



STRESS AWARENESS MONTH BOOKLET

2023

Stress and poor mental health are one of the biggest public health challenges that we're facing. Sadly, even though that is the case, we are still not taking its impact seriously enough. We continue to separate mental health from physical health and vice versa. The reality is they cannot be separate – they are two sides of the same coin. There is no health without mental health and stress can lead to numerous health problems. From physical problems, like heart disease, insomnia, digestive issues, immune system challenges, etc to more serious mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.



Stress Awareness Month has been held every April since 1992 to raise awareness of the causes and cures for our modern-day stress epidemic. It is the time when we have an opportunity for an open conversation on the impact of stress. Dedicated time to removing the guilt, shame, and stigma around mental health. To talk about stress, and its effects and open up about our mental and emotional state with friends, families, colleagues, and professionals.

What could you do for Stress Awareness Month?

- Talk about Stress and it's effects – lets work together to reduce the stigma that is associated with stress by talking about the topic openly and freely with friends, family and colleagues.
- Share your coping mechanisms – if something has worked for you why not share it. It might benefit someone you care about and in the meantime, it might help you take your focus off your own challenges.
- Be nice to those who are stressed and anxious – we are all undoubtedly going to experience stress and anxiety in our lifetime so treat others going through it with compassion and empathy.
- Look after yourself – we all need to think more about self-care. Take time out of your day to relax or do something that you enjoy. Don't forget to exercise and eat well, even when you feel too stressed.

The most crucial thing you can do when you are stressed or anxious is to make sure you are continuing to look after yourself. Make time to relax when you need to and learn to say no to requests that are too much for you.

SLEEP, STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

How does sleep relate to stress and mental health?

There's a close relationship between sleep, stress and mental health. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep, and poor sleep can have a negative impact on your mental health.

"Poor sleep leads to worrying. Worrying leads to poor sleep. Worrying about sleep is like your mind trying to fight itself. That's a horrible place to be."

People who are stressed think excessively about responsibilities such as work, family and finances. For teens and young adults in school, this stress often focuses on exams and other important assignments. When one attempts to fall asleep, those thoughts continue and cause numerous disruptions in sleep patterns.

High levels of stress can impair sleep by prolonging how long it takes to fall asleep and fragmenting sleep. Sleep loss triggers our body's stress response system, leading to an elevation in stress hormones, namely cortisol, which further disrupts sleep.

You might:

- find it hard to fall asleep, stay asleep or wake up earlier than you'd like to (also known as insomnia – find out more on the NHS website)
- have problems that disturb your sleep, such as panic attacks, flashbacks, nightmares or psychosis
- find it hard to wake up or get out of bed
- often feel tired or sleepy – this could be because you're not sleeping enough, not getting good quality sleep or because of health problems
- sleep a lot – which could include sleeping at times when you want, or need, to be awake.

DESK YOGA

Why is Desk yoga good?

Physical and Mental Health Improves

We know that yoga reduces stress, improves focus and improves energy. According to the Mayo Clinic, office yoga can also help manage chronic health conditions. Insomnia, high blood pressure, and even depression can improve with regular yoga.

CAT COW

INHALE
to arch
back...



10 Seconds

EXHALE
to round
spine...



10 Seconds
2x

SIDE STRETCH



10 Seconds



10sec



10seconds
2x

SEATED SPINAL TWIST

move
Shoulders
down!



10seconds



10seconds
2x

UPPER BACK STRETCH

PULL
SHOULDERS
DOWN!



10 sec
2x

NECK STRETCH

Gently pull head
to each side



10sec



10 sec 2x

Improves muscle tone and strength

According to a 2021 review, chair yoga can help older adults develop and maintain muscle strength.

Researchers also found that chair-based exercise improves upper- and lower-body function

How often should you stretch at your desk?

It is recommended that a person break for 5-10 minutes for every hour spent at a workstation. If possible, it is ideal to stand up and walk for this time (e.g., work tasks that involve standing, walking, or at minimum, a change of body position). If not possible then doing these stretches at your desk will help to increase blood flow and help stop stiffness and cramps.

OFFICE MEDITATION SESSION

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

Meditation and mindfulness can improve work performance, personal relationships, and health. In an average 9-to-5 work day, just 5 minutes of deep breathing, reflection, and tension release can work to decrease stress levels and increase overall productivity.

HOW TO START MEDITATING AT WORK

There are things you can do to start a meditation practice at work. Here's how:

- Get comfy: Sit or lie down on the floor or stay in your desk chair if it's supportive.
- Close your eyes.
- Breathe deeply in a rhythmic pattern.
- While you're breathing deeply, turn your focus on each breath.
- As you become more experienced, you'll find that your mind will be less distracted and able to focus on each breath.
- Start with five minutes of meditation at first and try to build up to 20 minutes daily, increasing by time increments that are workable for you. Of course, if five minutes is what works for you, that's perfect, too!

SELF SOOTHING TIPS FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY

PLAN AN ACTIVITY

This might be something you do alone or with a friend or loved one. Think of what you'll do and when. Maybe you'll go to dinner, take a walk on the beach, see a movie you've been looking forward to, or visit a museum. Focus on the details, such as what you'll wear, when you'll go, and how you'll get there.

LIST FAVORITES

List three favorite things in several different categories, such as foods, trees, songs, movies, books, places, and so on.

LISTEN TO MUSIC

Put on your favorite song, but pretend you're listening to it for the first time. Focus on the melody and lyrics (if there are any). Does the song give you chills or create any other physical sensations? Pay attention to the parts that stand out most to you.

PRACTICE SELF KINDNESS

Repeat kind, compassionate phrases to yourself. Say it either aloud or in your head, as many times as you need.

- I'm having a rough time, but I'll make it through.
- I'm strong, and I can move through this pain.
- I'm trying hard, and I'm doing my best.

Nature, Stress and Mental Health

Spending time in nature has been found to help with mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression. For example, research into ecotherapy (a type of formal treatment which involves doing activities outside in nature) has shown it can help with mild to moderate depression.

This might be due to combining regular physical activity and social contact with being outside in nature.

How can nature benefit my mental health?

Spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. For example, doing things like growing food or flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can have lots of positive effects.

It can:

- improve your mood
- reduce feelings of stress or anger
- help you take time out and feel more relaxed
- improve your physical health
- improve your confidence and self-esteem
- help you be more active
- help you meet and get to know new people
- connect you to your local community
- reduce loneliness

Why not plan a walking meeting with your staff to help reduce everyone's stress levels and help bring nature into our lives at the office.



DOWNLOAD OUR APP!

Our app has loads of different features to help with reducing stress such as audio books, tip sheets, helplines, mindfulness activities and even some members only discounts in case shopping is what relieves your stress!

You can find our app, on both the google play store and the Apple store, by searching the name "MHC hub". You can also scan the QR code below!



HELPLINES

Samaritans.

To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

You can call 116 123 (free from any phone), email jo@samaritans.org or visit some branches in person. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm-11pm every day).

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK.

Offers a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide.

You can call the National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK on 0800 689 5652 (open 24/7).

Shout.

If you would prefer not to talk but want some mental health support, you could text SHOUT to 85258. Shout offers a confidential 24/7 text service providing support if you are in crisis and need immediate help.

Papyrus HOPELINEUK.

If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call Papyrus

HOPELINEUK on 0800 068 4141 (weekdays 10am-10pm, weekends 2pm-10pm and bank holidays 2pm-10pm), email pat@papyrus-uk.org or text 07786 209 697.

C.A.L.L.

If you live in Wales, you can call the Community Advice and Listening Line (C.A.L.L.) on 0800 132 737 (open 24/7) or you can text 'help' followed by a question to 81066.

