



Stress:

Tips on how to better manage the pressures and stresses of daily life

What is stress?

We all say the words “I’m so stressed,” but what actually is stress, and how do you distinguish the good stress from the bad?

There is **no medical definition of stress**. Everyone’s experiences of stress are unique to them.

Stress can be characterised **by situations and events that place pressure on us**, and **our reactions to being placed under such pressures**.

It is important to note that **not all stress is bad for us**. ‘Eustress’ can have a positive effect on wellbeing, provide motivation, and increase endorphins.

Stress is not normally considered a mental health problem. But it is connected to our mental health:

- Stress can cause mental health problems
- Mental health problems can cause stress

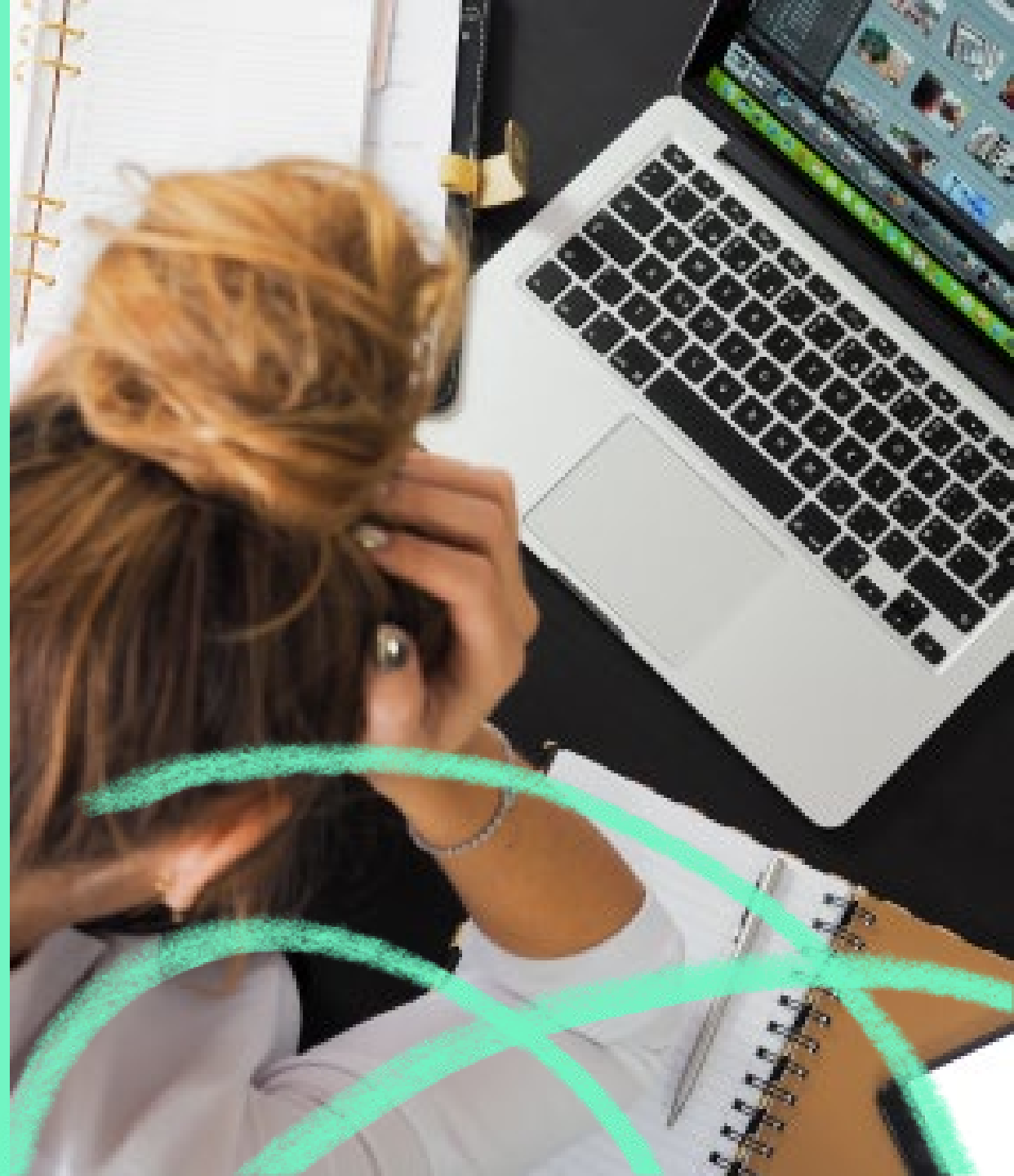
If not managed correctly, stress can start to feel like a **vicious cycle**, dramatically impacting our overall wellbeing.

We have put together this short toolkit guide on how to begin better managing our pressures and stresses, and look after our mental health and wellbeing.

74% of UK adults have felt so stressed at some point over the last year they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope.

(Mental Health Foundation Research Report 2018)

“[It feels like]
the world is
closing in on me.
I can't breathe
and I'm running
out of time.”



What are the signs of stress?

Stress can affect **our emotions, our body, and how we behave** in lots of different ways.

When we are stressed we can often:

- Find it hard to make decisions
- Be unable to concentrate
- Constantly worry or have feelings of dread
- Snap at people
- Grind our teeth or clench our jaw
- Eat too much or too little
- Feel restless
- Cry or feel tearful
- Withdraw from people around us

Sometimes when we are stressed, we might be able to tell right away. But at other times, we might keep going without recognising the signs.

Stress can often make us feel:

- Irritable, angry, impatient or wound up
- Over-burdened or overwhelmed
- Anxious, nervous, or afraid
- Depressed
- Uninterested in life
- A sense of dread
- Worried or tense
- Lonely
- Worried about our health



Muscle tensions

Rapid heartbeat

Stomach problems

Feeling sick or dizzy

Chest pain

Blurred vision or sore eyes

Indigestion or heartburn

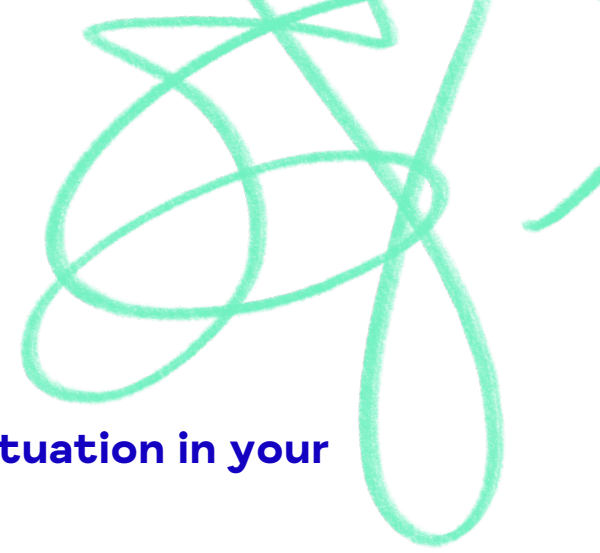
Low energy

Headaches

Physical signs of stress

The physical signs of stress are often ignored and not as widely spoken about, but they can in some cases be more debilitating than the emotional impact of stress.

What can cause stress?



Many things can cause stress. You might feel stressed because of **one big event or situation in your life**, or it might be **a build-up of lots of smaller things**.

This might make it harder for you to identify what's making you feel stressed, or to explain it to other people. Feelings of stress can often be triggered by many different things and could include:

- Feeling under lots of pressure
- Facing big changes in your life
- Being worried about something
- Not having control over the outcome of a situation
- Not having enough work, activities, or change in your life
- Having responsibilities you find overwhelming
- Experiencing discrimination, hate, or abuse
- Going through a period of uncertainty



**Sometimes I take a minute to
'reply' to my stressy thoughts...**

**It's hard to be stressed when
you've got things in perspective!
Most of the things I worry about
are either things I can't change
or things which aren't
earth-shatteringly important.**



Factors that can contribute to stress

Certain situations and life events can cause stress and it can be helpful to consider these areas when assessing our stress levels and daily pressures. These contributing factors can be in all aspects of our daily lives and can include:

Personal issues

Money

Employment and study

Social factors

Friends and family

Housing

Some situations that are often thought of as happy events can still cause stress. For example, you might feel expected to be happy or excited about getting married or having a baby.

But these events can bring big changes, and you might experience new or unusual demands, so they can still feel very stressful. This can be equally difficult to deal with, especially if you also feel pressure to be positive.

How to deal with pressure

Experiencing some level of stress is unavoidable for most of us. Even though there are likely to be many things happening in our lives that we can't control, there are still practical things we can do to manage the amount of pressure we experience each day.

Identify your triggers

Working out what may trigger stress can help you prepare for it, even if it can't be avoided.

This could include: situations that reoccur, one-off events that are on your mind a lot, ongoing stressful events, or something that you are worried about happening.

Accept the things you can't change

Organise your time

It is common to feel stressed due to having lots of things to manage in our lives. Changing the way we organise our time can help us feel more in control.

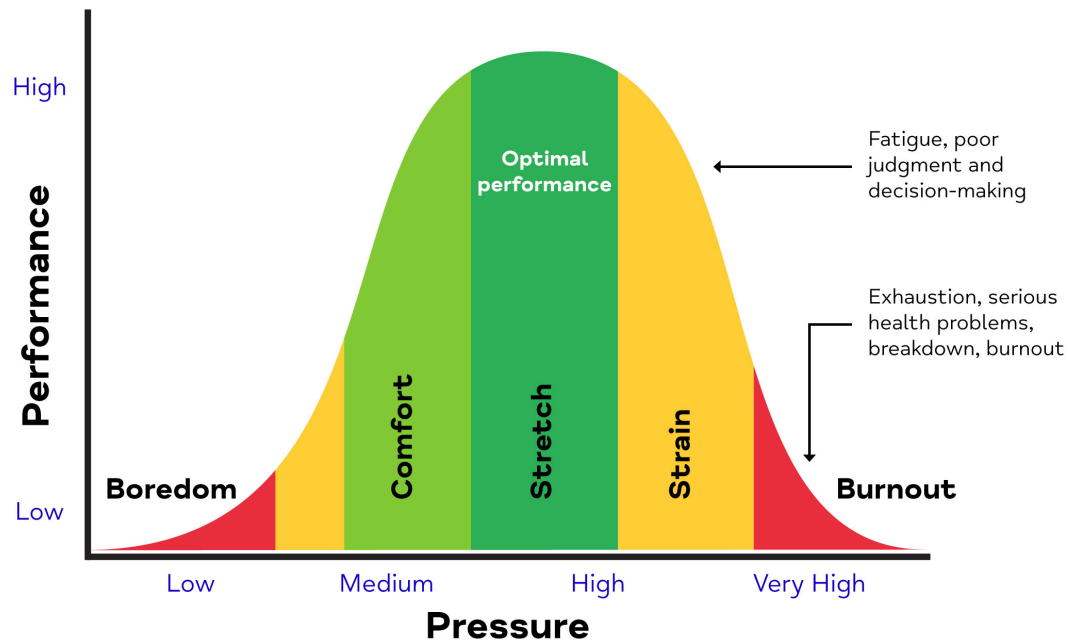
Address some of your causes of stress

Even if there are many things you can't change, there might be some practical ways that could help resolve or improve some of the issues adding to your stress.

Identifying stress

We all have different experiences and tolerance levels when it comes to stress. It can be helpful to consider what our own levels and pressures look like, in order to help us gain a better understanding of how we can begin to manage stress.

Stress vs. good pressure



The stress bucket



Developed from an idea by Brabban and Turkington (2002)

Challenge your thoughts

Stop, take a breath, consider, and challenge.

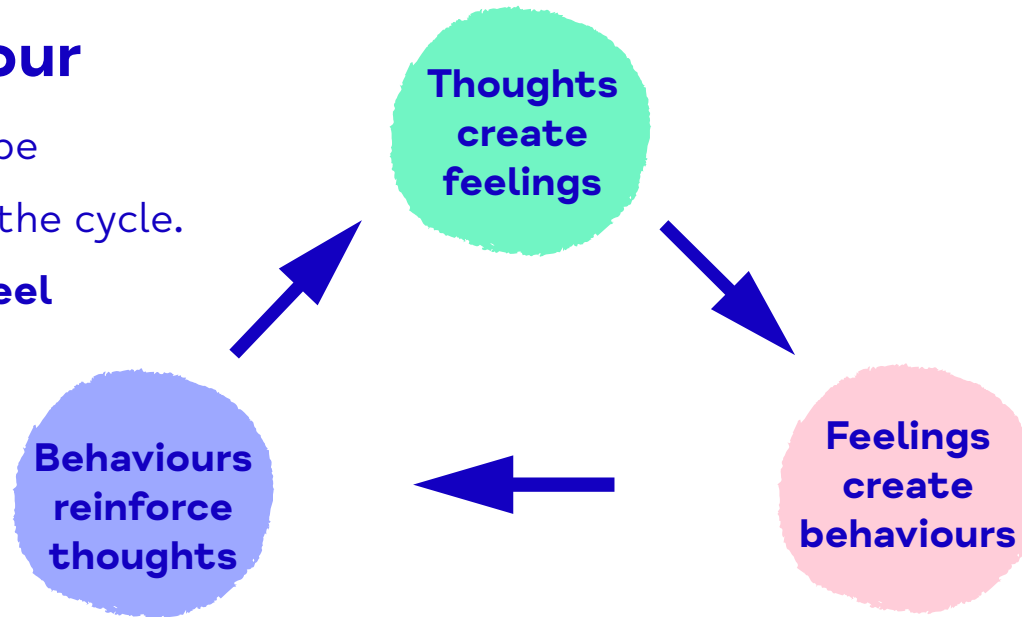
Is this thought: Accurate? Fact or fiction? Helpful? Important?

What's the bigger picture?

Consider your behaviour

Changing our behaviour can often be the easiest way to begin breaking the cycle.

Is my behaviour helping me to feel less stressed?



Acknowledge your emotions

Acknowledging how you feel can enable you to sit with your uncomfortable feelings and ride out the emotion.

How do I really feel?

How to break the cycle of stress

Building emotional resilience

Taking steps to look after our wellbeing can help us deal with pressures and reduce the impact that stress has on our lives. **Emotional resilience** is the term used for the ability to adapt and bounce back from the challenges life throws at us. The following can help us build emotional resilience:

- **Making lifestyle changes:** Practicing being assertive in communicating boundaries, relaxation techniques, developing new interests and hobbies, connecting with loved ones, and working on finding a lifestyle balance.
- **Looking after your physical health:** Eating healthily, being physically active, and getting enough sleep.
- **Giving yourself a break:** Acknowledging and rewarding your achievements, taking time away from your regular routines, resolving conflicts, and forgiving yourself for making mistakes.
- **Using your support network:** Confiding in trusted friends and family, seeking extra support at work when needed, online peer support groups, and seeking professional support from your GP.





Be more active

Moving your body can help reduce your stress levels and burn off nervous energy.

Talk to someone

Sharing stresses with loved ones and colleagues can often help us find solutions to our problems.



Plan ahead

Creating a balanced routine and regular to-do lists allows you to prioritise and manage additional stresses more easily.



5 top tips to manage stress!

Allow yourself some positivity

Practicing daily gratitude's can be a reminder of everything good and can help put stresses into perspective.



Challenge your thoughts

Taking a step back to acknowledge and consider your thoughts.

“Is this thought helpful or accurate?”



30 day challenge to help you stress less!

 1 Clean, organise & refresh your work space	2 List everything positive from your day	3 Plan something to look forward to 	4 Take a bath & pamper yourself	5 minutes to reflect	6 Spend some quality time with family 	 7 Get an early night for the week ahead
8 Create a to-do list to help you prioritise	9 Practise a grounding technique 5-4-3-2-1	10 minutes to do nothing	11 Set yourself a physical challenge 	12 Check in with your support networks	 13 Try out a new recipe	14 Set yourself a positive daily affirmation 
 15 Get up early & watch the sunrise	16 Do some mindful doodling 	17 Take regular breaks at work	18 Practise breathing techniques & meditation	 19 Take a walk in nature	20 Volunteer your time or donate to a good cause	 21 Complete a digital detox
22 Carry out random acts of kindness	23 Write a list of gratitudes 	24 Learn a new skill 	25 Share something positive with others	26 Reach out to a friend 	27 Practise being kind to yourself 	 28 Start reading a new book
29 Create a new daily schedule 	30 Ask for help if you need it 	Complete our 30-day challenge to reduce stress, build resilience, and boost your mental wellbeing. #StressLessDevon			 www.devonmind.com <small>Registered charity no. 1181757, registered company no. 10281020</small>	

Download our stress calendar at www.devonmind.com/stress

Help and treatments for stress

There are no specific treatments for stress. But there are treatments for some of the signs and symptoms of stress that could help, if you are finding it difficult to manage stress yourself.

- **Speaking to your GP**

It might be helpful to seek professional support and advice if you are experiencing a lot of stress, have felt stressed for a long time, or if feelings of stress are affecting your physical or mental health.

- **Talking therapy**

Talking with a trained professional could help you find ways to deal with stress. Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) can help you understand your thought patterns, recognise triggers, and identify positive actions to take.

- **Complementary and alternative therapies**

Certain complementary and alternative therapies can be helpful in treating signs and symptoms of stress. These can include acupuncture, aromatherapy, hypnotherapy, massage, tai Chi, yoga, and mediation.

Where to find urgent help:

SAMARITANS

Open 24/7 for crisis support
Call 116 123

shout
85258

here for you 24/7

Open 24/7 for text messaging support
Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

**CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
LIVING
MISERABLY**

Open 5pm till midnight 365 days a year for suicide support
Call 0800 58 58 58



FirstResponse
mental health crisis • 24/7

Local 24/7 mental health crisis first response lines:

- **Plymouth: call 0800 923 9323**
- **Devon: call 0808 196 8708**



www.devonmind.com

call 01752 512 280

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