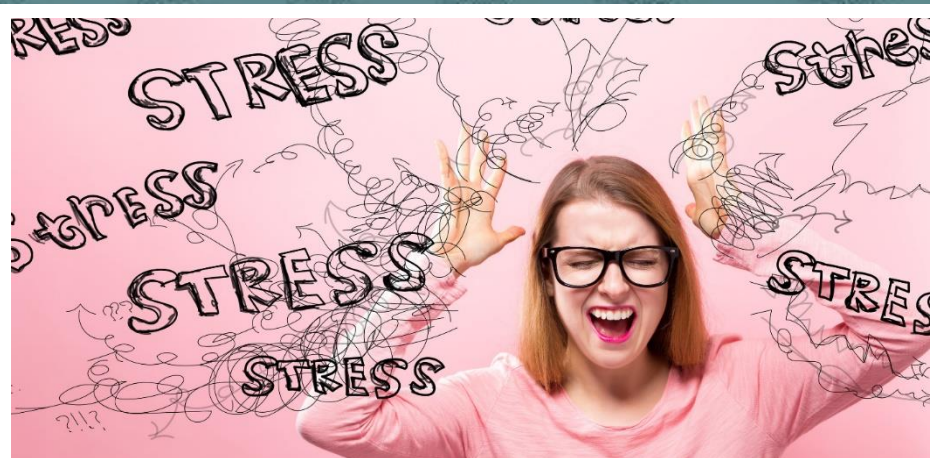


MINDFUL MOMENTS

APRIL: STRESS

Introduction

We can all feel stressed at times - we may say things like 'this is stressful' or 'I'm stressed', but it's not always easy to pin down exactly what stress means and where it might be coming from. Feelings of stress are often triggered by things happening in our lives, whether to do with our health, family, money, housing, employment or something else... But there are some general changes we can make to our lifestyles to help us cope with stressful situations.



How does stress impact me and my work?

When dealing with stress we go into a 'fight or flight' response where adrenaline and cortisol (our stress hormones) are released.

Being under pressure or slightly stressed is a normal part of life and, in small amounts, stress can help us feel more energised and productive. However, if we often become overwhelmed by stress, it can spiral into a bigger problem.

Feeling stressed over a prolonged period can tip us out of balance and our supply of 'happy hormones' may decrease.

This can cause a slump in mood and energy, which could lead us to snapping at people, avoiding situations or feeling tearful. It can also influence our eating habits by causing us to consume too much or too little.

When we are stressed it can affect our day to day work and we might not be able to function as we usually would due to low energy levels, reduced mental alertness and lack of concentration, motivation and productivity.

How can I help myself?

There are various steps you can take to reduce stressful situations, for example: **identifying your triggers, organising your time, addressing the causes, accepting that not everything can be changed.** Doing something to look after your wellbeing can also help you deal with pressure and reduce the impact stress has on your life. This could help you to develop resilience and adapt in future stressful and challenging situations.

Support available

There are many places you can reach out or get more information and support with stress or associated problems:

- Be Mindful: bemindful.co.uk information about mindfulness-based stress reduction.
- Mind Tools: mindtools.com information on stress management.
- NHS Choices: nhs.co.uk tips on how to deal with stress in the workplace.
- Stress Management Society: stress.org.uk tips on coping with stress.

Tips to help you manage stress

1. Prioritise sleep – Try to get into a good routine, switch off your phone and try something relaxing in the hour leading up to bed. This will help you feel refreshed to deal with any stress the next day.

2. Be active – Exercising not only gives us something else to focus on but we release 'happy hormones' which can help us feel less stressed. Try to get outside as this also reduces symptoms of stress!

3. Build a support network – You shouldn't have to cope with stress alone.

Relationships with others can help provide a distraction, as well as emotional support.

4. Try mindfulness – Practice deep breathing which can help us to remove ourselves from negative emotions and help calm the mind.

5. Take a break – Take some 'me time' and do something that interests you or your hobby. This keeps your mind occupied with something else.