Mind
Troubleshooters: stress
A fold out factfile

Life is stressful. What matters is that you recognise when you are under so much stress that it may be harmful.

• Half a million people in the UK experience work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill.
• Twelve million adults see their GPs with mental health problems each year, much of it stress related.

Are you under too much stress?

How your body may react
breathlessness
headaches
fainting spells
chest pains
tendency to sweat
nervous twitches
cramps or muscle spasms
pins and needles
high blood pressure
feeling sick or dizzy
constant tiredness
restlessness
sleeping problems
constipation or diarrhoea
craving for food
indigestion or heartburn
lack of appetite
sexual difficulties

How you may feel
aggressive
irritable
fearing you are ill
dreading failure
believing you are bad or ugly
losing your sense of humour

How you may behave
difficulty making decisions
problems concentrating
denying there's a problem
inability to show true feelings
avoiding difficult situations
frequently crying
Ten tips to tackle stress

• **Make the connection.** Could the fact that you’re feeling under-the-weather be a response to too much pressure?

• **Take a regular break.** Give yourself a brief break whenever you feel things are getting on top of you – get a soft drink or take a brief stroll.

• **Learn to relax.** Follow a simple routine to relax your muscles and slow your breathing (see back page).

• **Get better organised.** Make a list of jobs; tackle one task at a time; alternate dull tasks with interesting ones.

• **Sort out your worries.** Divide them into those that you can do something about (either now or soon) and those that you can’t. There’s no point in worrying about things that you can’t change.

• **Change what you can.** Look at the problems that can be resolved, and get whatever help is necessary to sort them out. Learn to say ‘no’.

• **Look at your long-term priorities.** Step back and examine what it is about your life that’s giving you too much stress. What can you off-load, or change? How can you introduce a better balance between work, social life and home life? Is it time to reassess your priorities?

• **Improve your lifestyle.** Find time to eat properly, get plenty of exercise and enough sleep. Avoid drinking and smoking too much. However much you believe they can help you to relax, they’ll have the opposite effect.

• **Confide in someone.** Don’t keep emotions bottled up.

• **Focus on the positive aspects of your life.**

[Signature: mind]

For better mental health
Learn to relax

- Close your eyes and breath slowly and deeply.
- Locate any areas of tension and try to relax those muscles; imagine the tension disappearing.
- Relax each part of the body, in turn, from your feet to the top of your head.
- As you focus on each part of your body, think of warmth, heaviness and relaxation.
- After 20 minutes, take some deep breaths and stretch your body.

How to find out more

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
tel. 0870 443 5252, web: www.bacp.co.uk

British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies
tel. 01254 875 277, web: www.babcp.com

First Steps to Freedom
helpline: 0845 120 2916, web: www.first-steps.org

Further reading available from Mind Mail Order
To order the books listed here, or a complete catalogue of publications, send an SAE to Mind Mail Order at the address below.

How to assert yourself (Mind 2006) £1
How to cope with exam stress (Mind 2006) £1
How to cope with sleep problems (Mind 2005) £1
How to cope with the stress of student life (Mind 2006) £1
How to improve your mental wellbeing (Mind 2006) £1
How to stop worrying (Mind 2006) £1
The Mind guide to managing stress (Mind 2005) £1
The Mind guide to relaxation (Mind 2004) £1
Mind troubleshooters: panic attacks (Mind 2004) 50p
Understanding anxiety (Mind 2005) £1