

Managing Stress

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS?

Acute stress – specific to the demands and pressures of a particular situation – for example, dealing with a difficult customer when you have a venue full of patrons.

Episodic acute stress – repetitive stress as a result of a series of challenges – losing a job, then developing health problems, having a child experience difficulty at school.

Chronic stress – ongoing demands, pressures and worries that seem to go on forever.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF STRESS?

There can be many different elements which impact on our stress levels. These can include work factors, particularly throughout COVID-19 and the challenges that changing workplaces have created. COVID-19 has also created a number of external factors that impact on our stress levels – changing Government restrictions, economic conditions and issues with travel. Home factors – such as issues with our families and friends can cause us to feel stressed, but this will also extend to health concerns about our loved ones through COVID-19. And finally, personal factors – such as personality – can contribute to our stress levels.

HOW TO MANAGE FEELINGS OF STRESS?

Understand triggers and early warning signs – recognise the events or factors that cause you to feel stressed; if we understand them, we can learn to anticipate and manage them. This might include seeing particular people, overtired children, or drinking too much coffee. Identifying your own warning signs is also important, consider what you do when you start to feel stressed. This might include tensing your jaw, grinding your teeth, or getting headaches.

Establish routines – Having some predictability and routine in your day or week can be reassuring, particularly when you are dealing with so much that is outside your control. This may include regular times to get up, setting aside time to exercise or relax or planning to do particular jobs on certain days of the week.

Keeping things in perspective – it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and start to look at things in a generalised way. When one thing is causing stress, it can be easy to feel like everything is stressful. When this starts to happen, concentrate on your own self-talk and notice when you are saying things that are unhelpful (I can't do this, I can't cope with this, this is all too much) and look for more helpful messages (this will pass, I'm doing the best I can with what I can control). Looking for a positive in amongst the challenges can help to keep things in perspective. Try self-talk such as 'in the overall scheme of things, this doesn't matter so much'.

Look after your health – eating healthy food, getting enough exercise and finding time to do things that you enjoy and find calming are important. In particular, time spent with nature can have an impact on our physical, mental, social and work-related health. This can include exercising in nature, but also gardening, sitting and reading outside, watching the horizon, having indoor plants or pictures of nature views.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

These questions are designed to prompt team discussion and interaction following the podcast:

- What are the signs of you being stressed? (This may be a useful question for team members to ask each other – what they notice about each other when they are stressed)
- How do we as a team handle high pressure situations?
- How can we as a team better handle stress and support one another?