

TOP 10 STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS

Stress

What do we mean by it?

Stress is a familiar term that everyone experiences. But what is stress? According to psychologists, stress is a physiological and psychological response to perceived threats, challenges, or demands in one's environment. The response can be positive or negative, depending on its intensity and duration. While some stress is healthy and motivates individuals to perform their best, prolonged or intense stress can lead to physical, mental, and emotional health problems.



Taking a closer look...

Factors that trigger and maintain stress

Stress can be triggered by a range of factors, including work pressures, financial worries, relationship conflicts, and health concerns. The way an individual perceives and copes with stressors can affect their stress response. Some coping strategies can add to stress, such as substance use, denial, and avoidance. On the other hand, effective coping strategies like problem-solving, social support, and relaxation can help reduce stress levels.

In 2020-21, 3.4 million Australians aged 16-85 years (17%) saw a **health professional for their mental health.**



In 2020-21, 15% of Australians aged 16-85 years reported feeling lonely in the previous four weeks, while 16% of households experienced at least one financial stressor such as not being able to pay bills on time.

15% of Australians aged 16-85 years experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress.

The neurobiology behind stress

When the brain perceives stress, it activates the sympathetic nervous system, signaling the fight-or-flight response. The brain releases stress hormones, including cortisol, which triggers a range of physiological responses in the body, such as increased heart rate, breathing rate, and blood sugar levels. In the long term, increased cortisol levels can wreak havoc on the body, leading to physical symptoms, including headaches, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances. Stress can also impair cognitive function, memory, and concentration, affect mood regulation, and weaken the immune system.

Children versus adults

Children and adults experience stress differently due to developmental differences. For children, stress can present as behavioral or emotional changes, such as acting out, clinginess, or withdrawing. They may also experience physical symptoms like stomach aches, headaches, and changes in sleeping or eating patterns. Helping children cope with stress may include providing emotional support, establishing routines, and encouraging healthy habits like physical activity, good nutrition, and quality sleep. For adults, stress can manifest in a range of mental and physical health issues, including anxiety, depression, heart disease, and chronic pain. Effective coping strategies for adults include maintaining a healthy lifestyle, seeking social support, and practicing stress management techniques.



Our top 10 stress management tips

1. **Identify Your Stressors:** Understanding what triggers your stress response can help you better manage stress in your life. Start by keeping a stress journal to monitor your stressors.
2. **Practice Self-Care:** Engaging in self-care activities that promote relaxation and pleasure, such as exercise, meditation, and hobbies, can boost mood and resilience to stress.
3. **Prioritise Sleep:** Getting quality sleep is essential for physical and mental health. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep a night and establish a relaxing bedtime routine.
4. **Stay Connected:** Social support can help reduce stress levels and promote feelings of happiness and well-being. Reach out to friends, family, or support groups for emotional support and companionship.
5. **Practice Mindfulness:** Mindfulness practices, such as deep breathing, and meditation can help reduce stress levels and improve overall well-being.
6. **Manage Time Effectively:** Poor time management can contribute to stress levels. Set priorities, schedule tasks, and delegate responsibilities when possible.
7. **Seek Professional Support:** psychologists can help you learn effective coping strategies, manage stressors, and improve overall well-being.
8. **Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:** Eating a balanced diet, staying hydrated, and avoiding harmful substances like alcohol and tobacco can help reduce stress levels and promote physical health.
9. **Establish Boundaries:** Learning to say no, setting boundaries, and prioritizing your needs can reduce stress levels and promote overall well-being.
10. **Practice Gratitude:** Focusing on positive aspects of your life, such as relationships, achievements, and experiences, can promote feelings of happiness and resilience to stress.

Understanding stress, its impact and how it manifests differently in life stages allows us to implement effective stress management techniques into daily life. Most importantly, seeking professional help when needed can lead to a healthier and happier well-being.