

# Managing stress

## TIP SHEET



**We all get stressed at some points in our lives. Sometimes, you may feel that you have a few too many things to deal with and you're not sure how you are going to do it all. At other times, you might be dealing with some challenging issues, or going through a tough time. At all of these times, it's important that you take care of yourself by using some simple strategies to help you manage your stress levels.**

### Signs of stress

Stress can result in a range of different physical and emotional reactions. Be aware of signs that might indicate that you're under stress, including:

- being short-tempered or irritable
- headaches
- an upset stomach
- sleeping difficulties
- a lack of concentration

- getting sick more often
- tension in your jaw or shoulders
- fatigue or extreme tiredness
- finding it difficult to relax and be calm.

If you think that you're more stressed than you're comfortable with, try some of the following techniques that you can use to help reduce your stress levels. Everyone has different ways of managing their stress, so it's important to find out what works for you.

### Exercise regularly

Exercise can have a positive effect on your emotional health and wellbeing. Exercise regularly with activities including walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics, dancing or going to the gym.

Try to exercise for at least 15 to 30 minutes, three days per week. If you're finding this hard to achieve at this time of year, aim for just a 10 minute walk each day. The short break can help to refresh you and re-energise you for what you have to do next.

### Rest

Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep each night. During the day, you should also take regular work or study breaks. A general rule of thumb is to take a

10-minute break every hour. Rest your eyes as well as your mind, particularly when spending time looking at computer screens or smart devices.

### Eat well

Eat a balanced diet. This means eating lots of whole, fresh foods, particularly fruit and vegetables. Try to avoid foods that are high in fat and sugar.

Don't rely on drugs and/or alcohol to cope as they may negatively impact decision making and can contribute to mental health issues. Avoid drinking too much caffeine, because as well as keeping you awake, it can also make it harder for some people to concentrate.

### Organise yourself

Schedule the activities that you need to complete each day, or week, in your calendar and work out a plan for how you are going to get them done.

It can also be helpful to schedule time to do other activities that help you to look after yourself, such as exercising and cooking healthy meals.

Having routines and plans in place can be reassuring and you can spend less time worrying about how you're going to get everything done.



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### *Talk to friends or family*

Spend time with friends and loved ones who will listen to and understand you. Share your thoughts and feelings with people who care about you and may be able to support you.

### *Take time out*

Taking time out from a stressful situation can be a helpful way to calm down, step back from the situation and think more clearly.

If you're at work, you could go for a short walk, have a glass of water or do some gentle stretches. If you are at home, you could listen to music, read a book or spend some time on a hobby.

### *Be kind to yourself by giving positive feedback*

Tell yourself that you can cope, and that you will complete the things you need to do to the best of your ability.

Avoid negative self-talk, including statements such as "I can't do this" or "I can't cope with this". You are an individual who is doing the best you can, and negative self-talk can actually increase your stress levels.

### *Work on things that you can change*

There is no point worrying about the things you can't change. Work out what you can change and decide if and how you want to make those changes.

### *Practise relaxation*

Try relaxation exercises such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation or yoga to take your mind

off your stress for a while. You could also try less formal ways to relax, including listening to music, watching TV or gardening.

There are a range of relaxation apps for smartphones that are available to download, such as Smiling Mind [www.smilingmind.com.au](http://www.smilingmind.com.au) and Breathe [www.au.reachout.com/reachout-breathe-app](http://www.au.reachout.com/reachout-breathe-app).

### *Plan leisure activities*

Plan positive activities, or even a holiday, to look forward to at the end of the day, the week or the stressful time in your life. Having something to look forward to can help you get through any current difficulties.

For more information, see Dan Siegel's Healthy Mind Platter at [www.drdansiegel.com/resources/healthy\\_mind\\_platter/](http://www.drdansiegel.com/resources/healthy_mind_platter/).

## More information

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) provides services supporting individuals, couples, parents and families. These include counselling and relationship education courses that can help to manage stress and mental wellbeing.

RAV also provides professional development workshops, including customised workshops for workplaces, to help staff manage stress in and out of the workplace. For more information on our services, visit our website [www.rav.org.au/training](http://www.rav.org.au/training).

## About Relationships Australia Victoria

RAV is a valued provider of specialist family and relationship services. A community-based, not-for-profit organisation with no religious affiliations, our services are for all members of the community, regardless of their religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances.

Our vision is for positive, safe and respectful relationships for couples, families, schools, workplaces and communities.

Visit [www.rav.org.au](http://www.rav.org.au) or call 1300 364 277 for more information on our programs, locations and how to access our services.



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