



Calm in Chaos

YOUR GUIDE TO MANAGING STRESS



A guide on how to 'stress less'
and find your own
practical coping tools.

BY SARAH TOMBS

Trauma-informed Therapist, Psychological Coach and Workplace Wellbeing Consultant
Reg. MBACP, MSc, BSc, Dip Coach



www.SarahETombs.com



[@sarah_tombs](https://www.instagram.com/sarah_tombs)



[@sarahtombscoaching](https://www.facebook.com/sarahtombscoaching)

Welcome to

Calm in Chaos

YOUR GUIDE TO MANAGING STRESS



Dear Reader,

Welcome - It's lovely to meet you!

If you're reading this, you've made huge steps forward to support your well-being - I believe that needs acknowledging!

As you read this, take a moment to pause and recognise those steps you've made - well done.

I'm Sarah Tombs, a Psychotherapist, Psychological Coach, and Workplace Wellbeing Consultant with over 11 years of experience supporting individuals like you in overcoming stress and building resilience.

Throughout my career, I've helped thousands of people swap doubt for confidence and live more authentic, fulfilling lives.

I'm passionate about empowering others to take control of their mental well-being, and I'm excited to share my knowledge and expertise with you through this guide.

I've created this to help you navigate the challenges of stress and find greater peace and balance in your life.

I hope you find the information and tools valuable, supporting you to 'stress less', create calm and begin your journey to your most confident self.

with love and gratitude,

Sarah



www.SarahETombs.com



[@sarah_tombs](https://www.instagram.com/@sarah_tombs)



[@sarahtombscoaching](https://www.facebook.com/@sarahtombscoaching)

Contents Page



PAGE 4 Understanding Stress

- What is Stress?
- How Stress Impacts the Body
- Importance of Building Awareness of Stress

PAGE 7 Identifying Stress

- Identifying Physical, Emotional, and Behavioral Signs
- The Traffic Light Metaphor: Recognising When You're in the Red, Amber, or Green Zone

PAGE 10 Unpacking unhelpful thoughts

- How Negative Thinking Triggers Stress Responses - the power of thoughts
- Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts to Reduce Stress
- Tools to Manage Negative Thinking Patterns

PAGE 12 Strategies for Stress

- Mindfulness and Meditation Techniques
- Deep Breathing and Relaxation Exercises
- Setting Boundaries and Prioritising Self-Care
- Challenging & choosing thoughts
- Building your own 'stress tool kit'

“

Take your well-being into your own hands.

You can use this guide to write down coping tools that work for you.

By the end, you will have built your own stress tool kit.

”

UNDERSTANDING STRESS



What is stress?

Stress is a natural response to the demands and pressures of life.

Our body reacts to situations that it perceives as threatening or challenging.

While some stress can be beneficial, excessive stress can have harmful effects on physical and mental health.



Important!

Eustress is a kind of 'positive stress' it gives us a helpful push to do things and motivates us to achieve goals. Yet it is short-lived - that's why you need to learn how to manage stress proactively!

How does stress impact the body?

When we encounter a stressful situation or perceive a threat, whether it's real or imagined, our body kicks into action. This "fight or flight" response is triggered and is designed to prepare us to either confront the threat (fight) or flee from it (flight).

This response releases stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which prepare the body to respond to perceived threats. Meaning we can act quickly and stay safe in dangerous situations.

Yet, we need to be mindful If the body is in a prolonged activation of the stress response as it can have a negative impact on the health of our body.

UNDERSTANDING STRESS



Continued...

In modern life, the threats we face are often not physical dangers like predators, but rather psychological stressors like work deadlines, relationship conflicts, or financial worries.

Despite this, our body's response to stress remains the same, activating the fight or flight mechanism in response to perceived threats.

Even our thoughts can trigger this response! *(more on how to STOP over-thinking on pages 10 - 11)*

When we ruminate on negative events or anticipate future challenges, our brain interprets these thoughts as threats, leading to the activation of the fight or flight response.

As a result, we may experience the physical sensations of stress even in the absence of immediate danger.



Important!

Understanding how the fight or flight response is triggered by both external events and internal thoughts can help us recognise and manage stress more effectively in our daily lives.

Importance of Building Awareness of Stress



Stress often lurks in the background, silently wreaking havoc on our mental and physical well-being until we reach a tipping point or 'burnout'.

However, by shining a light on stress and building your understanding, you regain the power!



Important tip

As humans, we're wired to feel emotions like stress and anxiety; it's a natural part of life's ups and downs.

The goal isn't to avoid these feelings altogether but to recognise them, understand their impact, and take positive steps to manage them effectively.

Building awareness of stress is the first step in effectively managing it.

You first need to learn to recognise your signs and symptoms of stress. This may be different from person to person, so it's essential you begin to understand yourself and your personal stress responses.

Secondly, you can then take proactive steps to reduce its impact on your life.

In the following sections, we'll explore how to identify the signs of stress and develop strategies for managing it more effectively.

IDENTIFYING STRESS

Stress can manifest in various ways, affecting not only your physical health but also your emotional well-being and behaviour.

By paying attention to these signs, you can gain insight into your stress levels and take appropriate action to address them.

Physical signs:

Headaches, muscle tension in the neck and shoulders, breathlessness or tightness in the chest, stomach discomfort, back pain, skin problems, and restlessness.

Remember, to seek support from your GP and check out any physical symptoms you experience with your healthcare provider.



Behavioural signs:

Changes in sleep patterns, Increased use of substances like alcohol or tobacco, nervous habits like nail-biting or pacing, avoidance of social situations, decreased appetite or overeating, avoidance of tasks, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, increased irritability or moodiness and 'snapping' at our loved ones or changes in how you take care of yourself.

Emotional signs:

Increased anxiety or worry, feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope, low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness, difficulty relaxing or experiencing joy, emotional outbursts, feeling teary or more 'emotional' than is usual for you.

Traffic Light Metaphor

Identifying stress



“

By paying attention to these signs,
you can gain insight into your stress levels
and take appropriate action to address them.

”

This is a helpful visual that I shared with all my clients - 'Traffic Light Metaphor'.

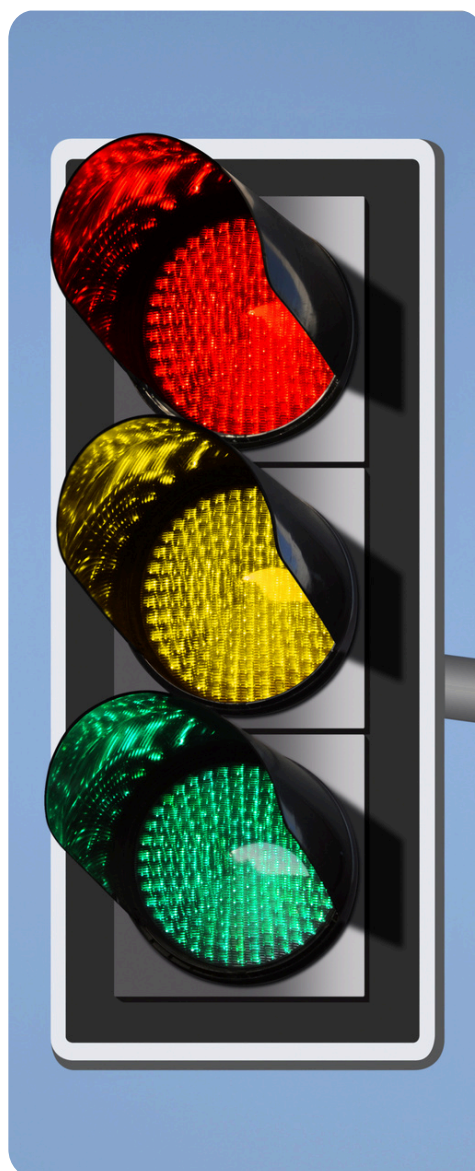
One helpful way to gauge your stress levels is to think of them in terms of a traffic light.

When you're in the "green zone," you feel calm, relaxed, and in control.

However, as stress levels increase, you may move into the "amber zone," here you experience mild to moderate stress symptoms such as a rise in tension or anxiety.

In the "red zone," stress becomes overwhelming, affecting your ability to function effectively.

By becoming more aware of your stress levels and recognising when you're in the red, amber, or green zone, you can take steps to manage stress before it escalates.



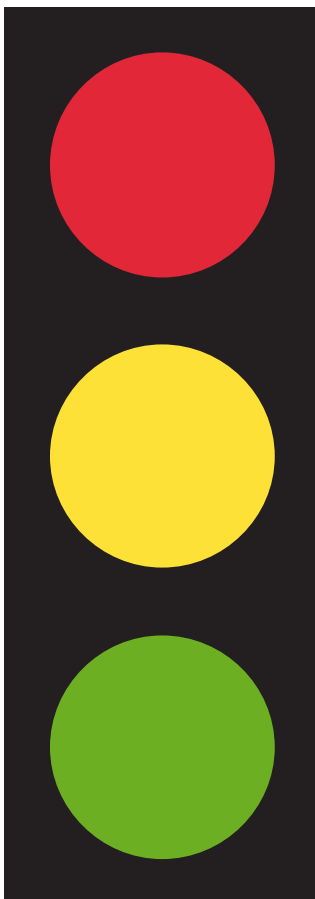
What do you recognise in yourself?



“ Use the diagram to make note of your own unique signs and symptoms of stress.

Remember that awareness is power.

”



Physical Signs, Behavioural Signs and Emotional Signs:

.....

.....

Physical Signs, Behavioural Signs and Emotional Signs:

.....

.....

Physical Signs, Behavioural Signs and Emotional Signs:

.....

.....

Unpacking unhelpful thoughts



How Negative Thinking Triggers The Stress Response

Our thoughts play a significant role in shaping our experience of stress.

To combat stress, we need to learn how to 'catch' negative and unhelpful thinking patterns.

Having supported thousands of clients over 11 years, the most common one I come across in my work is 'catastrophising'.

This is where we perceive situations as far worse or more dire than they are.

It involves imagining the worst possible outcome and dwelling on it excessively, often leading to heightened anxiety and stress.



You receive a 'sharp' comment from your boss about a project you are working on.

Instead of acknowledging it as constructive feedback, you catastrophise, believing you've failed, it's only a matter of time until you'll be fired, catastrophising the situation

Your partner is running late returning home from work.

You start to imagine all the possible accidents or disasters that could have happened, catastrophising the delay and feeling increasingly anxious as you wait for their safe return.

In each of these examples, catastrophising involves magnifying the perceived threat and imagining worst-case scenarios, leading to heightened anxiety and distress.

Unpacking unhelpful thoughts



Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts to Reduce Stress

One effective coping strategy you can try to challenge unhelpful thoughts is 'cognitive restructuring', this is a technique used in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT).

This means that you look for evidence for and against your negative thoughts and replace them with more balanced and realistic alternatives.

It helps if you write this down on paper and make time to do this exercise.

By reframing your perspective and choosing more helpful thoughts you begin to reduce the emotional intensity of stressful situations.

Making time to learn to challenge thoughts will help you 'stress less', build your resilience and create a sense of internal calm.

If you want to **pause your racing mind** this is for you:

FREE MASTERCLASS



'Overwhelmed to
Overcoming Doubt'

Create a calm mind

Access this **FREE 30-min Masterclass** and learn the 4-step strategy I teach all my 1:1 clients, so you can stop overthinking and start living a worry-free life.

Tap to Download

<https://sarahtombs.myflodesk.com/overcomedoubt>

Strategies for Stress Management

Take time to understand what works for you

Mindfulness and Meditation Techniques:

Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment with openness and curiosity, without judgment.

Meditation practices, such as focused breathing or body scan meditation, can help you cultivate calm and develop a greater awareness of your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.

By regularly practising mindfulness and meditation, you can learn to respond to stressors more skillfully and cultivate a sense of inner calm and resilience.

[You can access a quick 5-min meditation I recorded here](#)

Grounding Techniques:

Grounding techniques, like the 5-4-3-2-1 method, offer a quick and effective way to alleviate stress.

This technique involves engaging your senses by noticing:

- **Five things you can see:** Look around and identify five objects in your environment.
- **Four things you can touch:** Pay attention to the texture of four nearby objects or surfaces.
- **Three things you can hear:** Listen for three distinct sounds in your surroundings.
- **Two things you can smell:** Take note of two scents in the air or around you.
- **One thing you can taste:** Finally, focus on one taste or flavour you are currently experiencing.

Practising the 5-4-3-2-1 technique can help you stay grounded in the present moment and reduce feelings of stress or overwhelm.

Strategies for Stress Management

Take time to understand what works for you

Setting Boundaries and Prioritising Self-Care:

Setting boundaries involves clearly communicating your needs, preferences, and limits to others and honouring them in your daily life.

Prioritising self-care means making time for activities that nourish your physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

By establishing healthy boundaries and prioritising self-care, you protect your energy and prevent burnout, enabling you to show up as your best self in all areas of your life.

Challenging and Choosing Thoughts:

As we mentioned, learning how to recognise unhelpful thoughts and then learning how to challenge them is essential for managing stress effectively.

By becoming aware of negative thought patterns and questioning their validity, you can begin to replace them with more realistic and constructive ones.

Additionally, practising positive affirmations can further support you; these are short, powerful statements.

By repeating affirmations regularly, you can reprogram your subconscious mind, cultivate a more optimistic and compassionate mindset, and boost your self-esteem.

This practice can help you navigate stressors with greater ease and confidence, empowering you to face challenges head-on and maintain a positive outlook on life.

Building Your Own 'Stress Toolkit':

Use this space to identify and experiment with a variety of stress management techniques and coping strategies to determine what works best for you.

By intentionally curating a selection of tools and resources that help you, you can empower yourself to effectively manage stress and cultivate a greater sense of well-being in your daily life.

.....

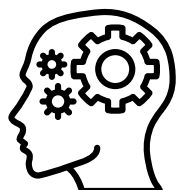
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



More goodies for you



1 'Overwhelmed to Overcoming doubt'

FREE 30-MIN MASTERCLASS - stop worrying and start living with more ease.

[TAP TO DOWNLOAD IT NOW](https://sarahtombs.myflodesk.com/overcomedoubt)

<https://sarahtombs.myflodesk.com/overcomedoubt>

2 'CHAOS TO CALM': 90MIN MASTERCLASS TO STOP SURVIVAL MODE

Ready to truly create sustainable change and learn more in-depth tools?

✦ **A little gift for you: 20% OFF CODE: ZENCLOUD20** ✦

Chaos to Calm
90 min Masterclass:
STOP survival mode for good



TAP TO ACCESS

This masterclass is for you if you want to:

- Eliminate overwhelm and feel in control of your life
- Make decisions confidently and decisively and say goodbye to second-guessing yourself
- Swap frustration for inner peace
- Improve your relationships by showing up as your best, most authentic self

<https://sarahtombs.myflodesk.com/chaostocalm>

"I loved it, it was so helpful and I learnt so much in 90 minutes! I feel the calmest I have ever felt and I have a plan to keep me balanced, focused and being my best self! Thank you!" **H, Nurse, Staffordshire**

Calm in Chaos



YOUR GUIDE TO MANAGING STRESS

It has been a pleasure to create this guide for you.

I trust that you feel more equipped to manage stress and cultivate a greater sense of calm in your life.

Save this guide and keep looking at the steps so you can:

- Recognise stress and stop it in its tracks using your personalised stress strategies
- Reduce overwhelm and anxiety, supporting you to approach each day with clarity and focus.
- Improve your overall well-being and quality of life by prioritising self-care and setting healthy boundaries
- Supporting you to say goodbye to overwhelm and begin working to create a calm mind

If you've found this useful and you want to hear more from me, then I would love to connect with you via the links below.

Here's to YOU feeling calm, confident and capable.

with love and gratitude,
Sarah



Let's Connect



[Join 'Calm Club' for FREE](#)
[weekly wisdom to your inbox](#)



www.SarahETombs.com



[@sarah_tombs](#)

Written by Sarah Tombs

Trauma-informed Therapist, Psychological Coach and Workplace Wellbeing Consultant

Reg. MBACP, MSc, BSc, Dip Coach