



# PERSONAL TOOL

## MANAGING STRESS



*This tool was created by one of our senior clinical team members, Kate McPhee, Learning & Organisational Development Consultant at AccessEAP.*

Stress - everyone has it, yet it appears to be one of the most individual experiences that we can have. There is no magical formula to avoid stress but many ideas on how we can manage it and feel better!. With extended lockdowns in many Australian States in place, you would be forgiven for feeling stressed about how the virus is impacting you and the people around you. Uncertainty is difficult, and when it arrives there are different approaches that are littered across Google and Twitter, from “embrace the change” to “stick to your daily rituals.” From my experience, the one that sticks out from the people I have spoken to is to build the uncertainty into your experiences and make that part of your daily planning.

If you are struggling this week a little more than usual –take heart dear reader - you are not alone Your experience is normal (whatever that is anyway!), and the aim here is to alleviate your stress where possible. The reason being that the less stressed you feel about being stressed – the better you will feel. Reducing stress means an increase in happiness, connection with others and an improved feeling of confidence. Reduced stress, like good health, is more than simply good luck – it is something you can plan, do and prevent the stress where you can.

The strategies here are a suggestion. In my experience, they are not taken in isolation – like chemistry (or a cake or cocktail); they are the right elements all put together to create the best management strategies. When discussing this with people, teams or even my family, the idea of a stress management plan is way more effective than “waiting and seeing” as to how your emotions may be once the stress has unfolded. Our emotions can be managed and with care, support, and in time we can learn our own reactions to different situations and plan for those events.

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Stress is everywhere and often feels overwhelming, but here are some tips on how to reduce the load:

- **Planning** – this is the number one way to help reduce feelings of stress. If you know what your day, week and month is looking like, you can make plans to engage help and support.
- **Work out your priorities** and spend some time looking at those at the beginning of your day. Include those people and activities in your life as priorities and make sure they get their fair share of allocation.
- **Practice saying no** – not just to yourself or those closest to you but everyone where and when you can. The alternative being, can I get back to you? I will have to think about that and get back to you when I am able.
- **Do not let people rush you** – just because they are disorganised or under the pump does not mean you have to match their response. If something is going to take longer than the other person is anticipating, make sure that you are clear and set expectations accordingly.
- **Identify your stressful situations** and know what your triggers are. Make a list of events and times in your week where you feel drained. When they occur, use them as an opportunity to practice your stress management strategies. Keep notes on what works.

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Stress and the management of it is hard – remember that clinicians have spent their working entire career assisting their clients on it. Do not suffer alone, and please reach out for support as an objective set of eyes can assist you in making some key steps in alleviating the stress. We are here to help. Contact AccessEAP on **1800 818 728**.

