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 focused 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.

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