



## What is stress?

Stress is a problem when a person feels they cannot cope with life pressures

As a clinical problem, stress occurs when the demands made on a person exceed (or they feel they exceed) their ability to cope. A variety of factors can contribute to a person feeling 'stressed'. This may include:

- Environment (work, home, school etc)
- Lifestyle
- Emotional issues.



An individual person's attitude, personality and approach to life will influence how they respond to stress. The following factors all play a part:

- How a person thinks about a problem
- The different ways a person copes with difficult situations
- Life experiences and life history
- A person's self-esteem
- Whether they have people around who can provide support.



## Types of stress

- *Reactive stress*: This occurs when a person perceives that they do not have the capacity to cope with the demands placed upon them.
- *Cumulative stress*: A condition brought about by a number of stressful factors.
- *Critical Incident stress*: A reaction to sudden, unanticipated demands of specific incident(s).
- *Post Traumatic stress*: A condition caused by an inability to satisfactorily accommodate memories of a traumatic episode(s).

## Work Stress

In Australia, the total cost of workers compensation claims for stress-related conditions is estimated at over \$200 million every year. According to the National Health and Safety Commission, work-related stress accounts for the longest stretches of absenteeism. However,

Data Source:

1. Better Health Victoria
2. depressioNet
3. beyondblue



what one person may perceive as stressful, another may view as challenging. Whether or not a person experiences work-related stress depends on the job, the person's psychological make-up, and other factors (such as personal life and general health).

## Contributing factors to Work Stress

- Absence of autonomy.
  - A worker may not have control over the demands of work.
- Poor physical work environment
  - Negative factors include cramped, hot or noisy working conditions.
- Workload factors.
  - Workers can be under-stimulated with too little challenge or overwhelmed with unrelentingly high workloads.
- Repetitive or meaningless tasks.
  - Lack of stimulation or challenge can lead to boredom and lack of interest.
- Role ambiguity.
  - An absence of clarity regarding expectations about a worker's duties.
- Work conflict.
  - A major cause of stress at work is unmediated conflict between a worker and their supervisor or colleague(s).
- Occupational mismatch.
  - There may not be sufficient fit between a worker and their organisation. This may be in terms of communication, rewards/ recognition or management style.
- Taking work home regularly can create conflict with family members and blur the work-home boundaries.
- Job satisfaction, security and career prospects may not meet the expectations of some workers.



## How to manage Stress

The old adage, 'prevention is better than cure' is certainly true for stress management. It will help if you:

- **Exercise regularly** - regular exercise is a great way to manage stress. You should do some form of exercise that causes you to feel puffed afterwards. A leisurely stroll to the bus stop is not enough! Have at least 20 minutes of exercise three times a week.
- **Avoid conflict** - avoid situations that make you feel stressed as much as you can. Avoid unnecessary arguments and conflict if you find them stressful (although ignoring a problem is not always the best way to reduce stress).

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# Stress



- **Relax** - make sure you give yourself some time to relax each day and try to spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself.
- **Eat well** - a nutritious diet is important. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and avoid sweet and fatty foods.
- **Sleep** - a good sleep routine is essential. Do something calm and relaxing before you go to bed, like listening to music or reading, if you have difficulty falling asleep.
- **Enjoy your life** - it's important to make time to have some fun.

## Contact Information:

If you need any help with stress in your life, there are a number of places to call or websites to

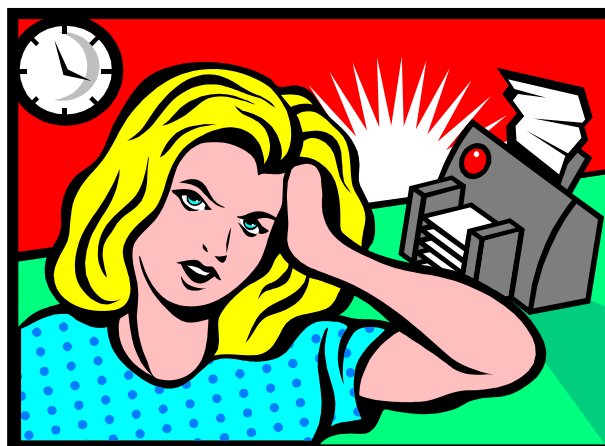
visit.

### Website Information:

1. BeyondBlue - [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
2. National Mental Health Council - [www.mhca.org.au](http://www.mhca.org.au)
3. MoodGym - [moodgym.anu.edu.au](http://moodgym.anu.edu.au)

### Phone Assistance:

- |                               |               |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Lifeline (local call cost) | 13 11 14      |
| 2. Kids Help Line             | 1800 55 18 00 |
| 3. Just Ask Infoline          | 1300 13 11 14 |
| 4. SANE Australia             | 1800 68 83 82 |
| 5. Mensline                   | 1300 78 99 78 |
| 6. Mental Health Direct       | 1800 22 04 00 |
| 7. Samaritans Help            | 1800 19 83 13 |
| 8. Psychiatric Emergency Team | 1800 67 68 22 |



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