

Step 6

Seek help

Unable to control your stress symptoms? Do not suffer in silence. Talk to friends, trusted colleagues or your manager. Use the online resources listed below.

Go to your doctor. Many people avoid this as they don't see stress as a "real illness" yet half a million people do report suffering stress, resulting in 13.5 million lost working days each year.

Unchecked, stress can cause heart attacks, chronic illnesses, headaches, lowered immunity and increased chance of miscarriage.

It is **OK** to talk about stress.

It is **OK** to seek help.



Resources

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

www.bhf.org.uk/default.aspx

www.protostar-uk.com/stress.aspx

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Let's Talk About Stress



A basic guide
to understanding
and avoiding stress



What Is Stress?

“The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”

Stress causes chemicals such as Adrenaline and Cortisol to be released. Blood thickens, blood pressure and sugar levels increase. All good if you need those to escape an attacking animal but not good if it regularly happens at work.

What Causes Stress?

Many factors such as; money issues, marital problems, poor health, relationships, moving house, revising for exams or balancing the needs of a family and career.



This guide concentrates on work related stress however much of the advice is equally good for out of work issues.

Step 5



Change your lifestyle and habits

A few simple changes have been proven to have positive effects on stress related symptoms. Here are a few;

- **Drink more water.** Don't just drink when you feel thirsty, as dehydration kicks in well before that.
- **Eat regularly** and don't skip meals. Try to avoid high sugar content and processed foods.
- **Exercise** so that for at least 20 minutes, twice per week, you break out in to a sweat. Take the stairs!
- **Avoid binge drinking** and remember that the maximum amounts of alcohol the average sized body can safely handle each day is, 3 units for men (1 pint lager) and 2 units for women (1 glass of wine).
- **Take your mind off** things by forcing yourself to make time for activities you enjoy. Plan them in your diary for months ahead and stick to it.
- **Avoid taking work home.** Is it essential or is taking it home just a routine?
- Deliberately allow **20% more time** than is required **for each journey.**
- **Talk to people** about how you are feeling.



Dealing with Stress

Step 1

Notice if you display symptoms

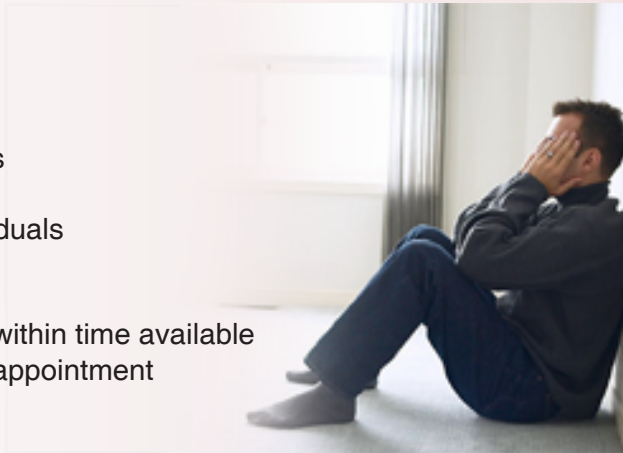
Complete the questionnaire on page 2 and be conscious of small indicators, such as jaw ache, constantly wagging your foot, twiddling a pen, wringing hands or twitching muscles.

Step 2

Identify the most common causes

Think back to when your “stress symptoms” occurred. What happened? What was on your mind? Where were you? Who were you with? Try to identify any possible “stress triggers”. At work some possible triggers are;

- Too much work
- Too little work
- Confusion over what to do
- Arguments with colleagues
- Missing deadlines
- Working with certain individuals
- Lack of clear direction
- Your efforts go unnoticed
- Unable to complete tasks within time available
- Too little time to get to an appointment
- Angry customers
- Being bullied



Ask friends and colleagues what they think is a trigger for you.

Step 3

Decide actions to reduce or avoid the triggers you have some control over

First, think rationally about each one, is it really worth getting stressed over?

Most issues are not worth the potential effect on your health, so remind yourself of that whenever that trigger appears.

Agree actions for dealing with each one. For instance;

Trigger Too much work

Action Meet with your manager to discuss your work load and agree priorities. Seek coaching and guidance.

Trigger "My Manager doesn'tand that stresses me."

OR

Trigger "My Manager doesand that stresses me."

Action Meet with your manager and describe what effect these actions have on you. Agree on a solution or compromise.

Evidence shows that most work related issues can be reduced if flagged up to a receptive manager.

If you feel you are being bullied or require additional support,



Step 4



Relaxation techniques

Keep an open mind and try out this very simple proven method for reducing the effects of stress

- Find a quiet place to sit down for 10 minutes. Tense your arms and legs for 5 seconds, then shake them loose. Open your mouth as wide as possible like a roaring lion, hold for 5 seconds and relax. Repeat the actions and then get comfortable. Place one hand gently on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose (if possible) at a steady pace, for a count of 7.
- Hold for a few more seconds and then purse your lips as though blowing out a candle. Steadily breathe out for a count of 11.
- Repeat for the remainder of your 10 minutes. Drink a glass of water and then you are ready to go.
- While finding 10 minutes on a regular basis to do this might seem impossible, think about it rationally. Is it really that difficult, especially if it helps you to avoid many of the terrible long term effects of stress?

For more techniques go to <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/information/wellbeing-podcasts/>



Are you suffering from stress?

Complete this questionnaire.

In the last 4 weeks have you . . .	Never	Sometimes	Often
Had heart palpitations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a feeling like butterflies in your stomach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a dry mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a headache	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shouted at a colleague	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Found minor things irritating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lacked confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lost concentration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Felt that things in general are pointless	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forgot important tasks or information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forgot things you were told that same day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had difficulty sleeping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drunk more alcohol than usual (Mon - Fri)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had bowel problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had indigestion or acid reflux	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a mood swing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Got frustrated in a queue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurried up other people's speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been told to "calm down"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scored more than 4 as "sometimes" or "often"?
You seem to be showing signs of stress.