



Simple Tips for Reducing Stress

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On 2nd November 2023, the UK will observe National Stress Awareness Day. Set up by the International Stress Management Association, the annual event has been created to raise awareness of the effects of psychological distress in the workplace and the strategies we can employ to address it.

Given that [79%](#) of people say job-related stress is the most common form of stress they experience, it's not surprising that the workplace is the central focus of the event. With so many of us feeling stressed at work, and [1 in 14](#) of us feeling

stressed every single day, it's vital that we know how to spot the signs and manage the symptoms before stress starts to become a problem.

What is Stress?

According to World Health Organization, stress is "a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation." While WHO reassures that stress is a natural human response that can actually help us tackle threats and challenges, they also confirm that "too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems."

When high levels of stress are suffered for a prolonged period, a person can experience:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Breathing difficulties
- Chest pains
- Blurred vision
- Heartburn and digestive problems
- Headaches
- Muscle tension and pain
- Increased risk of heart attack, high blood pressure, and stroke
- Sleep problems
- Weight gain

Now that we know the signs of a stressed mental state, let's take a look at the steps you can take to manage stress and remain grounded when pressures start to rise. First off, it's important to know the facts about stress – because you've probably heard a lot of fiction...

Myth: Stress is motivational

Fact: While it's [true](#) that short-term reactions to stress can help us deal with difficult or dangerous situations, using stress as your main motivator will eventually impact your physical health and mental wellbeing. As [Psychology Today](#) puts it: "People who get things done under stress are succeeding in spite of their stress, not because of it."

Myth: Stress is a mental health condition

Fact: If left unaddressed, stress can cause mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety to develop. However, stress itself is not a mental health condition - but rather a physiological response to some form of jeopardy.

Myth: Stress is inevitable

Fact: Stress may be an unavoidable reality, but it doesn't have to be inevitable. That's because we can take steps to change our response to stress by developing better mental resilience and effective coping mechanisms.

Tips to Manage Stress

1. Prioritise your wellbeing

In order to keep stress at bay, it's important that we're feeling well in our minds and bodies. Sleep, physical activity, and healthy eating can make stress easier to cope with by boosting our brain function and enhancing our analytical skills. You can begin by introducing small changes that make a big difference to your mental wellbeing, such as fitting in a short daily walk or getting to bed an hour earlier.

2. Learn to identify your triggers

As we've already mentioned, stress is often unavoidable. By learning to recognise what gets you stressed, however, you can better prepare for stressful situations as and when they arise. A good way to track your triggers is by making a note of everything that makes you feel stressed and looking for any patterns. When you next encounter one of these situations, you can pre-empt your response and use techniques to calm your stress levels – such as...

3. Breathing exercises

Did you know that breathing deeply can send signals to your brain that encourage your body to relax? By incorporating a breathing exercise such as [this one](#) from the NHS into your daily routine, you can calm your mind, steady your heart rate, and face your stress triggers in a positive, resilient way:

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your arms by your sides and your feet hip-width apart
 - Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth
 - With each inhale, count steadily from 1 to 5. Then, gently release the breath while counting from 1 to 5 again
 - Repeat for 5 minutes each day to experience the full benefits
4. Limit time on social media

Spending too much time on social media can become stressful for two reasons. Firstly, the act of comparing ourselves to others can make us feel depressed and isolated, which in turn leaves us less able to deal with stressful situations. Secondly, because many people use social media at night, it can impact our sleep quality and cause us to feel more irritable - and less resilient.

If you feel that social media is causing your stress to spike, why not set a screentime cap on your apps to remind you to stop scrolling?

5. Connect with others

Forming connections with those around us is vital to feeling safe and supported. Whether that's reaching out to a friend or colleague, joining a shared interest group, or volunteering for a local cause, finding a sense of community can boost your wellbeing and provide a space to give and receive support for life's many challenges.

Where to Turn for Further Support

Tried all the above and still can't seem to shake stress? It might be time to speak to your GP about alternative treatment options such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), medications, or referral to a specialist.

If your employer offers Vivup's Employee Assistance Programme, there are lots of useful resources on breathing techniques and mindfulness that can help you manage stress. Plus, you can also access a 24-hour telephone helpline for responsive, confidential and totally independent advice should you or a colleague need mental health support.

Sources

[Common types of stress in the UK 2020 | Statista](#)

[Signs and symptoms of stress - Mind](#)

[Workplace stress statistics: how stressed is the UK in 2021? - Ciph](#)

[Stress and your health: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia](#)

[8 Deadly Myths About Stress | Psychology Today United Kingdom](#)

[Breathing exercises for stress - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)