



## Stress

Stress is a mental, physical, or emotional state that produces bodily or mental tension and can be caused by external stressors (e.g., from the environment or social situations) or internal illness stressors (e.g., illness or injury). Whilst stress helps us to respond to demands in our lives or messages from our bodies, too much stress can cause cognitive, behavioural, physical, and emotional problems. Here are some signs of stress: can you identify your signs?

### Symptoms of Stress

Cognitive		Behavioural		Physical		Emotional	
Signs	Your signs	Signs	Your signs	Signs	Your signs	Signs	Your signs
All or nothing		Absenteeism		Chest pain		Anger	
Catastrophising		Excessiveness		Constipation		Anxiety	
Forgetfulness		Lateness		Diarrhoea		Instability	
Low focus		Overly active		Fatigue		Irritability	
Overgeneralising		Poor diet		Headaches		Low drive	
Pessimism		Procrastination		Indigestion		Low esteem	
Poor judgement		Riskiness		Nausea		Low libido	
Racing thoughts		Sleep issues		Neck/back pain		Low mood	
Ruminating		Tantrums		Tense muscles		Restlessness	
Worrying		Withdrawal		Tummy aches		Sadness	

### Stress Management Tips

See it differently. Stress is not a bad thing necessarily; it can motivate us to identify, solve, or change a problematic behaviour or situation, or to fulfil our responsibility. Be willing to appropriately reframe your beliefs on stress (e.g., that it can be an acceptable emotion or tool) as this can help reduce difficult symptoms associated with stress. Keep things in perspective. Whilst we can manage stress effectively we can never eradicate entirely.

- ❖ Can you reframe or apply more perspective on some stress beliefs?

Talk. Talk about things that stress you. Often people say “what good is it to talk when it doesn’t solve anything?” Sometimes talking can help to solve an issue as it can help to talk through a thing instead of going around and around in our head and we can get good feedback or ideas from the other person—such can help reduce the difficult emotions associated with the stressor, so too can getting to offload and to be caringly understood. Talking with friends about an issue can be valuable in many ways beyond the absolute measurement of solving.

- ❖ Where, when, and with whom can you talk to reduce or off-stay stress?

Responsibilities. Identify what are your responsibilities, prioritise them, and fulfil them. Ticking off the easy tasks on a “to do” list can help clear the decks and de-clutter the mind. It can give a sense of achievement as tasks are being completed. However, merely focussing on quantity over quality raises another issue—procrastination: avoiding the more difficult task by smaller less/non worthwhile tasks is, perhaps, only fooling and stressing yourself. Identify what is more important to do, then do it.

- ❖ Can you identify, prioritise and avoid procrastination in regards to your responsibilities?

Eggs in one basket. Often we can focus too much/solely in one area of our life: e.g., work, partner, activity. That in itself can be stressful; more so when it is threatened. It is important to gain support or nourishment to deal with or off-stay stress by having balance in various areas of life, e.g., family, friends, finance, health, romance, spirituality.

- ❖ How can you employ more balance in your life?

Self care. The basic needs often go unmet in times of stress; for some, perhaps, their basic needs are rarely met as they focus on “more important” things. Try to meet needs of healthy living, e.g., diet, sleep, exercise, hygiene, fun.

- ❖ What basic needs are you not (or poorly) satisfying?

Save time for you. Often we leave ourselves to last—or forget about ourselves entirely—as we focus on the needs of other’s. Having time to relax, have fun, or to do “nothing”, helps to build emotional resources and to de-stress.

- ❖ Where do you come on the totem pole of importance?