses and worries.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique involves going through each muscle group, tensing them individually, then moving onto the next. This method goes through the body to progressively relieve tension and relax your muscles.

Seeking support

Having a good support network can help make stress feel easier to manage. This support could include friends, family, colleagues, your tutors, your peers or a therapist.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a simple tool that can be used at any time to help reduce stress by bringing your attention to the present moment.

For example, whilst walking, try focusing on the feeling of your body moving to notice things like the feeling of your feet against the ground or the wind against your skin.

Try to avoid unhealthy coping strategies such as relying on alcohol, smoking or caffeine as these could create different problems.