

Coping with stress



TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

What is stress and how can you deal with it?

Stress is our reaction to an event that happens in our lives. Situations that cause stress are known as stressors. Stress can be considered either positive or negative.

Positive stressors can increase our capacity to perform well and push us into striving to achieve our goals. However, unhealthy and unresolved stressors can lead to burnout and other physical and mental health problems.

When we experience stress, our body goes into 'fight or flight mode'. Essentially, we get an adrenaline rush: our heart rate increases, breathing becomes deeper and faster, there's a rise in sugar levels, more direct blood flow to our muscles, sweating increases and we experience a sense of fighting or escaping from the threatening situation.

Stress is a normal part of life and our challenge is to be more in tune with our health so that we can combat stress.

What contributes to stress?

We all respond differently to stress. Personality, temperament and our general approach to life will impact on how we react to stress.

Some factors that can contribute to stress include:

- homework, exams, workload
- conflict with friends or family
- problems with friends, e.g., feeling left out
- winning an award / performing in public
- trying something new or starting a new role
- being harassed
- feeling sick or dealing with an illness
- relationship pressures or dealing with a breakup
- starting at a new school or university
- moving house
- parents separating or divorcing
- the death of someone we care about.

What are the warning signs of stress?

- Headaches, stomach aches or other pains
- Muscle tension and stiffness
- Problems with sleep
- An upset stomach, diarrhoea or constipation
- Fast heartbeat
- Feeling moody or irritable
- Feeling overwhelmed and unable to relax
- Having trouble concentrating and being unable to focus
- Feeling tired or down
- Forgetfulness
- Carelessness
- Feeling nervous
- Constant worry and negative thinking
- Being withdrawn and losing interest in being with others
- Putting tasks off and neglecting responsibilities
- Eating more or less than usual.

What can happen if you don't deal with stress?

When left untreated, severe stress can lead to physical and mental health problems. It's important to seek for help when overloaded with severe stress.

Find services that can help you on page 2.

What can you do about stress?

You can help keep stress at bay by promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

Positive mental health refers to our ability to fully enjoy life, form and appreciate our connections with others, have balance in the activities in life and make efforts to reach our full potential.

Good mental health encourages us to be more in tune with our emotions and to cope with and manage change and uncertainty.

Relationships Australia
VICTORIA



Eight tips to promote wellbeing and reduce stress

1. **Be active:** Physical activity allows us to relieve stress and nourishes and strengthens the brain.
2. **Connect:** Spend some time connecting with friends and loved ones. Talk issues out, express your feelings, and have fun together.
3. **Sleep:** Allow time for rest and a regular sleep routine (8-10 hours is ideal). This enables the brain to rest and to consolidate all learning.
4. **Down time:** Allow yourself to rest, so that your mind and body can relax and wander without any specific focus on goals etc. This allows us to recharge.
5. **Focus:** Focus on tasks, and set goals and challenges to allow your brain to make deep connections.
6. **Nourish:** Allow time to eat well and regularly.
7. **Play:** Allow time for hobbies and play so that you can be creative and spontaneous in things that you enjoy and new experiences.
8. **Reflect:** Take time to reflect on your emotions, feelings and thoughts and become more in tune with yourself.



Useful resources

- **Smiling Mind app:** smilingmind.com.au
- **Beyond Blue - Relaxation Exercises:** beyondblue.org.au/get-support/staying-well/relaxation-exercises
- **headspace - Sleeping well for a healthy headspace:** headspace.org.au/young-people/sleeping-well-for-a-healthy-headspace
- **Dr Dan Siegel - Healthy Mind Platter:** drdansiegel.com/healthy-mind-platter
- **Insight Timer:** insighttimer.com
- **ReachOut Australia - Tools and Apps:** au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps

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Need more help?

Remember that you don't have to deal with things on your own.

If any of the information we've talked about here has concerned you, or you'd like to chat to someone about what's going on for you, help is available.

You can start by talking to a trusted adult such as a parent, carer, family member, teacher or school counsellor and telling them how you're feeling.

If you feel unsafe and need help right now, call 000 (triple zero).

Crisis support

These services are available 24/7 to support you:

- **Kids Helpline** on 1800 55 1800
- **Lifeline** on 13 11 14
- **Beyond Blue** on 1300 22 4636
- **SuicideLine Victoria** on 1300 651 251
- **Suicide Call Back Service** on 1300 659 467

To make an appointment to chat to one of our counsellors, visit www.rav.org.au/counselling

To find other organisations that can help, visit www.rav.org.au/resources/youth-services

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.