



SRESS FACTSHEET

This factsheet will provide you with information and links to helpful websites about stress.

Feeling stressed?

Do you feel like there are loads of demands and more and more pressure being placed on you? Can you not sleep at night because you are worrying about exams or relationships? Everyone experiences stress but how much it affects us depends on us having the tools to let us cope with this. Also, what stresses one person out may not stress another – we are all different!

“I have loads of headaches and I am constantly shouting at my mum but I feel she is always on at me.”

What is stress?

Stress is a feeling that appears depending on the situation we are in. When you are stressed, your body reacts in a physical way – your heart and breathing rate may increase, your pupils may dilate and you may sweat a lot. This is all normal and it is your body's response to stress. It can be good for you in certain situations, for example, if you are due to sit an exam or take a penalty in your football game. This amount of stress can help you to focus, motivate you and help you do well in these situations. However, if stress continues over a longer period of time, you may begin to experience negative symptoms and effects of the stress.

“When I’m playing football I feel really pressured to do well. Afterwards, I realise I’ve played well and feel proud of myself!”

What kind of things could cause stress?

There are lots of things that can cause stress and as we said earlier what may cause you to feel pressured may not seem to cause your friend any stress.

We are all different, but here are some of the things that young people have told us makes them feel stressed:

- being bullied
- splitting up with a boyfriend or girlfriend
- relationship problems at home
- witnessing domestic violence
- bereavement or loss
- problems with school work or exams
- having a medical condition
- putting pressure on yourself to achieve
- having no time to relax!

“I’ve just split up with my boyfriend, have dance exams next week and mum and dad are constantly arguing – I don’t know how much more I can take!”

How do I know I am stressed?

If you are experiencing too much stress you may notice some of the following:

- anxiety/panic attacks
- physical complaints – headaches,
- stomach aches, feeling sick
- feeling irritable
- mood swings
- feeling constantly hassled by others
- an increase in asthma or eczema symptoms
- picking up more colds and infections
- sleep problems
- over or under eating
- increased feelings of sadness

“I have loads of thoughts going around in my head and I don’t know what to feel.”

You may not experience all of these as everyone experiences stress in a different way. Some people take their stress out on others in the form of anger whilst some people may take it out on themselves in the form of substance misuse or other self-harm.

How can I stop myself from getting stressed?

It is better to avoid stress in the first place, however, some stress is unavoidable and you need to look at ways to keep your stress from spiralling out of control.

- Stop being a perfectionist
- Be realistic, no-one is perfect.
- Ask for help if you need it.

Don’t try to do too much

If you feel you rush about all of the time and you have no time to relax, look at what you can cut out of your daily/weekly schedule to make things more manageable.

Relaxation techniques

Find out what makes you feel more relaxed – reading a book, having a nice bath, going for a walk - and look to build these into your daily routine.

Also learn some breathing exercises to help you relax when you experience a stressful situation.

“When I can feel myself getting stressed, I put my music on and sing loud... it always makes me feel better!”

Sleep

Ensure you get enough sleep – it will help you deal with any stress you are faced with.

Healthy eating

Make sure you eat a balanced diet. It is easy when you are studying for exams or are busy with other things to just grab some fast food or a take-away but actually this will mean that your body

won't be receiving the right foods to give you the energy to deal with any stress you may come across.

Exercise

This has been shown as a great stress reliever and takes your mind off what is causing you to be stressed.

Think positive

This point seems a bit straightforward, but if you think positively your mood will improve and also will your stress levels! "Think yourself happy!"

Solve problems one at a time

If you think of all the things you have to do, you will begin to feel overwhelmed. Think about the little things that you can do something about and tackle these first, one at a time. Thinking of everything together will increase your anxiety and ultimately your stress levels.

What can I do if I need further help?

If you feel you have problems with managing your stress levels, if it is impacting on your everyday activities and stopping you making the most out of life then you should tell someone you trust – this could be a family member, teacher or school nurse. They will listen to you and help seek the appropriate support that you need.

VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES

www.kooth.com

Free online counselling and support

www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/

Website contains information, advice and resources to help young people support their own mental health, including signposting to sources of support in times of crisis and tools to help young people manage their own wellbeing.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/

NHS Choices webpage offers practical advice, interactive tools, videos and audio guides to help you feel mentally and emotionally better.

www.themix.org.uk

The Mix is a UK based charity that provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile. It has lots of information and resources on their website.

www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/coping-with-stress/

Information & advice on Childline webpage

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/

Information & advice from Mind, a mental health charity