

STRESS

MANAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING EVERYDAY PRESSURE

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the body's natural response to pressure, challenges, or change. A small amount of stress can be helpful — it motivates and helps you perform. But chronic or high levels of stress can affect mood, sleep, digestion, immunity, and overall health.

“It's not the load that breaks you, but how you carry it” – Lou Holtz

HEALTHY WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS

Move Your Body

- Regular activity helps lower stress hormones and boosts mood.
- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity per week (e.g., brisk walking, cycling, swimming).
- Even short walks or stretching breaks help calm the mind.

Relaxation & Mindfulness

- Try deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindfulness meditation.
- Apps such as Headspace, Calm, or NHS Mind Plan offer guided sessions.
- Even 5–10 minutes a day can make a difference.

Time & Workload Management

- Prioritise tasks: focus on what's essential today.
- Break large tasks into smaller steps.
- Take regular breaks — avoid skipping lunch or working late daily.

Connect with Others

- Talking to friends, family, or colleagues can reduce stress.
- Social connection provides perspective and support.

If things feel too heavy, reach out to your GP or local support services (e.g., Mind Helpline 0300 123 3393).

Healthy Lifestyle Habits

- Eat regular, balanced meals (see Eatwell Guide).
- Get 7–9 hours of sleep per night.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol and avoid nicotine as a stress-coping tool.

Positive Thinking & Self-Compassion

- Notice negative thought patterns — ask, “Is this fact or assumption?”
- Replace self-criticism with supportive self-talk.
- Keep a gratitude or achievements journal.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If stress becomes overwhelming or persistent:
Speak with your GP, who can discuss options such as talking therapies.

Contact NHS Talking Therapies (England), or Samaritans (116 123, 24/7 free).



RECOGNISING SIGNS

Stress affects everyone differently. Common signs include:

Physical:

- Headaches, muscle tension, fatigue
- Upset stomach, changes in appetite
- Fast heartbeat, sweating

Emotional:

- Irritability, anxiety, low mood
- Feeling overwhelmed or unable to relax

Behavioural:

- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Increased use of caffeine, alcohol, or comfort foods
- Withdrawing from social contact

You can't always control what happens, but you can control how you respond, that's where your power lies

STRESS RELIEF TECHNIQUES

Use these anytime, anywhere:

Box breathing: Inhale 4 seconds → Hold 4 → Exhale 4 → Hold 4. Repeat 4 times.

Grounding exercise: Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.

Stretch break: Stand, roll your shoulders, and take 3 deep breaths.