

TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS

Tool Kit for parents and carers

Becoming parent can be one of the most exciting times in your life and also one of the most stressful.

This brochure has been prepared by a group of professionals at Karitane to provide you with tips on how to help manage stressful times in your life and anxiety provoking situations. The professionals involved include our social worker and nursing staff from Karitane's Residential Units in consultation with our clinical psychologist from Jade House.

Karitane has supported families since 1923, providing support and information to families over the years on how to recognise stressful situations and tips on coping with the challenges that come with parenting.



What is stress?

Stress is highly individual. A situation that one person may find stressful may not bother another person.

Stress occurs when something happens that we feel imposes a demand on us. When we think that we cannot cope or feel unable to meet the demand we begin to feel stress.

Stress is not all bad. We need a certain amount of stress in our lives because it is stimulating and motivating. It gives us the energy to try harder and keeps us alert.

However, when stress overwhelms us, it can negatively impact our lives.



Signs of stress

What are the common signs of stress?

- Disruption to sleep, such as taking longer to get to sleep or waking up more often during the night
- Feeling tense
- Increased irritability
- Increased worry
- Difficulties concentrating
- Change in appetite
- Unable to make a decision

Other signs of stress:

- Isolation - not wanting to socialise or go out
- Irritability
- Negative thoughts
- Persistent upset stomach
- Chronic Headache
- Tight chest
- Difficulty breathing
- Powerlessness
- Hopelessness
- Despair

What is anxiety?

Anxious feelings are a normal reaction to a stressful situation and can occur when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. When you continue to have anxious feelings even after the stress has passed, or for no apparent reason, this may be anxiety. You may begin to feel increasingly worried or frightened and unable to calm down. When these anxious feelings cannot be brought under control easily, coping with daily life can become difficult.

Over time, anxiety may reduce your productivity and sap your energy - eventually affecting your job, your relationships and your health.

As anxiety doesn't happen overnight, it's important to recognise the early signs and seek help. The earlier you recognize the symptoms of stress or anxiety and address them, the less impact it may have on your life.

REMEMBER:

If the situation causing stress has resolved, but the feelings continue, this can be a sign of anxiety.

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What's the difference

between stress and anxiety?

Anxiety may be the result of overwhelming stress. Stress involves too much and too many pressures that demand too much of you physically and psychologically.

Stressed people can still imagine that if they can just get everything under control they'll feel better.

However, unmanaged it can lead to feeling anxious and sad. People experiencing these feelings often don't see any hope of positive change in their situation.

Managing stress or anxiety

Helpful Ways:

- Become aware of your reactions
- Healthy balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Balance work and play
- Develop a support system
- Simplify your life
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Seek Professional Help

Unhelpful Ways:

- Ignoring the problem
- Withdrawal
- Alcohol/Drug misuse
- Unhealthy eating
- Inactivity
- Becoming over committed
- Being aggressive

What else can you do?

- Identify stress in yourself. Don't ignore it. Deal with it in a helpful way.
- Talk to some-one, talk to your spouse, a friend, a work mate or a professional.
- Eat a well balance diet and exercise regularly. Exercise can help release tension from your body .
- Know what stresses you. Once you know your own triggers you are better prepared to deal with the stress as it arises in your life.
- Have fun, make time to enjoy yourself, try something new.
- Schedule a pleasant activity.
- Work towards individual small realistic goals and reward yourself when you meet that goal.

Self-care ideas

- Go to the park and enjoy nature
- Read a book or a magazine you like
- Put on an uplifting song (and maybe dance around)
- Stretch and breathe deeply
- Cook a new dish
- Watch a good movie
- Spend time with your pet/s
- Do something artistic
- Get a massage
- Meet up with a friend
- Take a bath
- Get a manicure or pedicure
- Indulge in your favourite treat
- Curl up with a warm cup of something
- Go for a walk, run, swim or cycle
- Find something to be thankful for



NEED HELP?

Where you can seek professional help:

- General Practitioner
- Child and Family Health Nurse
- Karitane Careline (1800 CARING) 1800 227464
- Private Psychologist/Social Worker
- Psychiatrist
- Beyond Blue: www.beyondblue.org.au
- Mens line Australia: 1300 78 9978
- Relationships Australia: www.relationships.org.au

If concerned about your baby or toddler, see your Child & Family Health Nurse, GP or call our Careline on 1300 CARING (1300 227 464).