



Self-Help Guide for Stress Management



Self Help for stress

- Do you find it a struggle to cope with the demands of everyday life?
 - Do you feel like there is too much being demanded of you?
 - Do you feel overwhelmed and unable to manage everything required of you?
-

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', you may be experiencing symptoms of stress

THIS WORKBOOK AIMS TO HELP YOU TO:

- Recognise whether you may be experiencing symptoms of stress.
- Understand what stress is, what causes it and what keeps it going.
- Find ways to understand, manage or overcome your stress.



1. Do I have symptoms of Stress?

If you experience symptoms of Stress it is likely that you will recognise many of the feelings, physical symptoms, thoughts and behaviour patterns described below.

Please tick the boxes which regularly apply to you.



Feelings

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tense | ☐ |
| Irritable | ☐ |
| Overwhelmed / Helpless | ☐ |
| Anxious | ☐ |
| | ☐ |



Physical symptoms

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Butterflies in stomach | ☐ |
| Tired / Exhausted | ☐ |
| Light headed | ☐ |
| Nausea | ☐ |
| Poor concentration | ☐ |
| Disturbed sleep | ☐ |



Thinking patterns

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| I I won't be able to cope | ☐ |
| There's no way I'll be able to manage all this | ☐ |
| I'm going to end up missing something | ☐ |
| I'm losing control | ☐ |



Behavioural patterns

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Being busy non-stop | ☐ |
| Easily irritated | ☐ |
| Finding it difficult to concentrate | ☐ |
| Being easily distracted | ☐ |
| Procrastinating | ☐ |
-

If you have ticked a number of these boxes you may be experiencing symptoms of stress.

However don't be alarmed, this is very common and there are things you can do to improve your situation. You will find some useful strategies in this workbook.

2. What is Stress?



Stress is a feeling that we get when struggling to cope with the pressures of life. It can effect people in different ways. What may be stressful for one person may not be for another. Difficult life events or situations can cause a lot of stress. You might feel stressed if you don't have confidence in your own ability to cope.

Physical feelings are experienced when your body reacts to stress, fear or anxiety. These symptoms are often referred to as the 'fight or flight' response. This reaction quickly and helpfully prepares the body for action. It prepares us to either protect against or escape danger.

- **Making our heart beat faster - to supply more blood to our muscles.**
- **producing more sweat- to cool us down**
- **Tensing our muscles- getting ready for action**
- **Taking deep breaths- to supply more oxygen**
- **Shutting down body functions that aren't needed**
- **Racing thoughts- quick responses**

Stress is a commonly experienced problem. You are likely to know others who have been in a similar situation. There is no need to feel embarrassed or concerned about stress. Often it can help to tell others about how you feel stressed. They may be able to offer helpful advice and support. Stress is not harmful in itself. You are not weak because you struggle with it. Stress over a long period of time can, however, make us more vulnerable to health problems.

3. What causes stress?

Life Events :

Particular life events can cause people significant problems with stress. Difficulties that were previously manageable might also become much more challenging to cope with.

For example:

- Being unemployed or losing a job
- Divorce or family turmoil
- Death of a relative or close friend
- Health problems
- Getting married
- Having a baby
- Starting a new job
- Financial difficulties (eg debt)
- Neighbourhood problems (eg noise)

Thinking Styles:

Stress can make some people feel anxious and low. This can impact how we think about ourselves and other people. We are more likely to think negatively about a situation. It is also common to feel that you are unable to cope. You might think that what is being demanded of you outweighs your ability to manage.

3. What causes stress?

Behavioural Explanations:

You may find that you have developed strategies to avoid or escape situations in which you feel stressed. Such a pattern of behaviour may not be realistic or sustainable as a solution. In fact, this can make things worse

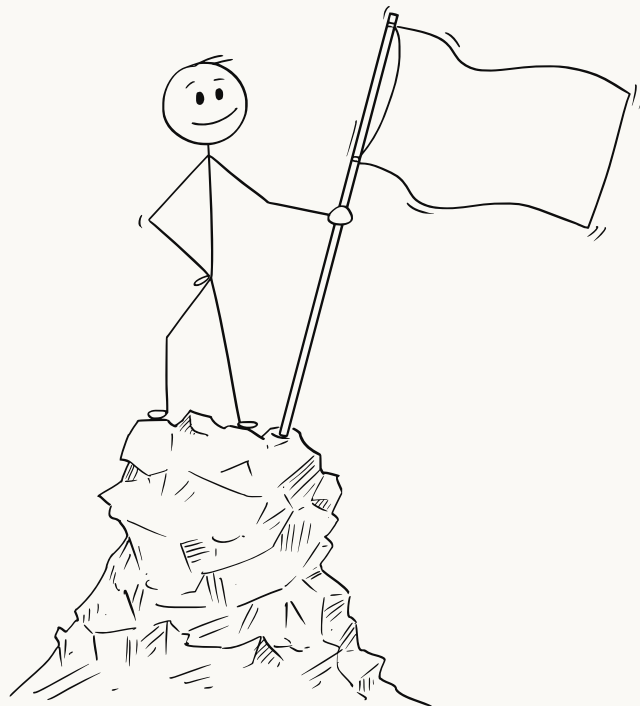
Biological Reasons:

There may be some traits that biologically predispose individuals to experience more stress than others. For example, a high concentration of the stress hormone 'cortisol'. Over a period of time this can weaken your immune system. Such findings do not however mean that you can't do something about the difficulties that you are experiencing.

4. How can I reduce my stress?

Fortunately, there are a number of strategies that we can use to reduce our stress. These include:

- Social support - speaking to people; family, friends, relatives, colleagues, etc.
- Confidence ? being sure of your own ability to cope.
- Problem solving - being able to work out solutions to problems.
- Self-awareness - knowing how this problem effects you; your body, thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- Looking after yourself - making sure that you have some time to yourself. For example going for walks, having a relaxing bath, etc



5. Building healthy coping mechanisms

1. Feelings (Emotional Coping)

How to deal with emotional overwhelm:



Healthy Strategies:

- **Label your emotions** – Try saying: “I feel anxious because...”
- **Practice self-compassion** – Talk to yourself the way you would to a friend.
- **Cry if you need to** – It’s a natural emotional release.
- **Express through art** – Paint, doodle, sing, or write.
- **Talk to someone you trust** – Venting can ease emotional load.



2. Physical Coping (Body)

Helps you reduce the physiological symptoms of stress.

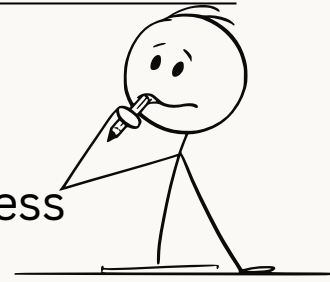
Healthy Strategies:

- **Exercise regularly** – Walking, yoga, or any form of movement helps.
- **Deep breathing exercises** – Practice belly breathing or box breathing.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation** – Tense and release muscle groups slowly.
- **Take short naps** – If sleep-deprived, a 20-minute nap can refresh you.
- **Eat balanced meals & stay hydrated** – Your body needs fuel to cope.

5. Building healthy coping mechanisms

3. Cognitive Coping (Thinking)

Focuses on how we interpret and respond to stress mentally.



Healthy Strategies:

- **Challenge negative thoughts** – Replace “I can’t handle this” with “I can take it one step at a time.”
- **Practice mindfulness** – Stay in the present moment rather than spiraling into “what-ifs.”
- **Reframe situations** – View setbacks as temporary and solvable.
- **Gratitude journaling** – Write 3 good things that happened today.

4. Behavioral Coping (Actions)

Involves changing your actions or habits to deal with stress more effectively.

Healthy Strategies:

- Establish a daily routine – Predictability can reduce stress.
- Time management – Use planners or apps to break big tasks into small ones.
- Set boundaries – Say "no" when needed to avoid burnout.
- Engage in hobbies – Do things you enjoy just for fun.
- Take short breaks – Use the Pomodoro method or the 20-20-20 eye rule.

14 days Anxiety Management activities

Day 1 Deep Breathing Reset

Practice box breathing (4-4-4-4 seconds).

Repeat for 5 minutes and note how you feel before & after.

Day 2 Stress Dump

Do a brain dump: Write all your current worries on paper.

Don't filter — just let it out.

Day 3 Move Your Body

Do 20–30 minutes of any physical activity (walk, yoga, dancing).

Physical movement lowers cortisol levels.

Day 4 Music Therapy

Create a “calm vibes” playlist.

Listen to it while relaxing, commuting, or working.

Day 5 Journaling for Clarity

Write about a stressful situation and how you wish you had responded.

This builds awareness and emotional regulation.

14 days Anxiety Management activities

Day 6 Laugh it Out

Watch a funny video or talk to someone who makes you laugh.

Laughter releases endorphins and relieves stress.

Day 7 Breathing & Visualization

Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful place (beach, forest, mountain).

Breathe deeply as you mentally explore that space.

Day 8 Screen-Free Hour

Take a 1-hour break from screens.

Do something analog: read, sketch, write, nap.

Day 9 Gratitude Shift

Write down 3 good things that happened today.

Focus on small wins, not perfection.

Day 10 Create a To-Don't List

List 3 habits that increase your stress (e.g., overthinking, multitasking).

Challenge yourself to avoid one today.

14 days Anxiety Management activities

Day 11 Nature Time

Spend at least 20 minutes outside, even if it's just a walk or balcony sit.

Nature boosts your mood and resets your nervous system.

Day 12 Aromatherapy Moment

Use essential oils like lavender or peppermint.

Inhale slowly or use a diffuser during a relaxing moment.

Day 13 Social Recharge

Have a stress-free conversation with someone you trust.

No venting — just good vibes and connection.

Day 14 Reflect & Reward

Reflect on what helped you the most this week.

Treat yourself (a small gift, dessert, or a self-care ritual) as a reward

Conclusion

Stress is an inevitable part of life, but how we respond to it makes all the difference. By building healthy coping mechanisms—emotionally, physically, mentally, and behaviorally—we empower ourselves to navigate challenges with resilience and balance. Remember, it's okay to ask for help, take breaks, and put your well-being first. Healing and growth don't happen overnight, but every small step counts. Be gentle with yourself on this journey.

"You can't always control what goes on outside, but you can always control what goes on inside."