

# Feeling Stressed?

Pay attention to your warning signs

## Stress

In small doses, stress is normal and an everyday part of life, helping you to focus and get things done. But when it starts to overwhelm you, it can damage your health and wellbeing, your relationships and the quality of your life, and may lead to more serious problems. Protect yourself by recognising your symptoms.

## Symptoms may include feeling

- Overwhelmed by difficulties
- Unable to cope and keep control
- Unable to focus and remember
- Exhausted, difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches, rapid heart beat, upset stomach, tension
- A loss of appetite or overeating
- Under pressure
- Short tempered, irritable, anxious

## Causes of stress

Stress is most often caused by situations involving change when you feel you are not in control. These may be positive or negative changes, but are likely to be making more demands on you than usual. Ongoing stress may be caused by long-term difficulties, such as financial issues, unemployment, and relationship challenges.

## Top tips

- **Avoid causes of stress**  
Clear your mental and physical clutter, reduce what you know stresses you, and avoid competing with others.
- **Remove yourself**  
If you can't remove the stress, remove yourself, and find quiet time.
- **Manage your time**  
Do only one thing at a time, and focus on a single priority.
- **Learn to say 'no'**  
Be more assertive and realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- **Accept what you cannot change**  
Focus on what you can control.
- **Learn to relax**  
Relaxation is the natural answer to stress. Make the time.
- **Talk to someone**  
Talking with someone and supporting others is much better than being isolated

## Further help

If you are not coping and you feel your stress is overwhelming you; get help from a professional, such as a doctor, counsellor, or phone a helpline.

## More on managing stress

### Avoid causes of stress

Think about what types of situations or people tend to make you feel stressed, and try to reduce how much you are exposed to them. For example, you may want to avoid crowded or loud spaces, or not spend too much time in the company of a particular person. You may feel that you are competing with others, and that is something you can control by being more accepting of what you have and who you are.

### If you can't remove the stress, remove yourself

You may have feelings of stress from being overwhelmed by too many problems and responsibilities. By taking some quiet time alone, you may be able to slow down racing thoughts, and get some perspective, finding calm and control.

### Manage your time

- It is okay to do nothing
- Your brain can only manage one task effectively at a time, so avoid trying to multi-task, which is inefficient. Set a priority task and try to complete it.
- Be realistic about how long it takes to do a task well and make sure you allocate enough time for all the activities that are important to you. Cut back on how much you try to do.

### Learn to be more assertive

Say 'no' when you cannot reasonably take on a task without increasing your stress level.

### Accept what you cannot change

You may cause yourself unnecessary stress by worrying about things that you cannot influence. Make a list of what is stressing you, and cross out those items that you cannot control. Prioritise and focus on what you can control.

### Learn to relax

Relaxation is the natural answer to stress, and where ongoing stress can be damaging to your mental and physical health, regular use of relaxation techniques can maintain and improve your health, and increase your personal coping resources. Techniques that work well include:

- Breathing exercises
- Meditation and guided visualisation
- Laughter
- Physical exercise (try to incorporate 30 minutes into your day)
- Keeping a journal
- Regular and healthy sleep patterns
- Practice of gratitude and optimism