

# MANAGING STRESS

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Sometimes stress can feel overwhelming and difficult to manage. This fact sheet provides information on some of the common causes and signs of stress. It also has some ideas on how we can manage our own stress levels.



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### TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

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Stress is our normal protective response to challenging or dangerous situations. Experiencing stress is a normal part of life. A small amount of stress can actually be quite helpful. It can boost our energy and alertness and help us perform well in difficult situations.

Too much stress can cause problems in areas of our lives such as relationships and work. When high levels of stress are ongoing, there is an increased risk of developing anxiety, depression and substance abuse issues.

At Positive Solutions we are here to help. If you feel you might need some assistance to cope with stress, please contact us to make an appointment.

## CAUSES OF STRESS

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Stress can be caused by the many changes we experience in our lives.

These changes can be positive or negative. Some examples include:

- **The demands of everyday life** (e.g. work, financial and family responsibilities)
- **Significant negative life events** (e.g. the death of a loved one or a relationship breakdown)
- **Traumatic events** (being exposed to dangerous and life threatening situations)
- **Positive life events** (e.g. buying a new house, getting married or the arrival of a new child)
- **Our own thoughts, attitudes, or expectations**

## COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS

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- Feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue
- Headaches,
- Muscle tension
- Decreased sex drive
- High blood pressure
- Difficulty sleeping
- Angry outbursts
- Avoiding people
- Excessive use of alcohol and drugs
- Relationship issues
- Worry
- Crying
- Sense of loss of control
- Loss of confidence

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# THE STRESS RESPONSE

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*Stress can activate our, "fight or flight" response. This is our normal protective response that helps us deal with threat or danger.*

The fight or flight response creates a number of changes in our body to help us quickly fight or run away from a threat. Our breathing and heart rate increases and our muscles tense, preparing us for action. Blood moves to parts of the body that need it to fight.

We also have an opposite response called the "relaxation response". This allows our body to calm down and relax. Stress management techniques can help us to activate this relaxation response.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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- [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
- [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)
- [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)
- [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

## MANAGING STRESS

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### Identify triggers

Identify what is making you feel stressed and any "triggers" (e.g. situations, thought process) for increased feelings of stress).

### Changing or modify the stressor

Consider changing or modifying the stressor if it is within your control to do so. For example, with work stress, it may be possible to modify or change work hours and duties.

### Postponing major life decisions

Consider postponing major life decisions (e.g. moving house, or changing careers) unless this issue is the source of your stress.

### Practicing self-care

We can protect our physical and mental health by healthy eating, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting a good amount of sleep, and doing regular exercise. Spending time outdoors can help lift our mood and improve our concentration.

### Do things you enjoy

Do things you enjoy which may include activities or pastimes you have previously found rewarding. Spending time in nature, watching a comedy, playing with a pet, going for a walk, or spending time with a friend.

### Connecting with others

You may wish to talk to a supportive friend or family member. Spend time with people who you find uplifting and maintain a sense of humour.

### Learning stress management

For example, relaxation exercises involving deep breathing, muscle relaxation, yoga, meditation, mindfulness and music.

### Seeking professional assistance

Professionals such as General Practitioners, psychologists and counsellors provide support to people who are experiencing stress related issues.