Recognising and managing stress

All of us experience stress at some time in our lives. Things like debt, unemployment, health worries, relationship breakdown, loss and loneliness can affect how we feel, think and act.

A little stress can be a good thing – we call this positive stress. It can help us feel excited, focused and energised. It can improve our ability to problem solve, improve memory and strengthen resilience.

We need this type of stress in our life. It is good for mental and physical wellbeing.

Too much stress is a bad thing. It can affect our health, mood, relationships, sleep, ability to make decisions and carry out every day activities. Stress can make us feel irritable, anxious, frightened, exhausted and impact on self-esteem and confidence.

It can cause physical symptoms like pain, headaches, sickness, stomach problems, breathing difficulties, skin rashes and dizziness.

Sometimes stress can affect how we behave - substance misuse, gambling, avoiding people or familiar activities, changing routine, how much we eat or exercise.

Learning how to recognise and manage stress is important for our mental and physical wellbeing. Everybody is different so it is helpful to understand what makes us feel stressed, how stress affects us and what helps to manage or reduce our stress.

How to help yourself

Listen to yourself and how you are feeling

Recognise when stress is becoming a problem

Think about the things you can change to manage your stress

Build positive relationships. Talk to a friend, colleague or family member

Take time out, practice mindfulness, breathe

Eat healthily, this can improve your mood, and boost energy levels

Create positive routines using exercise and things you like doing

Break down tasks into easier and realistic steps

Plan ahead, write 'to do' lists, jot down notes

Contact a helpline or support group

Be kind to yourself

Develop a positive bedtime routine

The Sleep Charity

the sleep charity

Mind - Managing Stress

mind

NHS - Stress Busters

NHS