

Managing stress

Stress is how your body reacts to challenges or demands in life. Whether it's juggling work and family responsibilities or dealing with financial pressures, a little stress can sometimes help you stay focused and get things done.

Stress can build up when multiple pressures happen at once. It can make daily life feel harder and impact your wellbeing.

Figuring out what's making you stressed can help you find ways to manage it.



What is burnout?

Burnout can happen when ongoing stress starts to feel like too much, leaving you feeling drained, overwhelmed, and disconnected.

Signs & effects

Stress can show up in different ways for different people. Some common experiences include:

- 
Feeling overwhelmed or on edge
 Emotions like irritability, worry, or feeling like you can't keep up.
- 
Feeling stuck or drained
 Everyday tasks feel harder, and motivation might feel low.
- 
Noticing changes in your body
 Headaches, tight muscles, a racing heart, or finding it hard to sleep.
- 
Struggling to focus
 Feeling forgetful, indecisive, or finding it hard to concentrate.
- 
Losing interest in things you usually enjoy
 Stress can make it hard to find pleasure in the things that normally bring you joy.
- 
Pulling away or avoiding things
 Withdrawing from people, putting off responsibilities, or turning to things like overeating, alcohol, or gambling to cope.

Causes

Stress can build up from all kinds of experiences, and it often comes from a mix of things happening in your life. Some common causes include:

Relationship challenges

Conflict with partners, family, or friends can be emotionally draining and hard to navigate.

Big life changes

Things like separation, divorce, or losing someone you love can bring up feelings of sadness, grief, or uncertainty.

Health concerns

Dealing with illness, injury, or supporting someone else as a carer can take a real toll, both physically and emotionally.

Work pressures or job worries

High workloads, job loss, or feeling unsure about your future can leave you feeling overwhelmed.

Financial stress

Struggling to cover bills, manage debt, or make ends meet can create ongoing worry.

Traumatic events

Going through things like natural disasters, accidents, or personal loss can shake your sense of safety and stability.

Experiencing stress is never your fault. Whatever the cause, there are ways to navigate what you're feeling. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

Recognising how stress shows up

Having a plan like below can help you prepare for situations that might lead to the build up of stress. This can make it easier to spot what's happening and respond in ways that support your wellbeing.

Stress management plan

Anticipate What might cause my stress?
e.g., work deadlines, family conflict, financial pressure

Identify How might I feel or respond?
e.g., headaches, racing thoughts, trouble sleeping

Manage What can I do to care for myself?
e.g., take deep breaths, go for a walk, talk to a friend



Practical management strategies



Notice what's causing your stress

Writing things down can help you see what's on your mind. Focusing on one thing at a time can make it feel more manageable.



Take care of your body

Getting enough sleep, eating regular meals, and moving your body (even just a little) can make a real difference in how you're feeling.



Talk about how you're feeling

Sharing what's going on with someone you trust, whether that's a friend, family member, or counsellor, can help lighten the load and give you a fresh perspective.



Bring yourself back to the present

Grounding techniques like slow, deep breathing or the 5 senses exercise can help calm your mind and body when things feel too much.



Set healthy boundaries

It's okay to say no when you're feeling stretched. Protecting your time and energy helps you look after yourself.



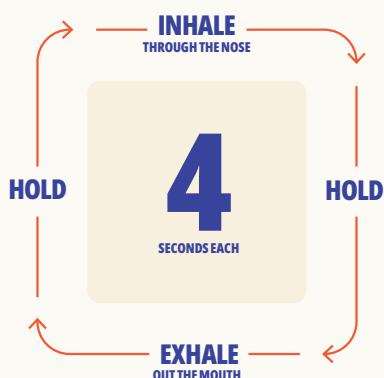
Limit what adds to your stress

If certain people, places, or situations are regularly causing stress, it's okay to take a step back where you can.

Want to try something now?

If you're feeling distressed or unsure where to start, a grounding technique like **box breathing**, **reciting something in order**, or **using your five senses** can help ease physical sensations and take your focus off what's causing you to feel stressed.

BOX BREATHING



RECITING TECHNIQUE

You can try reciting:

- the alphabet
- the months, backwards
- what you did yesterday



5 SENSES TECHNIQUE

Look for...

-  5 things you can **see**
-  4 things you can **feel**
-  3 things you can **hear**
-  2 things you can **smell**
-  1 things you can **taste**



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

 lifeline.org.au/toolkit

When to seek help

You may want to speak with a health professional if:

- ✓ You feel constantly tense or unable to relax, no matter what you try.
- ✓ Stress is making it hard to keep up with everyday tasks or take care of yourself.
- ✓ You're feeling hopeless, trapped, or having thoughts of self-harm.
- ✓ Stress is affecting your relationships, work, or daily life.
- ✓ Physical symptoms, like chest pain, headaches, or ongoing fatigue, are getting worse or not improving.
- ✓ You're relying on unhelpful coping methods, like excessive alcohol, gambling, or pulling away from others.

Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

Support is available

Understanding and managing stress isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/stress/services or scan the QR code to get started.

If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

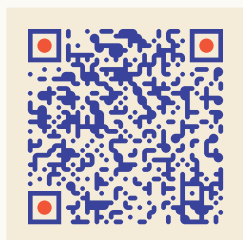
You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.



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