



THE
MENTAL
HEALTH
HOUR

Managing Stress


With Samavia

Q&A Session

Managing stress

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1. It feels like there's not enough hours in the day to catch up on workload – how can I manage?

We're all busy, but sometimes we go through periods where the work piles up and it seems like it might never end. You might have such a heavy workload that it feels too intimidating to even start. A heavy workload can be tough to deal with and can cause stress, burnout, and ongoing frustration. So here are some tips to manage the workday.

1. Acknowledge You Can't Do It All
2. Focus on Your Unique Strengths
3. Use the Strengths of Your Team Members
4. Take Time for Planning
5. Focus on Priorities
6. Maintain a Healthy Work-Life Balance - Take Time out
7. Work in Blocks of Time
8. Take a Time Audit

Maintain your confidence you know your job you know your abilities.

02. How do you spot the signs of stress?

If you are stressed, you might feel:

- Irritable, angry, impatient or wound up
- Over-burdened or overwhelmed
- Anxious, nervous or afraid
- Like your thoughts are racing and you can't switch off
- Unable to enjoy yourself
- Depressed
- Uninterested in life
- Like you've lost your sense of humour
- A sense of dread
- Worried or tense
- Neglected or lonely
- Existing mental health problems getting worse

You may experience these emotions depending on what you have going on but if you feel that these feelings are persistent and you are struggling to control them you may be experiencing stress.

03. How do you not take stressful situations personally?

Working on mindfulness and implementing mindfulness techniques can help you become more aware of your emotions and what may be serving as a trigger in stressful situations.

1. Realise when it is causing you a problem
2. Identify the causes
3. Review your lifestyle

To act on the answer to these questions, you may need to prioritise things you are trying to achieve and re-organise your life. This will help to release pressure that can come from trying to do everything at once



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04. Can you get ill from being too stressed?

With all intense emotions, there are physical effects, if the cause issues are not addressed this can lead to both physical and mental health issues

- Difficulty breathing
- Panic attacks
- Sleep problems
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches and headaches
- Chest pains and high blood pressure
- Indigestion or heartburn
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Sudden weight gain or weight loss
- Sweating
- Changes to your period or menstrual cycle
- Existing physical health problems getting worse

But with support and proactive coping mechanisms to manage stress these can be managed. Reach out for support.

05. How do you calm yourself down from being stressed at work?

1. Try deep breathing. Breathing exercises are one of the simplest and easiest activities you can practice reducing symptoms of nervousness
2. Channel your nervous energy into positivity. This may sound difficult, but there is a distinct connection between the feelings of motivation and eagerness, and fear and nervousness.
3. Understand that it's OK to be vulnerable.
4. Get some fresh air. Removing yourself from the current environment that makes you feel nervous and taking a walk around the block can provide an opportunity to return to your usual heart rate.
5. Practice mindfulness - Mindfulness can be anything from writing down how you feel, to spending a few minutes meditating.

06. What is stress?

Stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure.

Acute stress - Acute stress results from your body's reaction to a new or challenging situation.

Episodic acute stress - Episodic acute stress is when acute stresses happen on a frequent basis. This can be because of repeatedly tight work deadlines.

Chronic stress - This type of stress feels never-ending. We often have difficulty seeing any way to improve or change the situation that is the cause of our chronic stress.



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07. How do you manage stress if you work from home?

Lack of structure, home distractions as well as social isolation and a lack of physical exertion can lead to increased stress levels.

Implementing a routine such as getting ready for work as if you still work in the office can help, replacing the commute with gentle exercise or going for walks can help you mentally prepare for the day and shut down after work.

It can be beneficial to have some level of social interaction during the workday, socialising is a practiced skill. When working from home, you may find yourself getting less exercise than you would in an office setting. Lack of exercise can impact your sleep quality and overall mental health

Implementing boundaries for example with family for them to understand that you are still working means that there are less demands on your focus and attention

08. How can you manage stress when everything is overwhelming?

It is important to give yourself time to step back and refocus when you feel like this. You must allow yourself the opportunity to recharge.

If you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious, a quick way to begin to alleviate those feelings is by doing breathing exercises. If the thing that's overwhelming you is in front of you, try taking a step away from it to create some separation between you and the trigger.

Protect your time and space, it is OK to say no healthy boundaries are key.

Acknowledge that it is OK to feel this way, you are human, and we all need help at some point reach out to your social and work support network.

Writing things down can be a useful technique to get clarity about what you have going on, it can stop the cycle of over thinking and allows you to break things down into manageable portions.

09. What are the do's and dont's for managing stress?

Do's

- Eat and drink to optimise your health.
- Exercise regularly. (this can be a 20 Min walk every day)
- Cut down on caffeine, alcohol, or cigarettes
- Implement relaxation techniques.
- Practicing time-management skills like asking for help, setting priorities, pacing yourself, and reserving time to take care of yourself.
- Set realistic goals and expectations.

Don't

- Struggle alone
- Don't wash away your sorrows with a bottle of wine or gallons of caffeine.
- Don't focus on your weaknesses and limitations – focus on what you can do.
- Don't put yourself in situations that have caused you stress in the past.
- Don't do nothing and pretend it's not happening. This will quietly but certainly eat away at self-esteem and self-confidence.



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10. How do I know I'm being impacted by stress?

- Depression or anxiety.
- Anger, irritability, or restlessness.
- Feeling overwhelmed, unmotivated, or unfocused.
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Racing thoughts or constant worry.
- Problems with your memory or concentration.

11. What in particular should you avoid when managing stress? Behaviour, tasks that sort of thing?

Avoid drugs and alcohol as they can add to stress. Eat a well-balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise on a regular basis.

Don't isolate yourself as this will lead you to over think and catastrophise.

Allow your self-space from the issue, take 30 minutes to rest and recharge

Talk about it, reach out for support this can help lighten your mental load.

Maintain your routine - Get up in the morning and go to bed at night each day at the same time. Eat three meals daily.

12. Feeling stress in the workplace- how can I separate it from affecting home life?

Allow your self-time after you finish work to process your day and distress. What can you do to process the anxious energy?

- Going for a walk or engaging in exercise.
- Doing something you enjoy such as cooking or a hobby
- Ending the day by reviewing all the things you have achieved giving you the sense of achievement
- Take control of your environment. If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-travelled route. If the food shop is too much online shop takes the stress away.

Changing small behaviours can have a big impact on how you feel.

13. Do any medications help with relieving stress?

Medications can help with overwhelming physical symptoms but access mental health support and changing a stressful routine will also be helpful. There is no shame in accessing all the support you have available.

If you are worried about the effects that medication can have, talk to your GP have an open conversation about your worries.



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14. How do I control my eating habits during times of stress?

A way of describing it is emotional hunger

Negative emotions may lead to a feeling of emptiness or an emotional void. Food is believed to be a way to fill that void and create a false feeling of “fullness” or temporary wholeness.

So, it is about distinguishing between emotional cues and true hunger cues.

Physical hunger

Develops over time

Desire a variety of foods

You feel the sensation of fullness and take it as a cue to stop eating.

You have no negative feelings about eating.

Emotional hunger

It comes about suddenly or abruptly.

You crave only certain foods

You may binge on food and not feel a sensation of fullness

You feel guilt or shame about eating.

15. How do you help someone dealing with depression related to family/love life?

Do your research, read up on depression so you know what you are dealing with. There is a lot of information available online and through employer support programmes.

There are many online and in person support groups so signposting to these services can help.

Listen but don't advise allow them to come to their own conclusions, this will allow them a sense of control.

It is important that you are taking care of yourself when taking care of other so boundaries are a must.

16. What do you do when you have too many outside of work thoughts and deadlines at once?

Feeling overwhelmed can affect your ability to focus and you can find yourself procrastinating when you should be working. A technique that can help is setting time aside where you focus on your worries.

Worry time

Spend 20 minutes a day to deal with your worries.

1. Write down something you worry/over think about
2. Ask yourself- is it in my control?
3. If it is not, cross it out and start again, focus on something you can do something about. If it is in your control write down possible practical solutions (do a brainstorming session)
4. Find the most practical solution
5. Write down steps you will take to implement solution (step 1, 2, 3 etc.)
6. Do it
7. Review it



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17. What are the best tools to use when managing stress?

- Eat a balanced diet – taking care of your body will help you manage physical symptoms
- Make time for activities you enjoy - building time for leisure into your schedule could be key to helping you feel your best. And when you feel better, you'll perform better, which means leisure time may make your work time more efficient.
- Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation, this will allow you to work on mindfulness and recognise where you carry your stress
- Focusing on your breathing or changing the way you breathe can make a big difference to your overall stress level. Breathing techniques can calm your body and your brain in just a few minutes

18. What is the best coping mechanism for stress?

As unique individuals stress management is not a one size fits all technique. It may involve some trial and error, trying things and testing different ways but inevitably tailoring things to fit with you needs.

Some people work out, go for runs go to the gym. Others read or take part in crafts. Some write and keep journals. But everyone has one thing in common, becoming more self-aware. Working to recognise your triggers and implementing techniques to manage these.

The best mechanism to cope with stress is to be honest with yourself accept the emotions and learn more about what makes you tick. By taking the time to see what helps and hinders you, what you enjoy and what you feel bring you down will help you to evolve and be better for yourself. Put yourself first allow yourself to be selfish in meeting your needs and don't give up if one thing does work, move on to the next without berating yourself boost yourself knowing that these steps will lead to a positive outcome.

19. My partner is stressed but I'm not – what shall I do to help them?

It is hard to watch the people that we care about feeling stressed or feeling overwhelmed. We want to do something that will make the 'better' take away the negativity they are facing.

It may be good for you to take a step back not add your desire to help to their list of stressors. Let them know you are there and ready when they want your support. You may not be able to help them reach a solution, but you are there for them to feel less alone.

Reassure them - When someone is in the middle of a stressful time, it can be hard to see when it might end. Let them know that situations change and can get better.

Help them relax – Find something that you can do together that allows you both time away from the issues. A yoga class or hiking.



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20. I tend to stress eat – how can I break the cycle?

Focus on becoming more self-aware, ask yourself why I am engaging in this behaviour before acting.

Am I eating to fill my belly or am I eating to feed the negative emotions I am feeling?

Think of alternatives, what else can I do to lift my mood and get rid of the anxious energy that, something that will help the positive emotions last rather than the quick fix.

Make meals in advance so that mealtimes are not a rush.

Remove the unhealthy foods or make that snack something you look forward to such as a reward for an achievement.

21. How can I find time to de-stress in a busy lifestyle?

There is a misconception that we need to set aside an hour or two per day to be able to better manage busy schedules. The smallest change can have the biggest impact.

For example, practicing self-care could be taking a 10-minute walk at lunch time to allow you to distance yourself from work. You could implement a 15-minute yoga workout when you arrive home after a busy day which in turns allows you to ground yourself and begin refreshed.

Changing unhealthy eating habits can boost energy and help battle fatigue, reducing caffeine can stop anxiety build up and meeting up with friends can be a safe space to unwind and focus on things other than daily stressors.

My suggestion is to start small and take it one day at a time.

22. My boss gets too stressed and takes it out on us – how can I help them chill?

Schedule a meeting with your manager as a team. Talk about how you feel the team dynamics work and what each team members strengths and weaknesses are, you can then highlight what you worry about in terms of your managers reactions to stress. This will make the conversation less focused on the one person.

By doing this you can lead on to possible solutions and methods of managing stress within the department.

23. My partner does not feel stressed about joint problems e.g. taxes, insurance

We express stress in different ways. As unique human beings how, we process and express emotions can be very different also. Some people like to talk about problems get things out in the open and seek a solution with the help of others. Some people internalise their issues and feel that they must solve the issues alone 'be the dependable one'. In some cases, though we can resort to denying the problem exists as facing this issues head on is to be overwhelming.

What's key in a partnership is talking, find a way that you can communicate with each other, this may be sitting down together making a list and working through each issue, it may be splitting the workload and then setting time aside each week to go through things. What ever you decide to do play to each other's strengths acknowledge what each of you is good at and emphasis how you can support each other through the stress.



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24. How do you know when you're stressed out?

There are many physical symptoms to stress, but a key reaction is to feel overwhelmed.

Some of the symptoms can be

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Racing heart
- Irritability
- Feeling low
- Stress release such as overeating, loss of appetite, drinking or smoking too much
- Wanting to isolate yourself

25. I don't stress. I just let things happen. Is this the right thing to do?

What's right is what works for you, stress is a natural reaction and helps some people and can be overwhelming to others. It can work as a motivator or become a barrier. If you don't stress and allow yourself to adapt and react to a situation and this is working for you, I say carry on.

26. How to deal with insomnia whilst trying to deal with stress?

Stress and anxiety often lead to insomnia and sleep problems. By the same token, lack of proper rest can contribute to stress. You may find yourself stuck in the cycle.

There are a few techniques you can implement

Progressive Muscle Relaxation - Tension in your body can make it difficult to sleep. While people often don't even realize when they're stressed about something, their bodies are feeling the stress, and are tensed up as a result.

Journalling - write about all the things that you have going on for you; things which bring you joy, things which you feel contribute to your anxieties/low mood or may make you feel anxious. It may be helpful to make a note of those thoughts which you find circling your mind, things that maybe you over think or those things which you find affecting you in a way that you think maybe they should not.

Take the Pressure off Sleep - when losing sleep becomes a regular occurrence, bedtime itself can become stressful. If you're having trouble sleeping, you might want to get up and do something after a few minutes. It's also a good idea to use your bedroom primarily for sleep so that you associate your bed and your bedroom with sleep and not stress

Don't Do It Alone - see what's out there, CBT can help, some short term medication or yoga. Take to others see what helped them sometimes trial and error may help you find a solution that is unique to your needs.



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27. Would love ideas for supporting staff with stress at work when everyone is remote working

Set clear expectations - Providing guidelines, setting boundaries and reviewing the basics are among the most important steps to take

Be flexible - Although a concrete plan is a must, you should be opened to adjusting strategies as needed.

Track your workers' progress - Have your employees give you a work schedule, along with tasks they are expected to accomplish within a given time. This will give your team structure

Emphasise communication – this will allow the team to know where everyone is and how they are progressing feeling and promote socialising. Many people feel isolated and disoriented in this new work reality. That's why it's important to build connections with employees

Remember to listen - communicate trust and respect, inquire about workload and progress without micromanaging

28. How to cope with sensory overload?

There is no specific treatment for sensory overload. Generally, the aim is to help people dealing with sensory overloads be able to plan for them and manage their reactions.

- keeping a diary of signs, symptoms, and triggers of sensory overload
- avoiding the triggers of sensory overloads, such as loud concerts or events with flashing lights, where possible
- asking others to help reduce sensory inputs, such as by turning down bright lights or opening a window when strong smells are present
- identifying safe spaces to escape to when a sensory overload occurs at school, work, or other venues
- talking to teachers, colleagues, friends, and others about sensory overload and asking for their support in reducing sensory inputs
- taking regular breaks, and getting enough rest and sleep
- drinking lots of water and eating a balanced diet

29. Trying to fit in at school is stressful for me. How do I fix it?

Social anxiety can be very overwhelming. Social interaction is a practiced skill, the more we do it the more we learn.

Steps you can take to help

- 1) **Be mindful** - be present and aware of your thoughts and feelings in a non-judgemental and positive way
- 2) **Challenge your negative and anxious thoughts** - Identify, analyse, and challenge that thought.
- 3) **Act** - Do an activity you like and feel comfortable with, in an environment that would usually make you anxious.
- 4) **Do not focus on yourself** - We often turn inward and focus on ourselves and how others will perceive us, almost always assuming it will be negative. The thought that everyone will be looking at you when you walk into a room and judging you in one way or another? This is not the case.
- 5) **Take a breath** - The physical symptoms of anxiety include increased heart rate, pounding chest, dizziness, and muscle tension. Learning to take a minute and slow down your breath can help you take back control of your body.
- 6) **Be Kind** - Overcoming social anxiety is by no means easy. You will have times where you think negatively and slip back into old habits. If you are feeling run down or tired, you may find yourself feeling more anxious than normal, but it does not mean you have failed. Just take a minute, focus on the present, and practice the techniques you have been working on above.



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30. Are there any vitamins that can help with stress?

Vitamin B1, or thiamine, is often known as the anti-stress vitamin. Using B1 is key to improving mood and treating depression. Using B3, B9, and, in particular, B12, improves mood, a healthy nervous system, and brain health. A 2014 study showed taking B vitamins had a positive impact on occupational stress.

31. Healthy ways of coping with stress?

Acknowledge how you feel, don't cover it up, talk about it and allow yourself to pro-actively manage the symptoms. Find ways to channel the anxious energy this can be through exercise, a craft activity even colouring book.

Try mediation or mindfulness activities. Progressive Muscle Relaxation.

Good to release tension in body/ release stress/ anxiety and to switch off from worries:

Start with hands, then arms, shoulders, chest, stomach, legs etc.

1. Tense each part of your body for 5 seconds
2. Focus on your breathing
3. Visualise happy/safe place
4. Let go

Repeat few times

Protect your sleep - Getting quality sleep at night directly impacts your overall well-being. Even though it may be tempting to do so, using screens late at night can alter your sleep patterns and make it difficult to fall asleep. Be sure to prioritise unwinding at night and practice good sleep hygiene.

32. Feeling utterly overwhelmed with workload and my boss does not seem to get it?

Talk, with your manager, your supervisor, or your colleague, reach out to your team for support you are not alone, and you cannot manage without support.

Talking with others can help you feel less isolated, you may not be the only one feeling this way.

Approach your manager with solutions, what can be put in place to help, what do you need to help you manage and how is this affecting you and your mental health.

Having an open dialogue means that you have been open about the struggle as struggling alone without raising these issues can lead to burn out.

33. Tips for stress management when working remotely?

1. Distractions. Example, if you have a discouraging interaction with a client or management, in an office setting you just have to roll with it and get on with your workday. If you work from home, you can withdraw and go play video games until you feel better.
2. Setting Boundaries. Stick to your work times, It is easier to work longer when you know there is no commute and the work station is more accessible.
3. Social Isolation. Make sure to implement even a small social interaction
4. Less Physical Exertion. Replace your commute activities with walks.
5. Create a Routine. Set a schedule and stick to it, get ready as if you were in the office
6. Create a Dedicated Workspace. Have an area that is just for work where you can walk away when you finish the workday.



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