

# Ten strategies for coping with stress



## 1. Organise your time

**Try to prioritise** - don't get overwhelmed by too many problems. Decide what needs doing now and what can wait - making a list can help. Think about which tasks will make the biggest difference and try to concentrate on one at a time. If you're feeling very stressed now pick one task and focus on that.

**Divide projects up** - break problems up into smaller, more manageable chunks. Don't try to deal with everything at once.

**Keep a structure to your day** - keeping to a routine can really help if you're coping with stress; get up and go to bed at the same times and try to get out and do your usual activities like meeting friends or going to night school.

Find more ways to organise your time on our stress page: [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/stress](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/stress)



## 2. Reduce the pressure

**Create time for yourself each day** - build in at least 30 minutes each day to shut off and do something you enjoy - read a book, watch your favourite TV programme, play football or listen to music. Sometimes jobs can wait. Taking a break can help you feel more relaxed and better able to cope with the demands of your life. If you get an invitation to do something nice - do it! The ironing will still be there tomorrow.

**Take regular breaks** - you'll feel more relaxed and better able to cope. Get up for a stretch, go out for some fresh air or go for a run. Take your lunch break at work - you'll get more done in the afternoon. Go for a walk outside - being mindful of what's happening around you, rather than thinking about work, will help you return to your desk feeling refreshed.

**Take your holidays** - working under pressure for months without stopping can allow stress to build up and affect how you're feeling and behaving.



## 3. Take control

**Take control of problems** - if you're worrying about a problem that needs tackling such as debt - ignoring it will only make it worse. Some people find it helpful to use a problem-solving technique to consider the pros and cons of different options and create an action plan. Be realistic about goals and consider if other people can help.

**Learn to accept problems you can't control** - if you are worrying about a problem which is out of your control - sometimes it can help to accept that you can't do anything that will make things better.

**Do other people expect too much of you?** - whether it's family, friends or managers at work - if people are expecting too much of you try to address this. If you're given unrealistic targets at work - try to explain what's realistic and why.

Find more ways to take control in our stress self-help section: [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/stress-self-help](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/stress-self-help)



## 4. Get a good night's sleep

Sleep is essential for both our physical and mental health. Everyone is different, but most adults need an average of seven to nine hours of sleep. Not getting enough sleep can affect your memory and mental processes like concentration and problem-solving. Getting a good night's sleep recharges you for the day ahead and can help you to feel stronger and better able to cope.

On the MindWell website you can find lot's more information and tips to have a good night's sleep here: [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/sleep](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/sleep)



## 5. Look after your health

**Take regular moderate exercise** - 30 minutes every day can help you feel calmer and boost your wellbeing. Do something you enjoy; swimming, walking, yoga, dancing or a team sport.

**Eat well** - it's easy to turn to sugary, processed or fried food when you're feeling under pressure but a well-balanced diet with lots of fresh vegetables can really make a difference.

**Cut down on caffeine, smoking and drinking alcohol** - don't use them to combat stress. They can make you feel more anxious as well as affecting your sleep and physical wellbeing.

Find out more about how looking after your health can help with your mental wellbeing: [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/health](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/health)



## 6. Take time to relax

**Practise relaxation and breathing techniques every day** - breathing techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing can help you feel calmer and help combat the physical and emotional effects of stress. Watch a video at [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relaxation-breathing](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relaxation-breathing)

**Try different ways to relax** such as yoga, aromatherapy or Mindfulness. Explore our Mindfulness page here: [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/be-mindful](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/be-mindful)

**Slow down** - talk, walk, eat more slowly, relax your shoulders and breath more naturally.

**Try something new** - sometimes life can get dull and be full of routines and jobs that need doing. Doing something different can help you switch off and relax. Give yourself a challenge - try a new activity, learn something new or start a new hobby.

Take a look at the MindWell website for more ideas on how to relax: [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relax](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relax)



## 7. Stay connected

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The support of a good social network is important - take time to develop your relationships with family, friends and colleagues. Be open with them about how you're feeling. Being active and making new friends is also important.



## 8. Talk to someone if you're struggling

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**Don't keep problems to yourself** - talking things through can relieve some of the pressure and help you feel more supported. Whether you're feeling stressed about work, family, money or a relationship; another person can often see a problem in a different way and suggest things that might help. Try talking to a trusted friend, family member or go to [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/talk](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/talk)



## 9. Positive self-talk is important

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**Try to challenge any negative or anxious thoughts** - sometimes having negative thoughts can affect our mood and the way we feel. Talk to yourself kindly and with encouragement. How would a good friend talk to you? Remember positive feedback you've had or ask a friend to share their positive thoughts.

**Be positive** - take time to be thankful for the good things.



## 10. Try a digital detox

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**Try to take a digital detox** an hour before you go to sleep and cut down on social media. Digital devices help us to work remotely and feel connected. But there are downsides. Using devices for long periods can create 'information overload', affect the way we sleep and can sometimes stop us from just talking to each other. Social media can also add to the pressures we're feeling when we see constant posts about other people's exciting and 'perfect' lives.