

## Tips for Managing Stress

“I’m just so stressed!” How many times do we say or hear this on a daily basis? Talking about our stress is like asking about the weather...everyone has it or has something to say about it. Stress is a part of life for nearly everyone. It can motivate us to act when needed, prompt a needed change, or call our attention to something that needs deeper attention. But stress can also be a red flag for something more problematic and, if left unaddressed, emotionally damaging.

### What is stress and what causes it?

The short answer is that stress is a feeling of unpleasant tension and can be experienced physically, emotionally, or as a diffuse sense of alertness or irritability. Some tension is a natural and even healthy part of the situation — like getting ready to run a race, take a test, or have an emotionally charged conversation. In other situations, feeling tense can signal stress that needs more mindful attention. How your body reacts and responds to stress can be positive when it’s short-term (like helping you swerve around a giant pothole in the road or finish that term paper at the last minute) but lingering stress can take a toll on your body and mind.

The things that cause us stress often involve us taking actions to deal with that stressor. Add to that the fact that it’s hard to make good decisions when we’re feeling overloaded with stress in the moment and the result can feel overwhelming. Stress can cause all sorts of negative physical and emotional consequences, but there’s a growing base of research on simple stress management techniques that can prevent or reduce the negative side effects and help improve our quality of life and our overall wellness.

While we can’t always control the stress that comes into our lives, we can control how we manage and react to it. In fact, understanding these stressors in order to best respond to them in a healthy way is a key component of mental health.

Because reacting in the moment can often create more stress, it’s important to pause and take a minute (or hour or day) to engage in gentle self-care and take

the space you need to gain better understanding and perspective before taking action. Taking the space and time you need to understand what is happening makes it more likely that you will find healthy solutions and also helps you understand yourself and your patterns better – both of which will help the next time! So while the following list includes some effective techniques, it's important to find those that work best for you and your unique situation. And of course, if you find that your stress levels are accelerating or out of control, we recommend you get help immediately.

### 1. Review and organize.

Often the simple act of organizing the information about what we do and do not yet know and/or taking time to simply get organized can relieve stress. When we try to do too much or set unrealistic goals it is easy to feel overwhelmed. By being realistic about what we can get done and prioritizing tasks or obligations so we can tackle one thing at a time, it is easier to stay or find balance. This makes it easier to take care of ourselves, our responsibilities and those around us likely to feel the brunt of our stress. our health.

### 2. Take a break from it.

There's a reason so many people embrace mindfulness practices like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga. They help clear our minds and keep us in the moment so we can regroup and recharge in a quieter, calmer place. You might find that meditating or doing some yoga first thing in the morning helps you start your day with energy and focus, allowing you to tackle the day from a less stress-fueled vantage point. Not sure where to start? There are countless free apps with a simple Google search that can guide you. Another tip — watch less news and plan time daily to stay off social media. The simple act of stepping away from the chaos of the world, even for a short time, can do wonders for our psyche.

### 3. Keep it moving.

Not only is exercise great at reducing stress, but sometimes just getting outside and taking a walk, finding a change of scenery and disconnecting from our email and phone is really powerful. The constant need to be connected and responsive can wear down even the healthiest individuals. Consider dedicating part of your lunch break or morning to taking a walk — even if it's just around the block each day — in order to find some calm and movement.

### 4. Give it a rest.

Science has shown that stress and sleep are linked, with stress often leading to insomnia. So much so that lack of sleep is considered an epidemic. Sleep deprived people have significantly elevated levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, which can also lead to weight gain and brain fog. Getting enough sleep (at least 7 hours), and making that sleep regular, is one of the most powerful ways to keep stress at bay and drive overall health and wellbeing.

### 5. Lean into it.

Sometimes we need to just distract ourselves from the stress we're feeling in the moment by listening to music, watching a funny YouTube video, or talking to a friend. But it's also important to recognize when we're running away from our stress. By leaning into it a bit, trying to better understand where it's coming from and how we can effectively manage it, we can prevent some of the negative impact in the future. One way to do this is by journaling at the end of each day to capture your thoughts and feelings.

This can help identify patterns like:

everytime I talk to XX person, I end up being stressed the rest of the day;

everytime I agree to lead a team project I end up doing all the work.

This helps us make smart choices in the future about the most effective ways to remove or manage those stressors.

Stress affects all us, but in different ways and varying degrees. It's important to monitor when stress is becoming more than just a temporary concern. These tools are a great way to manage temporary stress, but don't get down on yourself if they don't work long term. It's always best to talk to a trusted friend or a professional and get the help you need to feel your best. Please call Lifeskills Australia on **1800 870 080** or email [info@lifeskillsaustralia.com.au](mailto:info@lifeskillsaustralia.com.au) to book a session now.