



Health & Wellbeing

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Stress Management

Stress - a word I'm sure is one that is familiar to us all. It is something that we have all experienced to a lesser or greater degree at different points in our life - but what is stress?

Stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure.

Stress is our body's response to pressure. Many different situations or life events can cause stress. It is often triggered when we experience something new, unexpected or that threatens our sense of self, or when we feel we have little control over a situation.

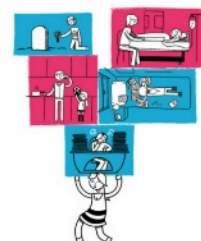
We all deal with stress differently. Our ability to cope can depend on our genetics, early life events, personality and social and economic circumstances.

When we encounter stress, our body produces stress hormones that trigger a fight or flight response and activate our immune system. This helps us respond quickly to dangerous situations.

Sometimes, this stress response can be useful: it can help us push through fear or pain so we can run a marathon or deliver a speech, for example. Our stress hormones will usually go back to normal quickly once the stressful event is over, and there won't be any lasting effects.

However, too much stress can cause negative effects. It can leave us in a permanent stage of fight or flight, leaving us overwhelmed or unable to cope. Long term, this can affect our physical and mental health.

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/stress?gclid=Cj0KCQjw9YWDBhDyARIsADt6sGYKWD9tdi2afJfnsQw77fluhFGXO-FRUURtm2XPpZVh-QPUIaTg_-AaAm8eEALw_wcB



What are the signs of stress?

How you might feel

You may feel:

- anxious
- afraid
- angry or aggressive
- sad
- irritable
- frustrated
- depressed.

These feelings can sometimes produce physical symptoms, making you feel even worse.

How you might behave

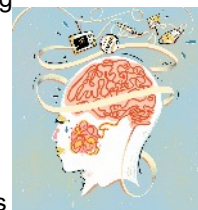
You may behave differently if you're stressed. You may:

- withdraw from other people or snap at them
- be indecisive or inflexible
- be tearful
- have problems getting to sleep or staying asleep
- experience sexual problems
- smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs more than usual.

How your body might react

If you're stressed, you may experience:

- headaches
- nausea
- indigestion
- shallow breathing or hyperventilating
- sweating
- heart palpitations
- aches and pains.



We all deal with stress in different ways and find different situations stressful, however, if we are aware of what stress is, how it feels and how it looks we can learn how to manage and deal with it when it appears.

Ready, Set, Go!

If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, don't be afraid to seek professional help. It doesn't mean you're a failure. It's important to get help as soon as possible so you can start to feel better.

www.2aspire.org.uk
01522 555795

How can we help to manage our own stress and the stress our children experience?



How can you help yourself?

1. Recognise when stress is a problem

Don't ignore physical warning signs such as tense muscles, tiredness, headaches or migraines. Think about what's causing your stress. Sort them into issues with a practical solution, things that will get better with time and things you can't do anything about. Take control by taking small steps towards the things you can improve. Make a plan to address the things that you can. This might involve setting yourself realistic expectations and prioritising essential commitments. If you feel overwhelmed, ask for help and say no to things you can't take on.

2. Review your lifestyle

Are you taking on too much? Could you hand over some things to someone else? Can you do things in a more leisurely way? You may need to prioritise things and reorganise your life so you're not trying to do everything at once.

3. Build supportive relationships

Find close friends or family who can offer help and practical advice can support you in managing stress. Joining a club or a course can help to expand your social network and encourage you to do something different. Activities like volunteering can change your perspective and have a beneficial impact on your mood.

4. Eat healthily

A healthy diet can improve your mood. Getting enough nutrients (including essential vitamins and minerals) and water can help your mental well-being.

5. Be aware of your smoking and drinking

Cut down or cut out smoking and drinking if you can. They may seem to reduce tension but actually make problems worse. Alcohol and caffeine can increase feelings of anxiety.

6. Exercise

Physical exercise can help manage the effects of stress by producing endorphins that boost your mood. Even a little bit of physical activity can make a difference, such as walking for 15-20 minutes three times a week.

7. Take time out

Take time to relax and practice self-care, where you do positive things for yourself. Striking a balance between responsibility to others and responsibility to yourself is vital in reducing stress levels.

8. Be mindful

Mindfulness meditation can be practiced anywhere at any time. Research has suggested it can be helpful for managing and reducing the effect of stress and anxiety.

9. Get some restful sleep

If you're having difficulty sleeping, you can try to reduce the amount of caffeine you consume and avoid too much screen time before bed. Write down a to do list for the next day to help you prioritise, but make sure you put it aside before bed.

10. Don't be too hard on yourself

Try to keep things in perspective and don't be too hard on yourself. Look for things in your life that are positive and write down things that make you feel grateful.

Helping children to manage stress

1. Encourage your child to face his/her fears, not run away from them.
2. Tell your child that it is okay to be imperfect.
3. Focus on the positives.
4. Schedule relaxing activities.
5. Model approach behaviour, self-care, and positive thinking.
6. Reward your child's brave behaviours.
7. Encourage good sleep hygiene.
8. Encourage your child to express his/her anxiety.
9. Help your child to problem solve.
10. Stay calm.
11. Practice relaxation exercises with your child.
12. Never give up.

For more information on each of these take a look at the link below:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/dont-worry-mom/201302/12-tips-reduce-your-childs-stress-and-anxiety>



When things get a little too overwhelming, we all need some comfort and reassurance to know that everything will be OK. This pocketful of comfort has been developed to combat stress caused by anxiety, whether that's the first few weeks of school, at the end of a tough day at work, or when someone's away and you need to let them know that everything will be just fine. At times, we all need something to ground us and remind us that there are people thinking of us and that they're with you every step of the way. It might just help to untangle the chaotic head-spin which anxiety and stress can cause and allow you a moment of calm to regain your perspective. Inside the drawstring cotton pouch you will find a rainbow of ribbons to brighten your day. There are eight ribbons in total, finished with a natural wooden bead. Reach in the pouch and find a wooden bead, pull to reveal the words of comfort written on each ribbon, take a breath and reset your mind. (Not on the High Street)



The Coping Skills Board Game - Children will learn to deal with feelings, adjust attitudes, discover choices, accept imperfections, and more. Real-life situations are challenging and fun. (Child Therapy Toys GB)



Don't worry, these friendly fellows don't mind a little squeeze, give yours a squish today! There's something very satisfying about feeling something squishy which is why everyone young and old will love having a grab at these Squeezey Heads. Grip them firmly and watch their eyes bulge in delight! Each little face is personalised with a fun, friendly expression which is sure to win anyone over. (Baker Ross)



"The greatest weapon against stress is the ability to choose one thought over another."

William James