

Tip sheet

Reducing stress

Stress is a reaction in our minds and bodies which we experience when we feel overwhelmed by life's problems and difficulties.

Too much stress over a long period of time has been shown to damage our health, relationships, quality of life and our ability to work effectively



Dealing with stress

Step 1: Recognise when you are stressed

The first thing we need to do is to be able to recognise signs of stress in ourselves.

Although everyone reacts differently under stress, there are some tell-tale signs to look for in our thinking, feelings, bodies and behaviour. What signs do you have that tell you when you are under stress? *NOTE: always have any unusual symptoms checked out by your GP.*

Step 2: Identify the reasons for your stress

Stress can come from anywhere, but because for most of us the two main areas of our life are home and work these are the most common.

Home

- Relationships – partner/children
- Financial Problems

Work

- Relationships – co-workers/managers
- Being unclear about job
- Excessive workload
- Bullying

Stress busters

There are a number of ways to manage stress.

There is no one right way. People and circumstances are different. It's a case of picking the stress buster that fits your problem.

Stress Buster 1: Tackle the problem

Sometimes we need to tackle the problem head on. This approach is often best when we are able to change the situation in front of us e.g. establish a family budget and stick to it.

Stress Buster 2: Acquire more resources

Sometimes we need extra resources to deal with stressful events and issues.

The resources we need depend on the problem. The key question is: What do I need to deal with this issue?

A few examples might be:

- Have a health check-up
- Take some annual leave
- Get support – a babysitter/cleaner
- Financial counselling
- Relationship counselling.

Stress Buster 3: Gain a new perspective

Instead of tackling the problem, this is about changing the *meaning* of the problem by changing the way we look at it or at ourselves.

See the problem differently:

- It will pass
- I've coped with worse
- It may offer different opportunities.

See ourselves differently:

- I need to let go and delegate
- It's only a problem because I like to please others
- It's only a problem because I like things to be a certain way.

A good way to gain a new perspective can be to talk things over with a trusted friend or counsellor. Often, we talk to relieve the emotional pressure and our perspective changes.



Stress Buster 4: Avoid black holes

When we're stressed, we have a tendency to make matters worse by thinking negatively and irrationally.

Examples include:

- That's typical of me, I never do anything right
- This has ruined my life for good

Thinking like this makes us feel worse and makes it harder to deal with our problems. The way out is to change your thinking. If you have problems with 'black holes' ask your Vitae counsellor to give/teach you tools/methods for getting out and staying out.

Stress Buster 5: Stress Buffers

These are simple things which make us more resilient to stress.

Examples include:

- Talk regularly about your feelings/thoughts
- Take regular exercise
- Practice relaxation/meditation
- Eat a healthy diet
- Moderate your alcohol intake
- Use your annual leave
- Enjoy hobbies/interests/sports
- Enjoy friendships
- Have fun
- Get good regular sleep
- Have a good work/home balance.

For more information about managing stress, contact your Vitae counsellor.

The 5 ways of wellbeing are...



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