

Stress

Reducing stress

We all experience stress at various points in our lives – before exams at school, moving house, before a sporting event, deadlines and presentations, tricky relationships – and a small amount of stress can actually be a good thing.

Stress can energise and focus you, raise performance, and make you feel raring to go! However, too much stress – especially if it goes unchecked over time – can be extremely debilitating and lead to further health issues, such as anxiety, depression, high blood pressure and stomach complaints, such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

As such, it is important to be able to recognise the signs of ongoing stress in yourself and then take some action to reduce that stress.

If you have a position of responsibility at work, it's equally important that you can recognise the signs of stress in others and know how to help them.

This copy was kindly written by Kate Wright & Sam Duffy, Performance Coaches and HR/L&D Consultants.

What are the clues that you or your employee are suffering?

The symptoms of stress can vary from person to person, but common symptoms could include:

- feeling grumpy and short-tempered with others and/or emotional

- being anxious, nervous, constantly worrying and possibly dreading work or certain situations
- feeling depressed, unable to enjoy yourself or disinterested in life
- finding it hard to make decisions
- avoiding situations that are troubling you
- biting your nails
- unable to concentrate
- eating too much or too little
- drinking alcohol or smoking more than usual
- feeling restless, like you can't sit still or like your thoughts are racing. You might feel that you can't switch off.

Physical signs could be:

- breathing difficulties and hyperventilation
- panic attacks
- muscle tension
- blurred eyesight or sore eyes
- [problems getting to sleep or](#) staying asleep
- tired all the time
- grinding your teeth or clenching your jaw
- headaches
- chest pains
- high blood pressure
- indigestion
- stomach problems
- nausea

Fast acting relief

Seek medical advice

If you are experiencing any of the physical signs of stress, then your first action should be to seek medical advice from your GP as soon as possible.

Work out the causes of your stress

Identify what causes you to feel stressed and what helps you to reduce your stress levels. A professional coach can help you work through this, as can keeping a diary of 'stress triggers' and stress releases.

Share your worries

With good friends and colleagues, or support services offered by charities like Mind, to help to combat loneliness and give yourself a boost.

Talk to your employer

Do speak to someone at work and ask for help. Most employers will want to work with you to help you feel better. Working with your employer to adjust your role or workplace (such as reducing your workload or enabling you to work flexibly) is usually the quickest and most effective way to reduce stress.

Long terms solutions

Discover your personal coping mechanisms and build them into your every-day life

Experiment with different coping mechanisms as soon as you feel your stress levels rising. Different techniques work for different people, but examples that are proven to help reduce stress levels include:

Seeking a better balance at work

Simply working longer and longer hours 'to get things done' is not a productive work approach and one that will only contribute to your stress levels. Instead, get some help with how you manage and balance your workload.

Keeping a log of how you spend your time at work can be very revealing about how much of your time is spent dealing with unimportant distractions, putting things off or doing work that you could be delegating to someone else.

Prioritising time

You might also find that you spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with urgent work, such as crisis management and urgent deadlines.

By prioritising time for activities that are important, but not urgent, such as planning and developing strategy, you should find that the number of urgent tasks drastically reduces – and so does your stress.

Take the time to look after yourself

By eating well, exercising regularly, finding time to do activities you really enjoy and getting enough good quality sleep.

Who can help you?

- Your GP
- Mental Health charities such as Mind: mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/
- WellBeing World and WellBeing At Work – wellbeingworld.je
- A professional coach to help you work out how to achieve a better balance at work and manage your stress triggers in the longer term: Arbre Consulting and Geck0 are examples of two local businesses that offer support in this area, but there are many other local coaches offering good support too.
- Your employer.

Relevant Links

> [Mind.org.uk](https://mind.org.uk)

> [Wellbeingworld](https://wellbeingworld.je)

> [Wellbeing in the workplace](#)
