



Stress & Anxiety

The causes, symptoms & ways to
manage



Stress vs Anxiety

What do you think the differences are between stress and anxiety?

Stress & Anxiety

Stress and anxiety are two different conditions (on a continuum).

One can lead to the other -if you are stressed for a long period of time this can lead to feelings of anxiety, if you have anxiety about different things, this can make you feel stressed.

Both can affect people differently - times, feelings, severity, symptoms.

Both are normal.

Stress

What kinds of things
make you feel
stressed?

Stress

- Stress is the response our bodies and minds have to a change
- It is quite normal and can be positive or negative
- It works on a continuum of within, or outside, our control. The less control we have, the more intense our stress reaction is likely to be
- The 'fight or flight response,' is our bodies natural stress response. It creates physiological changes for the body to successfully react to stressful situations

Common causes of stress

Money

Work

Family commitments

Relationships

Bad drivers

People not wearing a mask in the supermarket

Moving house or job

Check-in

Can you think of any times
in the last year when you
have felt stressed?

Signs of stress

Can you give examples of how you feel when you are stressed?

Signs of stress

When a natural, healthy, stress response is activated over a prolonged period of time, it can cause physical and emotional wear and tear on our bodies. If stress is left 'untreated' symptoms can include:

- High blood pressure
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Muscle aches and pains
- Decreased sex drive
- Weight changes
- Increased perspiration
- Frequent colds, viruses
- Sleep disturbances
- Mood swings
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of focus and concentration
- Bouts of depression
- Decreased productivity
- Withdrawal/isolation
- Increased irritability/decreased anger control

Gender & Stress

Men and women have different reactions to stress, both physically and mentally.

They attempt to manage stress in different ways...men are more likely to play sports, listen to music or say they do nothing to manage their stress than women and are less likely to seek help or support from friends, family or professionals.

Stress can affect men in very specific ways including increased risk of prostate cancer, erectile dysfunction, male infertility, cardiovascular disease, chronic gastrointestinal problems and chronic pain.

Check-in

What are some of the things you do to deal with stress?

Anxiety

Anxiety may be one of the results of prolonged stress, along with depression and panic attacks. But stress is not necessarily anxiety and it does not always result in anxiety in all people.

Experiencing occasional anxiety is no cause for concern, just as stress is a normal part of everyday living, so is some measure of anxiety. We all tend to operate at peak performance under a certain amount of anxiety.

But if you experience anxiety that seems unremitting, uncontrollable, and which interferes with your normal functioning, this could be an anxiety disorder.

Signs of anxiety

Can you give some examples of things you might feel if you suffer from anxiety?

Signs of anxiety

- Increased heart rate
- Feelings of fear and nervousness
- Rapid breathing (hyperventilating)
- Feelings of panic
- Overwhelming feelings of doom or danger
- Avoidance (avoiding situations that may trigger anxiety)
- Sleep problems
- Inability to focus on anything but the trigger of anxiety
- Inability to control thoughts of worry
- Phobias (unwarranted fear of spiders, social situations, germs...etc.)

Anxiety

Anxiety can become a mental health problem if it impacts on your ability to live your life as fully as you want to.

For example, it may be a problem for you if:

- your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
- your fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation
- you avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious
- your worries feel very distressing or are hard to control
- you regularly experience symptoms of anxiety, which could include panic attacks
- you find it hard to go about your everyday life or do things you enjoy.

How can you help yourself?

What are some of the ways
you could help yourself if you
are struggling with stress or
anxiety?

How can you help yourself?

How likely are you to
actually do them?

What are the barriers?

How can you help yourself?

Stress/anxiety diary

If you don't know what is causing your stress, it might help to keep a 'stress diary' for a few weeks. It may help you identify things you may be able to change. If you are anxious, it might help to make a note of what happens when you get anxious or have a panic attack. This could help you spot patterns in what triggers these experiences for you. Try noting what works or is going well too.

Get practical advice

You may be able to take steps to change the cause of your stress. There are lots of places you can get practical advice on different issues. An advice service may be a good place to start. They may be able to support you to solve an issue.

Plan your time

If you plan your time this can make you feel more in control of things.

How can you help yourself?

Lifestyle changes

Limit your caffeine intake - can help with better sleep

Exercise - can relieve stress and help you stay healthy

Eat a balanced diet

Get enough sleep

If you struggle with sleep, you can talk to your doctor, or refer yourself for talking therapies

Practice sleep hygiene - have a regular bedtime routine, only use your bed for sleeping, exercise regularly but avoid close to bedtime, cut down on caffeine, make the place you sleep a comfortable temperature & dark, do not use your phone or computer immediately before bedtime, and make sure the place you sleep is tidy.

How can you help yourself?

Cut back on stressors

If you're feeling overwhelmed, cut back on your workload or any other commitments to give yourself some time to relax.

Spend time with others

Men are especially prone to withdrawing socially and isolating themselves when feeling stressed and this can make you feel worse. Spend time with others to help take your mind off your problems.

Stay active

Go for walks, a bike ride, or hit the gym. Exercise lowers stress and anxiety & also helps you sleep better. Yoga has been shown to be especially beneficial for stress reduction.

Set aside time for things you enjoy

Making time for things you enjoy can help you unwind in times of stress.

How can you help yourself?

Talk to someone/find support/join a support group

Telling someone how you are feeling may help. It can help to 'offload' your worries.

Explore ways to actively deal with stress or anxiety

Explore activities such as mindfulness, meditation or Yoga.

Yoga is great for building physical strength and flexibility but also helps to focus and calm the mind. Try an online youtube channel such as Yoga with Kassandra, Yoga with Bird, or Pilates with Katya.

Deep breathing exercises can really help to bring down the heart rate, clear the mind and provide some time and space to mentally refuel.

Body tapping can be a helpful way to practice mindfulness and it calms the parasympathetic nervous system.

Set aside a specific time to mentally focus on your worries – so you can reassure yourself you are not ignoring them. Some people find it helps to set a timer.

Reflections
Next steps?