

Embracing Change

Supporting NHS Staff in the West Midlands through Transition

1. Supporting Yourself

Health and Wellbeing

Developed by:



Using information and materials provided by:



ATTEND TO THE BASICS

(Source: Transitions - An evolving guide to working through organisational change. ©NHS Yorkshire and Humber)

Whilst a certain degree of pressure can be stimulating, prolonged stress can cause us harm. We can limit the damage by attending to the basics:

- Boundary your working time – it is easy during a period of organisational change to begin to work longer and longer hours. There is often additional work and we can feel pressured to demonstrate that we are working hard in the mistaken and often unspoken belief that this increases our chances of getting another job. It is important for you to have space away from work where you can get a helpful perspective on the changes and start to really explore the new possibilities that might be emerging for you.
- Watch your diet – chocolate can be comforting and alcohol help you unwind but monitor whether your consumption is increasing. A good balanced diet is more helpful in keeping your brain working effectively and you need to be able to access all your creative resources if you are to make the most of this transition for you. Plan in more nurturing treats for yourself – a long scented bath, a massage, a day out with friends, a trip to the theatre
- Exercise – similarly make time for exercise, preferably in the natural world as both these can positively impact your stress levels.
- Support your sleep – anxiety can impact on our sleep patterns but do give yourself the best chance at sufficient regular sleep by getting into a routine and doing something relaxing before you go to bed. Watch your use of stimulants such as caffeine as under pressure, these can simply exacerbate your anxiety
- Celebrate – consciously review your achievements each day and think about the good things that happened during the day, not just the frustrations and worries
- Manage your negative self talk – whilst there are many things we don't control, to some extent we create our own reality at any given moment by the messages we give ourselves. Whilst genuinely expressing our feelings can be a healthy release of tension, dwelling on your anxiety and all the things that might happen is rarely helpful to you. (You will know the difference by how you feel afterwards. If you feel lighter and relieved afterwards, it was the former; if you feel worse, it was the latter)
- Choose your company – again, whilst it can be reassuring at times to know that you are not alone with your concerns, it is easy to get dragged down by constant fear fuelled conversations. In Transactional Analysis, this is often called the “Ain't it awful” game because it is a conversation that has got stuck in a rut and is no longer meaningful or helpful. Some people are more likely to be impacted by these conversations than others so choose your company wisely. If you find some people deplete your energy, find people who are more upbeat. Social time with people from outside your organisation can be really helpful.
- Stay in touch with your centre – each of us has a different way of achieving peace with ourselves. For some people they are at their most at home in themselves when they are gardening, or out running, or enjoying an evening with friends; for some it is achieved through meditation or walking by the sea or through spiritual practice. You will know

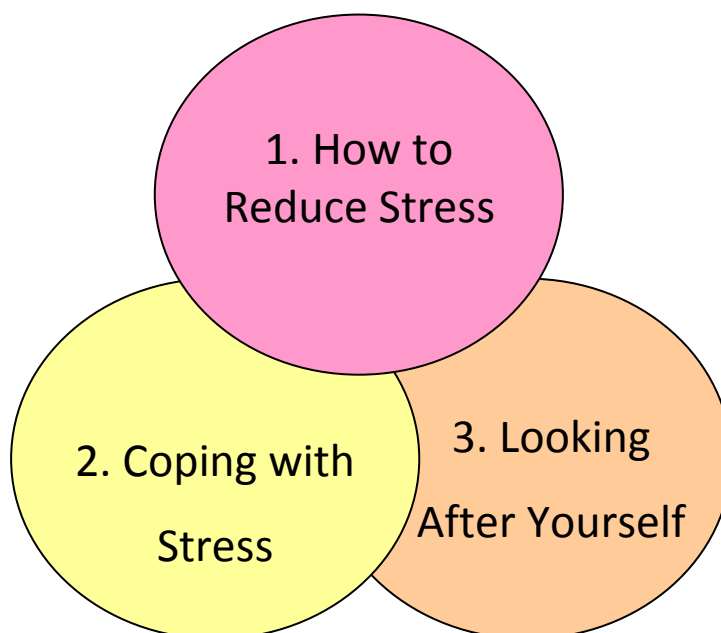
when you are most comfortable with yourself, in that state when you are not thinking about anything, just being. Whatever your way of finding your way to your centre, make sure you create space for this.

RESOURCES

- Spencer Johnson "Who Moved My Cheese?" Vermilion, London, 2000
- Joan Borysenko "Inner Peace for Busy People" Hay House, California, 2001
- Tanya Arroba & Kim James "Pressure at Work: A Survival Guide", McGraw Hill, London 1987
- Richard Carlson "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff at Work" HodderMobiis, London, 1999
FSA Redundancy Handbook - <http://www.moneymadeclear.org.uk/redundancy>

CHANGE MANAGEMENT : A STAFF GUIDE FOR MANAGING STRESS

(Source: Sandwell Primary Care Trust)



1. STRESS AT WORK

How to reduce and manage workplace stress – In this difficult climate, you may find it harder than ever to cope with challenges on the job. Both the stress we take with us when we go to work and the stress that awaits us on the job are on the rise and employers, managers and staff can all feel the added pressure. While some stress is a normal part of life, excessive stress interferes with your productivity and reduces your physical and emotional health so it's important to find ways to keep it under control. Fortunately, there is a lot that you can do to manage and reduce stress at work.

2. COPING WITH WORK STRESS IN TODAY'S UNCERTAIN CLIMATE

For employees everywhere, the current climate may feel like an emotional roller coaster. Cost savings and "budget cuts" have become bywords in the workplace, and the result is increased fear, uncertainty, and higher levels of stress. Since home and workplace stress grow in times of economic crisis, it's important to learn new and better ways of coping with the pressure. The ability to manage stress in the workplace can make the difference between success or failure on the job. Your emotions are contagious, and stress has an impact on the quality of your interactions with others. The better you are at managing your own stress, the more positively you affect those around you and the less other people's stress will negatively affect you.

You can learn how to manage work related stress

There are a variety of steps you can take to reduce both your overall stress levels and the stress you find in the workplace. These include:

- **Taking responsibility** for improving your physical and emotional well-being.
- **Avoiding pitfalls** by identifying knee jerk habits and negative attitudes that add to the stress you experience at work.
- **Learning better communication skills** to ease and improve your relationships with management and colleagues.

Signs and symptoms of excessive job and workplace stress

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| ❖ Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed | ❖ Muscle tension or headaches |
| ❖ Apathy, loss of interest in work | ❖ Stomach problems |
| ❖ Problems sleeping | ❖ Social withdrawal |
| ❖ Fatigue | ❖ Loss of sex drive |
| ❖ Trouble concentrating | ❖ Using alcohol or drugs to cope |

3. REDUCING WORK RELATED STRESS BY TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

When stress at work is interfering with your ability to work, to care for yourself, or to manage your personal life it's time to take action. Start by paying attention to your physical and emotional health. When your own needs are taken care of you're stronger and more resilient to stress. The better you feel, the better equipped you'll be to manage work stress without becoming overwhelmed.

Taking care of yourself doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul. Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy and make you feel like you're back in the driver's seat. Take things one step at a time and as you make more positive lifestyle choices, you'll soon see a noticeable difference in your stress level, both at home and at work.

Get Moving

Aerobic exercise – perspiring – is an effective anti-anxiety treatment lifting mood, increasing energy, sharpening focus and relaxing mind and body. For maximum stress relief, try to get at least 30 minutes of heart pounding activity on most days but activity can be broken up into two or three short segments.

Make food choices that keep you going and make you feel good

Eating small but frequent meals throughout the day maintains an even level of blood sugar in your body; low blood sugar makes you feel anxious and irritable. On the other hand, eating too much can make you lethargic.

Drinking alcohol in moderation and avoid nicotine

Alcohol temporarily reduces anxiety and worry, but too much can cause anxiety as it wears off. Drinking to relieve job stress can also start you on a path to alcohol abuse and dependence. Similarly, smoking when you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed may seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant – these lead to higher, not lower, levels of anxiety.

Get enough sleep

Stress and worry can cause insomnia. But lack of sleep also leaves you vulnerable to stress. When you're sleep deprived, your ability to handle stress is compromised. When you're well-rested, it's much easier to keep your emotional balance, a key factor in coping with job and workplace stress.

4. REDUCING JOB STRESS BY PRIORITISING AND ORGANISING

When workplace stress surrounds you, you can't ignore it, but there are simple steps you can take to regain control over yourself and the situation. Your growing sense of self-control will also be perceived by others as the strength it is, leading to better relationships at work. Here are some suggestions for reducing job stress by prioritising and organising your responsibilities.

Time management tips for reducing job stress

- Create a balanced schedule. Analyse your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.
- Don't over-commit yourself. Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take. If you've got too much on your plate and distinguish between the "shoulds" and the "musts". Discuss with your manager whether you can drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.
- Try to leave earlier in the morning. Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing to your destination and having time to ease into your day. Don't add to your stress levels by running late.
- Plan regular breaks. Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to sit back and clear your mind. Also try to get away from your desk for lunch. Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help you be more, not less, productive.

Task management tips for reducing stress

- Prioritise tasks. Make a list of tasks you have to do, and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.
- Break projects into small steps. If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.

5. REDUCING JOB STRESS BY PRIORITISING AND ORGANISING

Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways. It's about communication with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings and defuse tension and stress.

Emotional intelligence in the workplace:

Emotional intelligence in the workplace has four major components:

- **Self-awareness** – The ability to recognise your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.
- **Self-management** – The ability to control your emotions and behaviour and adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Social awareness** – The ability to sense, understand and react to others' emotions and feel comfortable socially.
- **Relationship management** – The ability to inspire, influence, connect to others and manage conflict.

6. REDUCING WORKPLACE STRESS BY BREAKING BAD HABITS

As you learn to manage your job stress and improve your work relationships, you'll have more control over your ability to think clearly and act appropriately. You will be able to break habits that add to your stress at work – and you'll even be able to change negative ways of thinking about things that only add to your stress.

Eliminate self-defeating behaviours

Many of us make job stress worse with patterns of thought or behaviour that keep us from relieving pressure on ourselves. If you can turn around these self-defeating habits, you'll find employer-imposed stress easier to handle.

- **Resist perfectionism.** No project, situation or decision is ever perfect and you put undue stress on yourself by trying to do everything perfectly. When you set unrealistic goals for yourself or try to do too much, you're setting yourself up to fall short.
- **Clean up your act.** If you're always running late, set your clocks and watches fast and give yourself extra time. If your desk is a mess, file and throw away the clutter; just knowing where everything is saves time and cuts stress. Make to-do-lists and cross off items as you accomplish them. Plan your schedule and stick to it. You'll feel less overwhelmed.
- **Flip your negative thinking.** If you see the downside of every situation and interaction, you'll find yourself drained of energy and motivation. Try to think positively about your work, avoid negative-thinking colleagues, and pat yourself on the back for small accomplishments, even if no one else does.

7. CONCLUSION

At some stage in our lives the majority of us will suffer from stress in relation to our home life or work, however, following some of the simple guidance provided within this document may help you to manage your stress effectively.

You may find the following link to NHS Employers: health, work and well-being useful.

The site provides advice and information on well-being at work, stress, sickness absence and health and safety.

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/HealthyWorkplaces/Pages/Home-Healthy.aspx>