

Stress Awareness

From distress to de-stress



Connection Certainty Control

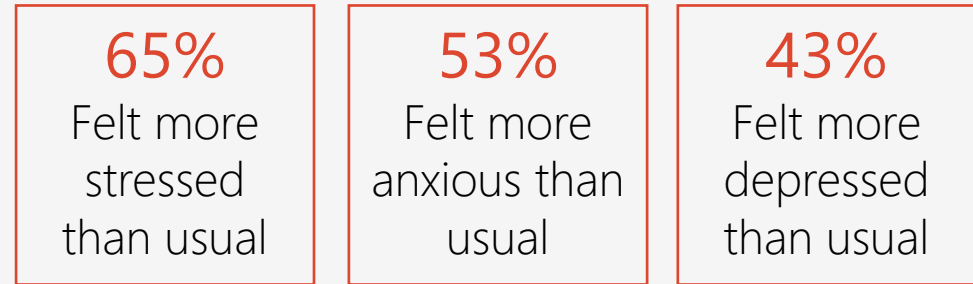
Stress Awareness Month has been held every April since 1992 to increase awareness about both the causes and cures for our modern-day stress.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, **74%** of UK adults have felt so stressed at some point over the last year, they have felt overwhelmed or unable to cope.

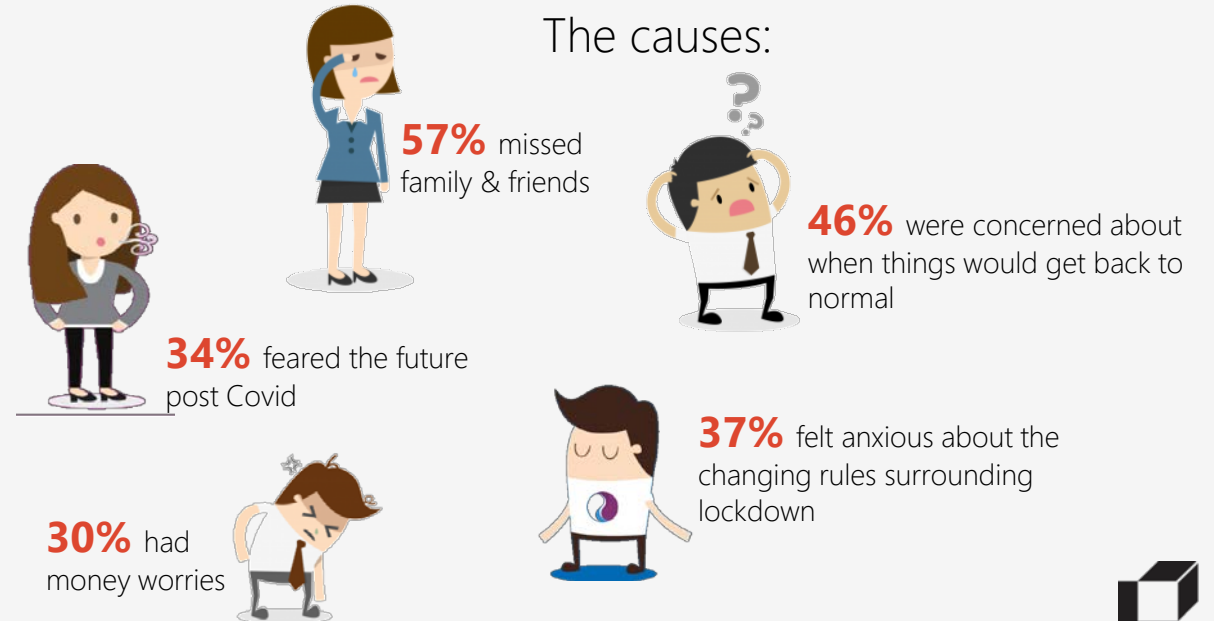
Stress is a significant factor in mental health problems including **anxiety and depression**.

Stress is linked to **physical health problems**, like heart disease, problems with our immune system, insomnia and digestive problems.

Since the COVID-19 restrictions started in March:



The causes:



Fight Flight Freeze

Stress is not what happens to us. It's our response to what happens. A response that we can change at any moment. Picturequotes.com

How it works:

Fight – When our body goes into a state of stress, you may feel agitated and aggressive towards others. This is because our bodies naturally go into a state of 'fight'. In most situations of our day to day lives, it can negatively affect relationships and even ruin reputations.

Flight – Another natural reaction is going into a state of 'flight', which can be a useful mode of survival, for example when we find ourselves in a dangerous surrounding. In everyday life, we are often unable to run away and when we do, we realise that the stressor is quick to catch up with us.

Freeze – For some of us, becoming stressed sets the stage for 'dysregulation'. In this case, the energy mobilized by the perceived threat gets 'locked' into the nervous system and we 'freeze'. This response sometimes reveals itself when we breathe. Holding our breath and shallow breathing in stressful situations are both forms of freeze. The occasional deep sigh is the nervous system catching up on its oxygen intake.

Aggression

Run Away

Deer in the headlights



Recognising Stress

It is usually possible to spot early warning signs of excessive pressure that could lead to a breakdown:

1 Mental and Emotional Breakdown

2 Taking one's own life

3 Serious health issues including:

- **Cardiovascular disease:** the heart is the first organ in the body to experience stress. It is a No. 1 killer and its no coincidence that as we find ourselves living under higher levels of stress, the instance of heart disease is increasing.
- **Stroke:** Stress can cause a rise in blood pressure. The main cause of hemorrhagic stroke is high blood pressure, which can weaken the arteries in the brain and make them prone to split or rupture.
- **Stress** has a profound impact on how your body's systems functions. Health experts are still sorting out whether stress causes cancer. There is little doubt that it promotes the growth and spread of some forms of the disease. Put simply, stress makes your body more hospitable to cancer.

A useful analogy to explain stress is that of a bridge. When a bridge is carrying too much weight, it will eventually collapse. Before this happens, it is possible to see the warning signs such as bowing, buckling or creaking. The same principle can be applied to human beings, it is possible to spot the signs of excessive pressure that could lead to breakdown.



How does stress affect us?

- 1 Cognitive:** Memory Problems; Poor judgment; Inability to concentrate; Indecisiveness
- 2 Emotional:** Frustration; Aggressive; Judgmental; Depression; Mood swings; Irritability
- 3 Physical:** Frequent colds; Teeth grinding; Headaches and migraines; Chest pain; Rapid heartbeat; Aches and pains
- 3 Behavioural:** Loss of sense of humour; Demotivated; Loss of pride in appearance; Increase intake in alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine to relax; Isolating yourself from others; Sleeping too little or too much



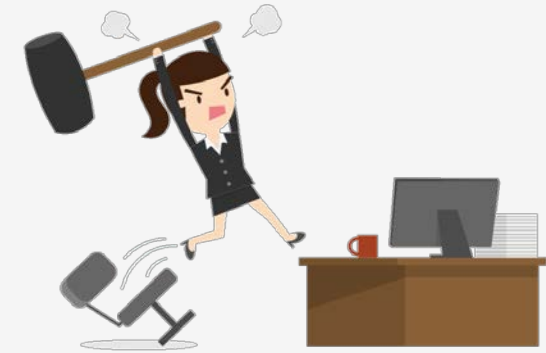
Absences related to Stress cost the UK industry **£12.47 billion** each year

In the UK, over **12.5 million working days** are lost every year because of stress

STRESS is believed to trigger 70% of visits to doctors and 85% of serious illnesses



Stress at home and at work



1 Although everyone's stressors are different, we all still encounter stress throughout our entire lives. We can't avoid it: situations arise on a day-to-day basis which make physical, mental and emotional demands on us. There may be decisions that need to be made.

2 We are expected to work longer hours than ever before, with many of us at the mercy of '24/7' technology like emails on our smartphones. This is leading to a growing imbalance between our home and work lives and can spiral into a vicious cycle of working longer and sleeping less. This, in turn, reduces our ability to function productively, meaning we have to work even longer to finish all our tasks.

3 If you work with other people, it is also helpful to learn to recognise the symptoms of stress in others and, if necessary, refer the problem upwards to someone who can deal with it. Not only is it the ethical thing to do as you are helping a colleague, but it will also benefit you as you are improving your working environment.



Recognising Stress at Home and at Work

Examples of significant changes at home:

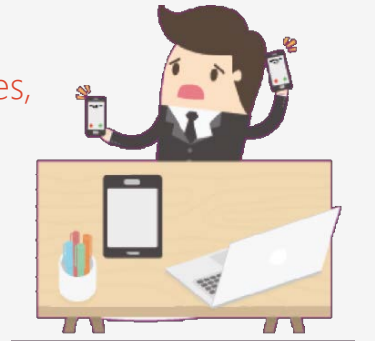
- Moving to a new house
- Getting married
- Having Children
- Relationship breakdowns
- Losing loved ones
- Money

When our bodies interpret a situation as dangerous or threatening, feelings of tension, apprehension and worry occur. They may also be accompanied by physical changes associated with anxiety, such as trembling, palpitations, dizziness, tremors, etc.



Certain factors at work may indicate a potential problem:

- An increase in absenteeism (sick leave)
- Presenteeism (attending work while sick)
- Arguments and disputes with colleagues
- Working late and not taking breaks
- Loss of sense of humour, replaced by irritability
- Indecisiveness and poor judgment
- Problems with drinking or drug taking
- A tendency to suffer from headaches, nausea, aches, pains, tiredness and poor sleeping problems
- A decrease in work standards
- Leavism (taking leave to catch up on work)
- Pressure to meet targets or deadlines
- Management style
- Workload/Volume of work



Coping with Stress

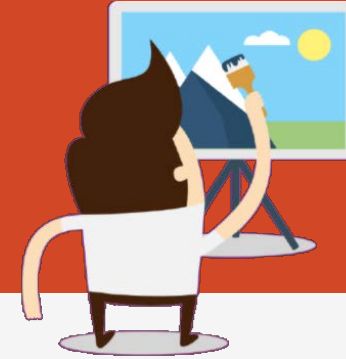


Your body is the only one you will get, treat it better and it will reward you Feed, water and let it out once in a while

- 1 Get enough sleep** – sleep is essential for the body to function properly.
- 2 Listen to music** – music can be used in many situations to help reduce stress and create a calming atmosphere
- 3 If you are ill, rest** – when you are ill, working will tire your body and prolong the illness. Recognise the limits and don't carry on as if you were firing on all cylinders.
- 4 Learn to say 'no'** – simple but effective. Where a 'no' is the appropriate response, say it without guilt. 'No' does not always have to be a decline, it can also be a 'negotiation opportunity' e.g – "I can't do that now but can do it next week"
- 5 Work off stress with physical activity** – pressure or anger releases adrenaline in the body. Exercise helps to reduce it and produces 'good mood' substances in the brain. Just going for a brisk walk around the block when you feel tense can help
- 6 Hobbies** – Activities outside of work and home can be a great way to break up the week and alleviate stress.
- 7 Breathe** – Taking a few deep breaths allows more oxygen to reach the brain, helping you become calm and restore concentration and focus.
- 8 Avoid nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and refined sugar products** – These are all stimulants which prevent you from feeling calm. If you are stressed, steer clear of them.
- 9 Talk to someone** – 'A problem shared is a problem halved'. Speak to a friend or family member. Contact the Samaritans if you want to speak to someone anonymously – 08457 90 90 90
- 10 Take breaks** – Taking breaks away from a stressful task can help you stay calm.



Have you tried unlocking your happy?



SEROTONIN

- Being outside in nature
- Having a massage
- Breathing exercises
- Practising daily gratitude
- Aerobic exercise

The mood stabilizer

DOPAMINE

- Celebrating success
- Getting enough sleep
- Mindfulness/Meditation
- Listening to music
- Sunlight exposure

The reward chemical

ENDORPHINS

- Having sex
- Creative activities
- Laughter
- Eating cacao rich foods
- Random acts of kindness
- Taking a hot salt bath

The pain killer

OXYTOCIN

- Practising yoga
- Cuddles and hugs
- Petting a dog
- Telling someone how much you care
- Spending time with friends

The love hormone



Stay well hydrated Unplugging from digital devices Making time for fun and laughter Mindfulness

