

Recognising Stress:

Are you...

Tense?
Irritable?
Can't cope?
Can't be bothered?
Tearful? Can't sleep?
No time? No energy?
Drinking or smoking more?
Can't be bothered?

Then you may be experiencing stress.

A certain amount of stress is useful to us – it keeps us going, providing us with the stamina to get through stressful situations. But prolonged exposure to stress can be bad for us. Stress is our body preparing to cope with a particular situation. Some of the things that can cause us stress (stressors) are; job demands, relationship difficulties, exams, interviews, daily hassles or simply being too busy. A physical injury or illness can create stress on top of other emotional difficulties.

Any type of mental pressure can cause stress. It can be brought on by a single event, a build-up of several small things or pressure you put on yourself.

Some common causes of stress include:

- [money](#) problems
- job worries
- relationships
- death of a loved one
- family problems
- [exams](#)
- workplace stress (see below)

Sometimes, there are no clear causes of stress. Some people naturally feel more frustrated, anxious or depressed than others, which can cause them to feel stressed more often.

Workplace Stress

Recent statistics confirm that work related stress is widespread in the UK working population and is not confined to particular sectors or high risk jobs or industries. That is why a population-wide approach is necessary to tackle it. Work related stress - together we can tackle it www.hse.gov.uk/stress

We all have the occasional day where everything seems to go wrong, but if you're constantly feeling stressed out by the pressures of the office, what can you do?

Here are some coping strategies:

- **Don't try to do too much** - Often we place completely unreasonable demands on ourselves. This just adds to the pressure and actually makes us less effective. Remind yourself that it's ok not to be perfect all the time.
- **Prioritise** - First thing every day, make a list of what you must get done that day – and then get on with it! Tackle the task you're dreading most first – once you've done it, you'll feel so pleased with yourself that you'll breeze through the rest of your work. At the end of the day, take 10 minutes to update your to-do list and plan for the next day.

Please scroll down for more!



- **Learn to say no** - Often we end up taking on work that isn't our responsibility because we're scared of upsetting someone by saying no. There is a limit to what you can do and you shouldn't be afraid to say so. If your boss is making too many demands, calmly explain that you can't do everything at once and ask which tasks are the priority – it is your boss's responsibility to prioritise too!
- **Get organised** - Clear the clutter from your desk. If you don't have one already, put in place a straightforward filing system. Set aside time every day to clear routine emails and paperwork. Try to handle each piece of paper only once – deal with it straightaway if you can. - and resist the temptation to keep checking your email – that's one of the biggest time drains!
- **Plan ahead** - Be clear what your deadlines are and plan accordingly. Don't leave a big project until the last minute – that just gives you unnecessary extra stress. Break it down into smaller chunks and do a little every day. That makes the task less daunting and means that you won't end up panicking and having to work flat out at the last minute.
- **Take regular breaks** - Always have a lunch break and, if you can, get outside for some fresh air. It will clear your head and help you to focus better. If you find yourself regularly working very long hours, book an appointment at least once a week - a gym class, massage or just arrange to meet friends - so that you are forced to leave work on time.
- **Take time off** - Make sure that you take your full holiday entitlement. No one is indispensable – the company won't fall apart if you're not there for a few days. And no one ever wished on their deathbed that they'd spent more time in the office! The key is to get the balance right so that you enjoy, rather than dread, going to work and can switch off effectively when you leave.

Be happy at Work Video: <http://www.nhs.uk/video/pages/Happyatwork.aspx>

Do your own Workplace stress self assessment here: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Stress/Pages/Causes.aspx>

There is not much you can do to prevent stress but there are many things you can do to manage stressful situations more effectively and reduce the impact of stress on your health.

Visit: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Stress/Pages/Prevention.aspx>

What causes stress? <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Stress/Pages/Causes.aspx>


See below to complete the stress test ...

[Workplace stress self assessment](#)

[Learn Mindfulness Stress Test](#)

[Lessons for Living Stress test](#)

Scroll down for Self Help and Useful Organisations!



Self Help

Ten tips to tackle stress

- **Make the connection.** Could the fact that you're feeling under-the-weather be a response to too much pressure?
- **Take a regular break.** Give yourself a brief break whenever you feel things are getting on top of you - get a soft drink or take a brief stroll.
- **Learn to relax.** Follow a simple routine to relax your muscles and slow your breathing
- **Get better organised.** Make a list of jobs; tackle one task at a time; alternate dull tasks with interesting ones
- **Sort out your worries.** Divide them into those that you can do something about (either now or soon) and those that you can't. There's no point in worrying about things that you can't change.
- **Change what you can.** Look at the problems that can be resolved, and get whatever help is necessary to sort them out. Learn to say 'no'.
- **Look at your long-term priorities.** Step back and examine what it is about your life that's giving you too much stress. What can you off-load, or change? How can you introduce a better balance between work, social life and home life? Is it time to reassess your priorities?
- **Improve your lifestyle.** Find time to eat properly, get plenty of exercise and enough sleep. Avoid drinking and smoking too much. However much you believe they can help you to relax, they'll have the opposite effect.
- **Confide in someone.** Don't keep emotions bottled up.
- **Focus on the positive aspects of your life.**

For more tips visit: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Stressmanagement/Pages/Stressbusters.aspx>

The Mind Guide for Managing Stress can be found here:

http://www.mind.org.uk/help/medical_and_alternative_care/mind_guide_to_managing_stress

Useful Organisations

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

tel. 01455 88 33 00

web: www.bacp.co.uk

Contact for details of local practitioners

British Autogenic Society (BAS)

tel. 020 7391 8908

web: www.autogenic-therapy.org.uk

For simple exercises in body awareness and relaxation

The British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA)

tel. 0845 345 5977

web: www.bcma.co.uk

Supports and protects the integrity of therapists, ensures the protection and wellbeing of clients, and the quality of service delivered

The British Holistic Medical Association

tel. 01278 722 000

web: www.bhma.org

Information about holistic approaches to health

The British Wheel of Yoga

tel. 01529 306 851

web: www.bwy.org.uk

For information about yoga and teachers in your area

Scroll down for more Useful Organisation!



First Steps to Freedom

helpline: 0845 120 2916

web: www.first-steps.org

Helpline for anxiety problems. Offers advice, information leaflets and relaxation tapes

The Institute for Complementary and Natural Medicine (ICNM)

tel. 020 7922 7980

web: www.i-c-m.org.uk

For details of complementary practitioners

International Stress Management Association (ISMA)

tel. 01179 697 284

web: www.isma.org.uk

A registered charity for the prevention and reduction of stress. Contact for advice and for details of practitioners

Mind Publications

15-19 Broadway

London E15 4BQ

tel. 0844 448 4448 www.mind.org

No Panic

helpline: 0808 808 0545 (free phone)

web: www.nopanic.org.uk

Helpline for people experiencing anxiety. Local self-help groups

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

tel. 020 7014 9955

web: www.psychotherapy.org.uk

A body of around 80 organisations offering psychotherapy

