

Managing Stress - Practical Strategies to Support Your Wellbeing

We all feel stressed from time to time, and it is a normal and natural response to the ups and downs of daily life. However, if you start to feel that your feelings of stress are causing you problems or feel overwhelming; it may be time to seek some support and advice.



...So what exactly is stress?

Most people feel stressed at some point in their lives. Some people even find a small amount of stress can be helpful or motivating. Stress is a natural response to mental or emotional pressure and can sometimes feel like 'everything being on top of' you. When you feel afraid or anxious, your body releases stress hormones. Although these don't feel very nice, they are designed to help you to move fast to feel safe again.



What causes stress?

Everyone is different but some examples for young people include:

- ✓ Relationship difficulties either at home or at school
- ✓ Problems completing homework
- ✓ Deciding on options
- ✓ Choosing a career path
- ✓ An important exam or performance
- ✓ Bullying (Online, offline or both)



How does our body feel when we're stressed?

Remember we talked about those stress hormones? Well, when they're released, our bodies can feel a bit different. You may notice:

- ✓ A racing heartbeat
- ✓ Increased sweating
- ✓ 'Butterflies' or a sick feeling in our stomach
- ✓ Headaches or Dizziness
- ✓ Needing the toilet more often
- ✓ Our muscles feeling tight and tense



Other things we might notice in ourselves and others:

- ✓ Feeling irritable or 'snapping' at our loved ones
- ✓ Difficulty concentrating
- ✓ Becoming more forgetful
- ✓ Increased worrying or fearing the worst-case scenario
- ✓ Difficulty in making simple decisions
- ✓ Struggling to get to sleep



How can we prevent stress?

There are lots of simple changes we can make in our lives that can help guard against stress or help us to cope with it when we do feel stressed. Most of these revolve around taking care of our minds and bodies and doing things that make us feel good! You could try:

- ✓ Talking to a close friend
- ✓ Writing down how you feel
- ✓ Drawing or painting about your feelings (remember, it doesn't have to make sense to anyone else!),
- ✓ Getting exercise daily or getting into nature
- ✓ Sticking to a good sleep routine
- ✓ Drinking water and avoiding caffeine (tea, coffee and fizzy/energy drinks)
- ✓ Eating a varied and healthy diet, at regular times
- ✓ Planning ahead for stressful situations – timetables, lists and giving yourself extra time
- ✓ Deep and slow breathing



Where can we go for support?

If you feel you have tried everything and your stress is causing you problems or feels overwhelming, you could try the following:

- ✓ Speak to the Counsellor or Educational Psychologist at your school – they are trained to help
- ✓ Speak to your family doctor about how you have been feeling
- ✓ Tell a member of staff that you trust
- ✓ www.youngminds.co.uk is a fantastic website that gives helpful advice around mental health for young people
- ✓ Childline's Calm Zone on their website has variety of tools, activities and games to help you to feel calm
- ✓ www.themix.org.uk has helpful apps and games to address emotional health difficulties



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