

# WHAT ACTUALLY IS STRESS?

1

## What is stress?

'Stress' can mean lots of things to different people and affects everyone differently. Things like change, pressure and challenges can cause us to feel 'stressed'. A situation may be stressful for us, but a situation could also be made stressful because of other factors. For example, going to school might not be stressful every day, but if you had a row with a friend or have an exam that day, it will feel much more stressful than normal.

## What can I do about it?

There are many things we can do to help ourselves and others deal with stress. Everyone has different thing that will help them feel better.



# IS STRESS EVER HELPFUL?



- Scientists have proven that low levels of the stress hormone Cortisol can prompt a natural drive to complete tasks, and prompt a productiveness you may not have when letting your body completely relax.
- It increases sugar, also called glucose, in the bloodstream- enhances the brain's use of glucose and increases the availability of substances in the body that repair tissues.
- Cortisol also slows functions that would be nonessential or harmful in a fight-or-flight situation, meaning your body prioritises functions that will help you in times of stress (e.g speed/thinking power).

However, sustained periods of extreme stress can cause medical problems like higher heart rate and blood pressure which can lead to headaches, migraines, and heart failure.

# UNHEALTHY WAYS OF DEALING WITH STRESS AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

Remember that some things might make you feel less stressed temporarily but can have serious negative impacts later, like over-eating, getting angry, or self-harm. **Your safety is vital.** Ask yourself: Will this harm my body, mind or emotions in another way?

What are the risks and how can I avoid them?

- 1) **Recognise triggers.** If you are able to identify times where your response to stress is unhealthy this can be an advance warning for you that these feelings might appear, and you may be able to avoid this by stopping that situation earlier.
- 2) **Recognise your feelings/urges** in yourself and notice when you are beginning to feel a certain way.
- 3) **Identify distractions** – what can you do to keep your mind occupied? Some people make scrapbooks/positivity books with things to look forward to or pictures that remind you of things that make you happy- concert tickets/good times with friends/ your pet/ family/ restaurants you want to try/ places you are going on holiday/ tickets to an event you are looking forward to. Remind yourself of all the positives.
- 4) **Keep a diary** and try to write down your thought processes and how you got to feeling a certain way- it can help you to work out what helps and what triggers.
- 5) **Spend time with people you care about and people who are good for you**
- 6) **Do something creative-** this can often be artwork, sport, or music and may take your mind off things.

Explore this with others if you want to discuss the topic more. Talking about how you feel is important. If you need to speak to someone urgently talk to a responsible adult or you can call the [Mind helplines](#).

Infoline: 0300 123 3393



# OVERCOMING STRESS

## Stress-busting strategies:

1. Talk to someone- get the stress out in the air
2. Don't compare or compete- you just have to do what's best for you, in the way that suits you. Everyone is different.
3. Good sleep- stop revising an hour or so before you sleep so you can rest quickly
4. Set realistic targets- little and often! Quality not quantity.
5. Keep your revision out of the bedroom- have a "work place" and a "relax place" if you are able to.
6. Exercise- relieves stress and releases feel-good hormones
7. Breathe deeply and slowly
8. Visualise/focus on your goals
9. Be realistic- what's the worst that would actually happen? Are there ways to fix the worst case scenario?
10. Do your best- no one in your life will need to do more than you are actually capable of, all you can do is what you can manage to give yourself pride.



# MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY



This mindfulness activity will help YOU to tune in to your breathing.

This mindful breathing can be done whenever you are feeling stressed. Wherever you are! For however long you need to de-stress.

# MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY PART 1

- Take some deep, calming breaths. Breathe in through your nose for six seconds and hold your breath once you can't breathe in anymore... then let go quickly through your mouth. Let's do that twice more.
- Now, silently breathe in through your nose for six, and slowly let out your breath for six counts... let's do that twice more. Then just continue breathing in this way, relaxing your whole body.
- Maybe you can notice certain parts of your body, like your face or jaw that have a hard time relaxing. Try to let everything relax as you breathe, and focus on the images that come up during this visualisation exercise.
- Imagine that you are walking up some stairs. At the top of the stairs, there is a closed door, and you know that on the other side of the door, there is a safe, calm room that you love. It's where you always go when you feel stressed.
- As you open the door, you breathe in and out... the biggest breaths you have taken all day. You know you are safe in this room and that you can relax. The room is yours – it's where you want it to be, it's how you want it to look, it has all the things you want to be in there

## MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY PART 2

- You walk to the wall in front of you, where there is a big, beautiful curtain. As you breathe in... and out... and in... and out... you draw back the curtain. On the other side, through a huge floor to ceiling window, you can see all the goings on and happenings in your life and in the world around you.
- You walk back, and relax down on to the softest, most comfortable chair or sofa you have ever sat on. As you breathe in... and out... in... and out... you relax more and more into this soft, comfortable, supportive sofa. You have never felt more comfortable and relaxed. You feel so relaxed, you are able to observe everything that is going on outside. You see things come by your window... people... cities... schools. You watch and you feel that you can slowly think through whatever it is you need to think through.
- You watch the events unfold outside your window and you feel safe and calm inside... knowing that you have the time and the space you need, to think through anything that might be troubling you... and figure out what it is you need to do. You breathe in and out... in and out. You feel more and more relaxed and your body keeps relaxing into the chair or sofa. You start to roll your wrists... you roll your ankles... you take a few more deep, slow, long breaths.
- And you open your eyes, ready to go back and join in the world.

**1. What do you think causes exam stress?**

**2. What are the thoughts that could trigger it?**

Some suggestions are:

Denial of what needs to be done/burying your head in the sand  
Leaving things to the last minute  
Feeling overwhelmed /not knowing where to start  
Pressure of getting the right grades  
Not wanting to disappoint yourself/others  
Seeing others seem to do well/worrying you're not doing well enough or can't do it  
Not knowing/forgetting how to do something  
Pressure from outside about importance of exams  
Uncertainty about the exam questions  
Unfamiliar surroundings and people overseeing the exams  
Concern about what others will say if you don't do well  
Lack of confidence about revision techniques and whether you are revising effectively  
Feeling that teachers and other adults don't understand stress.

# Things you can do/things you can say to help a friend who is stressed

Genuinely listen to how they are feeling

Reassure them that this stressful period is only temporary temporary and won't last forever

Help them to take some time out to have fun

Let them know that you're there for them if they need to talk

A hug might be helpful!

Share strategies that have helped you revise

Offer to revise with them!

Add more suggestions underneath as you share answers

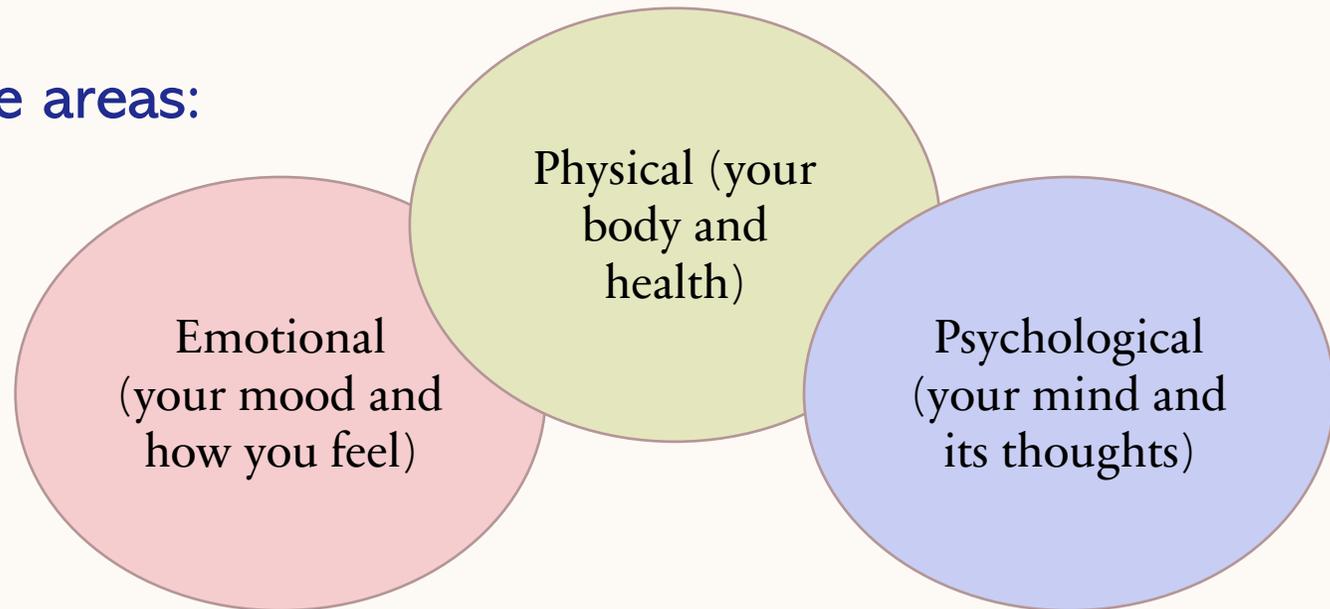
# WHAT IS WELLBEING?

What is the definition of the word wellbeing?

- People use this word to describe “being happy, comfortable, and healthy in both body and mind”

**Oxford dictionary definition:** the state of being healthy, happy, or prosperous; physical, psychological, or moral welfare.

It is usually divided into three areas:





# BREATHING EXERCISE

11

- Sometimes waves of emotion are so strong we can't focus or think straight.
- Breathing exercises can help your brain to calm down and in turn, helps you to start being able to focus on how to help yourself by thinking more clearly about an action plan.

Close your eyes and relax your body. Imagine you are on a soft, warm, sandy beach.

Spend one minute completely relaxed, trying to breathe in as the wave gets louder (pace your breathing slowly) and breathe out as the wave fades away (slowly).

During this, concentrate on the pacing of your breathing and how your body feels as it slowly takes in air and then decompresses. Can you feel your body functioning as it should to slow your breathing rate?

This is a strategy you can do anywhere- with or without audio- today we will try it with audio.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGiBBq7dBpk>

# SETTING BOUNDARIES

Setting boundaries with those around you, and likewise respecting the personal boundaries of others can make your emotional and Psychological wellbeing much better,

# REFLECTION

13

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mc0S7x91Bs>

1. Watch the web of connections video. How many people are in your web?
2. How are the ways you could contact them?
3. What needs do they have?
4. What can you do to be helpful or kind to them?

peace,  
love  
& joy