

Manage Stress and Resilience

Stress is a natural state which allows our minds and bodies to prepare for the unexpected. Some stress is good: It helps us prepare for a big task and protects against imminent threats. However, a constant state of stress is exhausting and bad for our physical and emotional health. Resilience allows us to cope with life's inevitable stress – it allows us to manage stressful periods more effectively and recover faster.



HELPFUL TIPS:

How to identify your stress signature

- **We show stress in four ways:**
 - ▶ **Physically:** feeling the rush of adrenaline, headaches, muscle tension.
 - ▶ **Emotionally:** becoming snappy or teary with little provocation; losing our confidence and vitality.
 - ▶ **Cognitively:** black and white thinking; catastrophising and dwelling on unhealthy thoughts; being indecisive.
 - ▶ **Behaviorally:** increasing our drinking or drug use; avoiding people and places; eating comfort food or not eating at all; insomnia.
- When we are stressed, our old, reptilian brain takes over to keep us safe. But this overwhelms our ability to think clearly, remember details, and respond calmly.
- By identifying indicators that we are stressed, we develop self-awareness that allows us to intervene before we feel overwhelmed.

Building resilience

- Like any muscle, the more you develop your resilience skills, the better you can cope with challenges.

- ▶ **Focus your attention** on what you can control. Set aside big worries (the economy; losing a job) and focus on what you can (looking after your health; learning new skills).
- ▶ **Keep moving!** You don't need to run or swim for an hour but getting 20-30 minutes of exercise several days a week boosts mental health. A brisk walk is great, as is stretching or yoga to unlock your body if you work at a desk. Whatever you enjoy is what you should do!
- ▶ **Build social supports:** People who are strongly connected to family, friends, and community manage stress better.
- ▶ **Reach out:** If you feel like you are being pulled in every direction, remember that you're not alone. Lean into your social network, or if you need privacy, AccessEAP, Lifeline or Beyond Blue are here.
- ▶ **Remember:** stress comes and goes. You might feel overwhelmed at times – but that is not how things will always be.
- ▶ **Be kind:** Volunteer. Look for ways to brighten someone else's day. These activities make someone else's day better. And the bonus is that you get some of that feel-good emotion fed back to you.

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