

Stress Management

Defining Stress:

- *Stress* is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension.
- *Stress* is a force from the outside world impinging on the individual. Stress is a normal part of life that can help us learn and grow. Conversely, stress can cause significant problems.
- *Stress* is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response.

Causes of Stress:

List the things that may cause stress in your life:

Identify the stress in your life as short and long term.

Short term stressors:

Long term stressors:

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Identifying the symptoms:

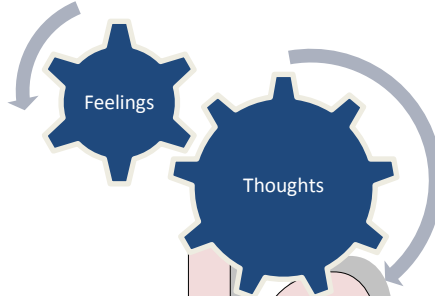
What are the signals of stress for you?

How does stress affect you?

What do you do to avoid stress?

Taking action:

You have control over your thoughts and how you respond to any situation.



If you can control what you think and how you interpret a given situation or stressful event, then you can control your emotional response.

You have a million things to do! What are you thinking?

The illustration shows a man in a blue suit and red tie sitting at a desk. He is holding a mobile phone to his ear with his right hand and looking at a document with his left hand. There are papers and a pen on the desk. Three small circles lead from the man's head to two larger cloud-shaped boxes. The top box contains the text: 'Unproductive thought = I will never cope. I can't do this!' followed by 'Feeling = _____'. The bottom box contains the text: 'Productive thought = _____' followed by 'Feeling = I'm ok. I feel good!'.

It is not just about Positive thinking. It is about restructuring your negative thinking, then trying to interpret events and situations in a more optimistic and positive way.

What strategies can you use to stop the cycle of negative thinking? _____

Counselling Notes: Stress Management

Description: This worksheet is designed to give the client insight into what causes stress for them, how to identify the warning signs and how they might manage stress.

Ages: 14 years+

Ideas for use: Try and get the client to explain in detail the ways they cope and give examples.

- Explain that how we interpret each thought can either create a negative or positive outcome.
- If the client interprets a stressful event in a negative way, then they are more likely to increase their levels of anxiety or stress.
- When the client is listing the things that cause them stress, try to get them to be as specific as possible e.g. if they say school, ask what is it about school specifically?
- The signs related to stress are important for the client to identify as they need to have a plan when they are experiencing those symptoms.
- Explain to the client about “positive self talk” and how thoughts impact upon emotions.
- The last question asks the client to think of strategies to stop the cycle of negative thinking. Some ideas are:
 - Be aware of a negative mindset.
 - Think more optimistic thoughts.
 - Replace the negative thoughts and self doubts with more productive thoughts.
 - Calm the self by using “self talk”.
 - Refuse to think the worst – It won’t be that bad!
 - Write down some positive quotes and reflect on them often.

The use of role play for a stressful event, such as studying for an exam, or completing VCE, while being involved with school life is a good way to demonstrate how thoughts have the ability to control emotions.

Possible Counselling questions:

- Describe a stressful situation where you didn’t cope
- Describe a stressful situation where you did cope?
- What is the difference between these two situations? What did you do differently, that helped you cope?

Other worksheets to explore in this series:

- Relaxation
- The Monkey Brain
- Stress Management Techniques
- Ways of Coping

Further Information: Stress Management

Types of Stress:

Stress has the potential to manifest itself as either physical, emotional or mental symptoms, or a combination of these. This will depend on the stressors that the individual is experiencing.

Physical – when the body starts to suffer as a result of a stressful situation. Symptoms can manifest in a variety of ways. Headaches are common, as people sometimes tense their neck, forehead and shoulder muscles. Long-term stress can lead to:

- Digestive problems including ulcers
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- High blood pressure
- Nervousness and excessive sweating
- Heart disease
- Strokes
- Hair loss.

Emotional – these responses are due to stress affecting the mind and include anxiety, anger, depression, irritability, frustration, over-reaction to everyday problems, memory loss and a lack of concentration for any task.

Anxiety is normally shown as a response to loss, failure, danger or a fear of the unknown. Anger is a common response to frustration or social stress and can become a danger to other individuals if not kept in check. Depression is frequently seen as an emotional response to upsetting situations such as the death of a loved one, illness and failure.

Psychological – long-term stress can cause psychological problems in some individuals. Symptoms include withdrawal from society, phobias, compulsive behaviours, eating disorders and night terrors.