

Stress Management

Description

What is Stress?

Stress is a response to an event or situation which can be either positive or negative. It is quite common and can occur as a result of relationships, work, or study commitments. It is a way for us to know that something in our life is causing us concern and is affecting how we are thinking and feeling.

What is Stress Management?

Managing stress is about making a plan to be able to cope effectively with daily pressures. The ultimate goal is to strike a balance between life, work, relationships, relaxation and fun. By doing this you are more resilient to deal with daily stressors and meet these challenges head on.

How Can I Manage Stress?

- **Know your stress triggers** This may be something internal (e.g. thoughts, feelings, memories of past events, or worrying about future events) or external (e.g. relationship conflict, new job or moving house).
- **Recognise the signs your body gives you when you're feeling stressed** This may include headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, chest pain/palpitations, stomach upset, dizziness, skin irritation, and/or hypersensitivity.
- **Manage time well** Keep a diary with things to do for the week. Be assertive and learn to say "no".
- **Set small, manageable, and achievable goals** Take your future a week at a time, or even a day at a time. Decide on a few clear objectives for the short-term and work at achieving these.
- **Solve problems that can be solved and accept things you can't change** Some events are unavoidable, (e.g. death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession). In such cases we can only manage the stress. Therefore use the techniques suggested to help cope with the stress. However some problems that are causing us stress are solvable, (e.g. relationship conflict, and work related issues). In such cases we should look for possible solutions and solve the problem by facing it head on to relieve the stress.
- **Reframe problems** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. For example, rather than becoming frustrated about being stuck in a traffic jam see it as an opportunity to sing at the top of your lungs your favourite tunes (this is a good opportunity to

have some time to yourself and relax)

- **Reduce worrying** Worry never stops problems from happening. Work on what you can control.
- **Postpone major life changes** If you are feeling stressed it is probably a good idea to try and avoid or postpone major life changes (e.g. moving house, changing jobs). Leave them to a time when you're feeling better.
- **Do things you enjoy** Making time to do activities that bring you pleasure and relaxation (e.g. listening to music, gardening, reading, exercising, going out with your friends).
- **Keep a healthy lifestyle** (i.e. regularly exercise, eat healthy, sleep regularly and drink plenty of water) Physical exercise such as walking, swimming, dancing, playing golf, or going to the gym can help relieve the tension in your muscles and relax your mind. Eating well helps nourish our bodies to better able us to cope with stress. Sleeping regularly fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally. Drink lots of water.
- **Reduce stimulants** Reduce your intake of caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and other drugs which actually contribute to the physical stress response in your body.
- **Make time to relax** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Seek help** Talking to a friend, doctor, counsellor, psychologist, or someone else you trust, can help relieve your stress. Asking for help and support at home, at work or in your other activities can also reduce stress.

Other Techniques to Manage Stress

- **Practice regular slow and deep breathing**

Have you noticed that you're breathing too fast? Stress can affect your heart rate and breathing patterns. Practice this exercise three to four times a day when you're feeling stressed so that you can use this as a short-term coping strategy.

1. Breathe in through your nose and out slowly through your mouth.
2. Breathe in for three seconds and out for three seconds really filling the lungs as you inhale and emptying the lungs as you exhale.

- **Practice progressive muscle relaxation**

This is where you systematically contract and relax all the muscles in your body to induce a strong feeling of physical relaxation. It is generally best to see your psychologist for initial training

and instruction in this area.

- **Learn to use visualisation and imagery to relax**

Bring up pleasant images (e.g. scenery or pleasant memories) in your mind. You may want to use soothing music with this. This will help calm you when stressed.

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