



Stress Management and Mental Resilience

What is stress?

- Stress is the body's physical and mental response to situations that feel **threatening** or **overwhelming**.
- For aviation personnel, **stress may come from various sources**, such as:
 - your work environment (e.g. noise, time pressure)
 - your workload and scheduling
 - Weather conditions
 - Communication with your work crew
 - Technical issues
 - Your personal life

Why is it important to recognize the significance of stress?

- **Experiencing stress is normal** and everyone experiences it to some degree.
- In aviation, however, the high demands of the job such as long hours, high responsibility and the need for constant focus and peak performance can **increase** stress levels.
- While a little bit of stress can help improve focus and alertness, **stress can also build up over time** and become **harmful**.
- When your stress is left unmanaged, it can affect:
 - **your performance,**
 - **your decision-making,**
 - **reduce your ability to concentrate**
 - **and ultimately compromise flight safety.**
- **Recognizing** and **addressing stress early** can help prevent it from becoming overwhelming and reduce the risk of errors.

How does it impact your health?

- When neglected, **long-term stress can negatively affect both your physical and mental well-being**.
- It may show up through symptoms such as:
 - muscle tension,
 - headaches,
 - Persistent fatigue

- digestive issues,
- Mood swings,
- or changes in sleep patterns.
- Too much stress may also reduce your focus, your memory, and your clear thinking, which are essentials for safe operations.

What should you do?

- There is **no single right way** to deal with stress. Everyone's reaction to stress is **different**, and everyone manages stress in their own way.
- What matters **most** is **to recognize the signs of stress** and when it starts to trigger you physically and/or mentally.
- Aim to find healthy ways to cope with stress and **avoid turning to alcohol, drugs, or medications** (unless prescribed by a primary care provider) to cope.
- Instead, there are several resources and coping mechanisms available to help you deal with stress. Here are some tips:
 - **Physical activity** is great stress reliever and helps reduce tension.
 - **Incorporate mindfulness** (acknowledging how you feel in the moment without judgment) in your pre- and post-flight routine can help lower your stress levels over time.
 - Other helpful techniques include **relaxation methods such as deep breathing, stretching and meditation**, especially before and after duty periods.
 - **Engaging in activities and hobbies** you enjoy outside of work can help you unwind and reduce stress.
- It's also important to lean on people around you. **Talk to your colleagues, family and friends** who may not know you are having a hard time.
- **Most importantly, if you feel you need extra support, reach out to your primary care provider or a mental health professional as soon as possible, before your mental health worsens (See the employee assistance program provided by your employer.)**
 - In some cases, if you need treatment (such as antidepressants), you may have to temporarily stop working. However, you will generally be able to resume your duties as soon as your condition stabilizes. Your CAME can explain what steps are needed to return to work safely.
- **Combining several of these tips may lead to better results.**
- Managing stress effectively is not only important for your well-being but also helps keep flight operations safe.