

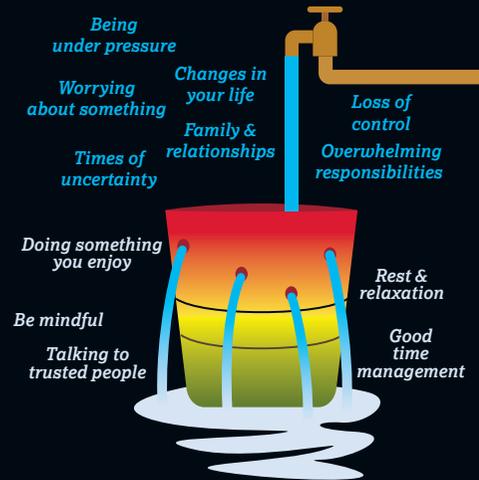


STRESS AWARENESS

Stress is the physical and mental changes we feel when we can't cope with something in our lives. We often feel stress in response to situations that challenge us – and this can be a good thing. Stress can be motivating and help improve our performance if it's managed well. But we often have to deal with stress from multiple sources such as work, home, family, health, and finances. When stress builds up or isn't managed, it can be harmful to our health.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE STRESSED?

When we are in a situation that is challenging or stressful, it can trigger a response in our bodies. This causes hormones to surge throughout our body to help us be alert and focussed and to manage the situation. This can be a good thing when it's short-lived and there is the chance to relax afterwards. However, when the stress goes on for a long time and we don't have a chance to fully relax afterwards, we can become exhausted over time. These physiological changes can then harm our health.



STRESS CAN LOOK AND FEEL DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE.

Over time, daily hassles and work pressures can gradually wear us down, and the signs and symptoms of stress can often develop without us being fully aware of them until they become severe. You might start going through each day somewhat mindlessly, living on autopilot and doing things by force of habit, or you may start experiencing physical symptoms like poor sleep or stomach pains.

Being self-aware about our own 'stress signature' (the stress symptoms that you experience) is important so that you can recognise when outside help is needed. This will also help you stay in check with what's currently challenging you, how your coping skills are working and what effect the current situation is having on your overall wellbeing.

	HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
MOOD	Normal Mood fluctuations Calm and takes things in stride	Irritable Impatient Nervous Overwhelmed	Angry Anxious Feeling hopeless Tearful	Angry Outbursts Aggression Tearful Excessive anxiety Panic attacks Depressed Suicidal thoughts
ATTITUDE	Good sense of humour Performing well In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm Forgetfulness Procrastination	Negative attitude Poor Performance or workaholic Poor concentration / easily distracted Extra sensitive to criticism	Insubordination Can't perform duties Can't concentrate
SLEEP	Normal sleep patterns	Trouble sleeping	Restless disturbed	Not being able to fall asleep or stay asleep
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Physically well with good energy levels	Low energy, muscle tension, headaches	Increased fatigue Aches and pains Frequent colds/infections Weight loss / gain	Constant fatigue Physical illness
ACTIVITY	Socially active	Decreasing activity & socialising	Avoidance Withdrawal	Lack of engagement, isolation
HABITS	Limited alcohol use	Regular but controlled alcohol use Increased reliance on smoking, caffeine Short term coping strategies with increased negative consequences ie/ hangovers, physical effects	Increased reliance on alcohol – hard to control Absenteeism	Alcohol use are very frequent with severe consequences in life areas and an inability to control

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