

Stress Awareness



The word stress is usually used to describe the feelings that people experience when the demands made on them are greater than their ability to cope. At such times people can often feel overloaded, under tremendous pressure and very tense or emotional.

Stress affects everyone, young and old and is a completely normal reaction that all human beings will experience from time to time when faced with situations that they feel under pressure in.

Stress can be looked at in terms of external and internal stressors.

- External stressors are sources of stress that we are aware of around us, these can include traumas, life and/or work experiences or simply daily hassles.
- Internal stressors are the sources of stress that are inside us and are often the most common sources of stress. They are the thoughts and feelings that pop into your head and cause you to feel unease, these can include unrealistic expectations, uncertainties, low self-esteem and apprehensions.

Stress can manifest itself as many different symptoms, ranging from physical to psychological and behavioral, and people may experience these to varying degrees.

- Physical symptoms can include; increased heart rate, sweaty palms, muscle tension, sleep disturbance, fatigue, vomiting, change in breathing patterns, dry mouth, headaches, nausea or dizziness, indigestion or heartburn and sudden weight loss or gain.
- Psychological symptoms can include anxious thoughts, irritability, low self-esteem and confidence, inability to concentrate, feeling fearful, feeling unable to cope, difficulty making decisions, feeling negative and lack of interest in life, feeling alone, and loss of creativity, withdrawal, frustration and confusion.
- Behavioral symptoms can include altered sleep patterns, use of drugs or alcohol, changes in appetite, avoiding situations, changing habits, nail biting, teeth grinding, neglect of physical appearance, lack of communication, putting off difficult jobs and giving excuses.

If you can answer yes to 5 or more of these symptoms then you may be suffering with stress.

Obesity and Over-eating	Increased or excessive drinking of alcohol
Loss of appetite	If you smoke – you'll smoke more
Increased coffee consumption	Substance Abuse
Excessive/continued irritability with people	You can't make decisions, large or small.
Unable to concentrate	Increased and suppressed anger
Not be able to cope with life	Feeling out of control
Jump from one job to another without finishing things	
Excessive emotion & crying at small irritations	Lack of interest in anything other than work
Permanently tired even after sleep	Decreased sex drive / libido

Free Individual Stress Testing is available here: <http://www.stress.org.uk/individual-stress-test>

Getting Treatment:



Stress is not a medical diagnosis so there is no specific treatment for it. However, if you are finding it difficult to cope with things in your life and are experiencing some of the symptoms listed above, then there are treatments that could help; these include talking therapies, mindfulness, medication, alternative and complimentary therapies. To access most treatments the first thing to do is talk to your own GP or occupational health service particularly if your employer has an Employee Assistance Programme that you can use.

10 Step Stress Solution:

- ✓ Prioritise your health - Stress is a leading cause of poor health and it is up to you to reduce and, where possible, remove any stressors in your life.
- ✓ Get a good night's sleep - night-time anxiety grows in relation to the busyness of our days, but it is ok to have 6 hours quality sleep if that is what your body needs, don't stress because you are awake.
- ✓ Practice deep breathing - just by controlling your breath you are easily, effectively and efficiently able to change your state and how you are feeling.
- ✓ Stay hydrated - when you haven't drunk enough water your energy levels are lower and the more tired you feel.
- ✓ Eat for wellbeing - whilst it is not always possible to avoid the trials and tribulations of daily life, what we can change is how we react to them with a healthy diet
- ✓ Get moving to combat stress - your psychology affects your physiology and vice versa!
- ✓ Adopt a positive mindset – don't get caught in a trap of negative thinking.
- ✓ Master your time – good time management is essential if you are going to control your busy life.
- ✓ Do not be slave to technology – take a break from technology at least once a day.
- ✓ Learn to say 'no' - some stress is caused by agreeing to do something that at that particular time that you don't have the capacity for, learn to say no and not feel guilty.

Getting Support:



Anxiety UK Infoline: You can call our Infoline on 08444 775 774 between 9am-5.30pm, Monday-Friday (except bank holidays). Calls to this number will cost a maximum of 7 pence per minute to call, plus your telephone providers Access Charge. Calls from mobile phones may vary.

Mindfulness: <http://bemindful.co.uk>

Self Help Groups and Forums: <https://www.bigwhitewall.com>

Stress Management: <http://www.stress.org.uk>

Stress Busting: <http://www.stressbusting.co.uk>

Mind – Mental Health Charity: <http://www.mind.org.uk>