



STRESS MANAGEMENT

Sutton

What is Stress?

Stress is the way you feel when you're under too much pressure. A moderate amount of pressure can be positive, making us more alert, keeping us motivated and improving our performance. However, too much pressure, or prolonged pressure, can lead to stress. Stress is a well-known trigger for depression and anxiety and it can also affect your physical health. So it is important to identify the causes of stress in your life and try to minimise them.

Any sort of loss, from bereavement, divorce and separation to a child leaving home causes stress, as do long-term illness and disability. But things such as marriage, moving house, a new job and holidays have quite high stress ratings too. Work-related stress is the second biggest occupational health problem in the UK.

Stress management strategies

There may be lifestyle changes that you can make to reduce the stresses you experience. You may also develop skills and strategies for coping with stress, even if you can't change the situation itself. Here are some suggested strategies.

Get to know the triggers of your stress

For some people, the reasons for stress may be obvious. For others it may be less clear-cut. Keep a log during of your stress levels. See if you can identify a pattern - are there certain times of day that your stress levels are higher? Are there certain events? Avoid the triggers of the stress, or see if you can change your routine to accommodate the stressful events, such as leaving earlier or later to avoid rush-hour traffic?

Make time for yourself and look after yourself

Give yourself some breathing space. This may be scheduling an enjoyable activity on a regular basis. Ensure you have some quiet time, whether that is a long soak in the bath, a sports activity or a long walk. It is important to eat well. If you are feeling stressed, avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine. Taking exercise has been shown to reduce stress levels.

Relaxation

Simple relaxation tools, such as controlled breathing and relaxing imagery, can help reduce stress. These techniques may help to keep you calm, even when you are not stressed at the time. See www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/mental_health/coping_relaxation.shtml for information.

Take things one step at a time

We often become stressed when we feel like there is too much for us to cope with. If there are lots of things for you to do don't try to do them all at once. It may be helpful to write down all the things you need to do and then prioritise them. It may be that there is too much for you to do. If this is the case, accept offers of practical help, and don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel you need it.

When you are stressed you may feel some of the following things:

- Feeling irritable and agitated
- Feeling like you can't keep still-restless
- Feeling over sensitive to criticism
- Difficulty sleeping or waking up
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating
- Drinking and smoking more
- Experiencing digestions problems including constipation, diarrhoea and heart-burn
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Losing your appetite
- Experiencing chest pains
- Tension in your muscles leading to muscle pain
- Experiencing headaches
- Feeling dizzy
- Feeling tearful and weepy
- Experiencing pins and needles
- Experiencing excessive sweating



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Tackling work related stress

Talk to someone in or out of work that you trust about the things that are bothering you. You may find it useful to seek professional counselling (see services listed below).

If the stress is affecting your work try to talk with your supervisor or manager. If difficulties can't be resolved, talk to your personnel department, trade union representative or other relevant members of staff. Occupational Health departments may also be a useful point of contact. Be aware of the company's policies and procedures regarding harassment, bullying or racism.

Stress often arises from difficulties in relationships at work. Remember to treat colleagues and clients with the respect and consideration you would like from them, even if you are stressed. Work regular hours and take all the breaks and holidays you are entitled to. If things feel like they are getting too much, book a day off or a long weekend.

Useful sources of information and support

There is a lot of information about mental health available on the Internet and in books. Occasionally these are not from reliable sources and may provide mis-information. While service users and mental health professionals have recommended these websites, books and services, we cannot guarantee their quality nor can we take responsibility for the impact that the resources and services will have on you. The websites and books listed here are not an exhaustive list.

Websites

- www.nnt.nhs.uk/mh/content.asp?PageName=selfhelp
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=350§ionId=18115
- www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/577/
- www.stress.org.uk

Books

- The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook by M. Davis, E. Robbins-Eshelman, & M. McKay
- The Great Office Detox: Minimize Stress and Maximize Job Satisfaction by D. Walter
- Stress Management for Dummies (--for Dummies) by Allen Elkin
- Stress Relief and Relaxation Techniques (Healing Wisdom) by Judith Lazarus

Local non-NHS services Your GP will also be able to advise you of local services and how to contact them.

<p>Sutton Counselling Service</p> <p>Sutton Counselling aims to offer affordable long term and brief psychodynamic counselling to adults (18+) in Sutton.</p> <p>Address 21a Cheam Road, Sutton, SM1 1SN Telephone 020 8661 7869 Email suttoncounselling@btinternet.com</p>	<p>Open Door Counselling</p> <p>Open Door Counselling offers Psychodynamic therapy for young people and adults. For more information and to access the service, please call.</p> <p>Address 1 Grove Cottage Grove Park High Street, Carshalton, SM53BB Telephone 020 8770 4388 Email karen-opendoor@fsmail.net</p>
<p>Private Therapy</p> <p>If you are interested in seeking private therapy it is recommended that you find a therapist through one of these professional bodies:</p> <p>British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_therapist/index.html British Psychological Society (BPS) www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/ British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP) www.babcp.com/</p>	<p>Other Useful Numbers</p> <p>SaneLine: 0845 767 8000 (Monday- Sunday 1-11pm) Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90 (everyday, 24 hours) NHS Direct: 0845 46467 (every day, 24 hours) Mental Health Helpline: 0500 639 000</p>