

Understanding anxiety, stress and management techniques



Parental Engagement - 12th May 2021



Objective

- To identify the signs of stress that lead to anxiety and identify techniques that can be used to help individuals to self-manage their own mental health, as well as those around them.





Symptoms of Stress

- Stress affects us all in some form..
- Some stress is ok – indeed, it can help you cope under pressure, but too much stress can make you sick, both physically and mentally (anxious).



Stress



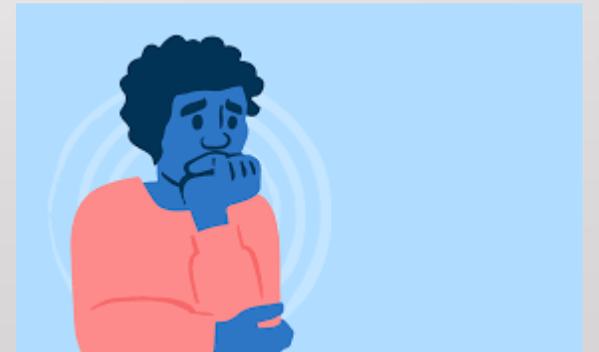
- Stress is the body's reaction to a challenging situation. When you feel threatened, chemical reactions occur in your body to prevent injury. This is called a 'fight' or 'flight' response.





Emotional Symptoms

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless and depressed
- Avoiding others



Physical Symptoms



- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhoea, constipation and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Excess sweating
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth





Cognitive Symptoms

- Constant worrying
- Racing thoughts
- Forgetfulness and disorganisation
- Inability to focus
- Poor judgement
- Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side

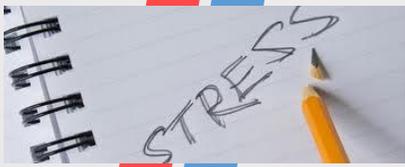




Behavioural Symptoms

- Changes in appetite - either not eating or eating too much.
- Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities.
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs or cigarettes.
- Exhibiting more nervous behaviour, such as nail biting, fidgeting and pacing.
- Anger, losing your temper.





Things that Influence your Stress Tolerance Level



- **Your support network** – A strong network of supportive friends and family members.
- **Your sense of control** – If you have confidence in yourself and your ability to influence events.
- **Your attitude and outlook** – Stress-hardy people have an optimistic attitude. They tend to embrace challenges, have a strong sense of humour, accept that change is a part of life.
- **Your ability to deal with your emotions** – You're extremely vulnerable to stress if you don't know how to calm and soothe yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, or afraid.
- **Your knowledge and preparation** – The more you know about a stressful situation, including how long it will last and what to expect, the easier it is to cope.

Consequences of Long Term Stress



- Mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and personality disorders
- Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks and stroke
- Sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sexual desire in both men and women
- Skin and hair problems, such as acne, psoriasis, eczema and permanent hair loss



Learn How to Relax



- You can't completely eliminate stress from your life, but you can control how much it affects you.
- Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response.
- When practiced regularly, these activities lead to a reduction in your everyday stress levels and a boost in your feelings of joy and serenity.



Stress management strategy #1: Avoid unnecessary stress



- **Learn how to say “no”** – Know your limits and stick to them.
- **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- **Take control of your environment** – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic's got you tense, take a longer but less-travelled route.
- **Avoid hot-button topics** – Avoid discussing issues with people that repeatedly cause stress.
- **Organise your to-do list** – Prioritise your duties and daily tasks with real intent and execute them with as much enthusiasm as you can muster. Avoid procrastination.

Stress management strategy #2: Alter the situation



- If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it.
- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behaviour, be willing to do the same.
- **Be more assertive.** Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them.
- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused.

Stress management strategy #3: Adapt to the stressor



- If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.
- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run.
- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection.
- **Focus on the positive.** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life.

Stress management strategy #4: Accept the things you can't change



- Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession.
- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behaviour of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside.** As the saying goes, "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth.
- **Share your feelings.** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments.



Stress management strategy #5: Make time for fun and relaxation

- Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors when they inevitably come.
- Healthy ways to relax and recharge**

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| Go for a walk. | Spend time in nature. |
| Call a good friend. | Sweat out tension with a good workout. |
| Write in your journal. | Take a long bath. |
| Light scented candles. | Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea. |
| Play with a pet. | Work in your garden. |
| Get a massage. | Curl up with a good book. |
| Listen to music. | Watch a comedy. |



Stress management strategy #6: Adopt a healthy lifestyle



- You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.
- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Resources for Parents



Free booklet - *The Anxious Child*

A booklet for parents and carers wanting to know more about anxiety in children and young people

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/anxious_child.pdf

Free booklet – *From our partners at CASY counselling (Anxiety and Resilience)*

Attached PDF

Who can help?

If you or someone you know is stressed, go and seek medical advice (see your doctor).



NHS Every Mind Matters

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

This website offers a range of mental health advice as well as an interactive quiz that's designed to help you feel more in control of your emotional/mental wellbeing.

Kooth

www.kooth.com

This site contains free mental health support with their online counsellors. It is a free sign up service that has resources such as discussion boards, helpful tips/articles written by young people and an option for them to write mood journals & set positive goals.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

A mental health charity for children & young people that has a wide variety of helpful videos, games and articles. They have a free telephone helpline (0800 1111) and message boards where young people are encouraged to share experiences and support each other in a positive way.

Papyrus

www.papyrus-uk.org

A mental health charity dedicated to preventing young suicide by providing support and resources for young people and their families. They have their "Hopeline" (Call: 0800 068 4141 / Text: 078600 39967 / Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org) for children and young people who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or for anyone concerned for a young person that could be thinking about suicide.

Calm Harm

An app to help teenagers manage/resist the urge to self harm by providing a wide range of distraction techniques.

Combined Minds

This app contains psycho-education for parents, families & friends with practical advice on how to provide mental health support to children & young people.

Cove

A relaxing musical app that helps people try to capture their mood and express it by making music within the program and capturing it in a journal format. Note: you do not need to know how to play an instrument to use this app.

Stem4

www.stem4.org.uk

A charity that promotes positive mental health in teenagers as well as encouraging them to build resilience and manage difficult emotions via online resources.

YoungMinds

www.youngminds.org.uk

A mental health charity that gives help and advice for young people, as well as encouraging them to get involved in fundraising/campaigning to raise awareness for children & young people's mental health.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

A charity that offers mental health support & information online for everyone. Their helpline is free and available to all ages. Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org 24/7.

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org/young-people

A site which has resources for young people who are grieving, as well as providing information & advice to families/professionals on how to best support a young person who is bereaved. A helpline is also available on 0800 028840.

Clear Fear

An app to help children & teenagers manage anxiety through distraction & helpful activities.

Calm

A mindfulness app that includes various relaxing sounds to listen to as well as "sleep stories" & some guided meditations.

Headspace

A mindfulness app that has more of a "podcast feel" to it with various talks, guided meditations and helpful videos available.