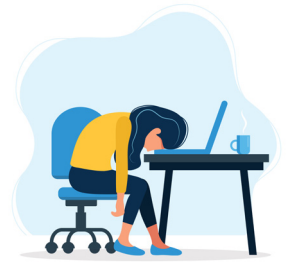


Managing stress



TIP SHEET

We all get stressed at some points in our lives.

Sometimes, you may feel that you have a few too many things to deal with and you're not sure how you are going to do it all.

At other times, you might be dealing with some challenging issues, or going through a tough time.

At all of these times, it's important that you take care of yourself by using some simple strategies to help you manage your stress levels.

Signs of stress

Stress can result in a range of different physical and emotional reactions. Be aware of signs that might indicate that you're under stress, including:

- being short-tempered or irritable
- headaches
- an upset stomach
- sleeping difficulties
- a lack of concentration
- getting sick more often
- tension in your jaw or shoulders
- fatigue or extreme tiredness
- finding it difficult to relax and be calm.

If you think that you're more stressed than you're comfortable with, try some of the following tips to help reduce your stress levels.

Everyone has different ways of managing their stress, so it's important to find out what works for you.

! Ten tips for managing stress

1. Exercise regularly

Exercise can have a positive effect on your emotional health and wellbeing. Exercise regularly with activities including walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics, dancing or going to the gym.

Try to exercise for at least 15 to 30 minutes, three days per week. If you're finding this hard to achieve, aim for just a 10-minute walk each day. The short break can help to refresh you and re-energise you for what you have to do next.

2. Rest and take breaks

Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. During the day, you should also take regular work or study breaks. A general rule of thumb is to take a 10-minute break every hour. Rest your eyes as well as your mind, particularly when spending time looking at computer screens or smart devices.

3. Eat well

Eat a balanced diet. This means eating lots of whole, fresh foods, especially fruit and vegetables. Try to avoid foods that are high in fat and sugar.

Don't rely on drugs and/or alcohol to cope as they may negatively impact decision making and can contribute to mental health issues. Avoid drinking too much caffeine, because as well as keeping you awake, it can also make it harder for some people to concentrate.

4. Talk to friends or family

Spend time with friends and loved ones who will listen to and understand you. Share your thoughts and feelings with people who care about you and may be able to support you.

Relationships Australia
VICTORIA

5. Organise yourself

Schedule the activities that you need to complete each day, or week, in your calendar and work out a plan for how you are going to get them done.

It can also be helpful to schedule time to do other activities that help you to look after yourself, such as exercising and cooking healthy meals.

Having routines and plans in place can be reassuring and you can spend less time worrying about how you're going to get everything done.

For more information, see Dr Dan Siegel's Healthy Mind Platter: drdansiegel.com/healthy-mind-platter

6. Take time out

Taking time out from a stressful situation can be a helpful way to calm down, step back from the situation and think more clearly.

If you're at work, you could go for a short walk, have a glass of water or do some gentle stretches. If you are at home, you could listen to music, read a book or spend some time on a hobby.



7. Be kind to yourself by giving positive feedback

Tell yourself that you can cope, and that you will complete the things you need to do to the best of your ability.

Avoid negative self-talk, including statements such as, 'I can't do this', or, 'I can't cope with this.'

You are doing the best you can, and negative self-talk can actually increase your stress levels.

8. Plan leisure activities

Plan positive activities, or even a holiday, to look forward to at the end of the day, the week or the stressful time in your life. Having something to look forward to can help you get through any current difficulties.

9. Work on things that you can change

There is no point worrying about the things you can't change. Work out what you can change and decide if and how you want to make those changes.

10. Practise relaxation

Try relaxation exercises such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation or yoga to take your mind off your stress for a while. These online resources and smartphone apps may help:

- **Smiling Mind:** <https://www.smilingmind.com.au>
- **Insight Timer:** <https://insighttimer.com>
- **Beyond Blue:** <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/staying-well/relaxation-exercises>
- **ReachOut Australia:** <https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps>

You could also try less formal ways to relax, including listening to music or a podcast, watching TV, doing something creative, or gardening.

Need support?

If you're experiencing persistent stress that won't go away, it may be a good idea to talk to your GP or seek support from a professional counsellor.

To find out how our counsellors can help and find your nearest centre, visit www.rav.org.au/counselling

Please note: We are not a crisis service. If you feel unsafe and need help now, call 000 (triple zero). For 24/7 crisis support, call **Lifeline** on 13 11 14.

For more resources, visit www.rav.org.au/resources

About us

Relationships Australia Victoria has over 70 years' experience providing family and relationship support services across Melbourne and Victoria.

We are committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible services for all people.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways of Australia and we support Aboriginal people's right to self-determination and culturally safe services.

We recognise the lifelong impacts of childhood trauma.

We recognise those who had children taken away from them.