

STRESS AWARENESS WEEK

2nd – 6th November 2020



Stress Awareness

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought uncertainty and challenges into our lives that we have never faced before. As a result, some of us will have experienced heightened levels of stress, which given the circumstances, is completely natural.

What is stress?

Stress is the body's natural response to pressure. Whilst experiencing pressure is a part of normal life, if these feelings become overwhelming, it can start to have a negative impact on our physical and mental health. Our physical and emotional responses to stress can be caused by a host of different situations or life events. Positive life changes such as purchasing a new house or the birth of a child can also produce stress.



Symptoms of stress

Some of the most common symptoms of stress can be split into four areas: psychological, emotional, physical and behavioural. Symptoms of stress will often accumulate until you are forced to take notice of them, such as:

- Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking and caffeine
- Aggressive outbursts
- Dizziness or palpitations
- Panic attacks
- Nausea

Reducing stress during COVID

The physical and mental health impact of the coronavirus outbreak is still very much present in our daily lives. We have listed below a few suggestions on steps that we can take to reduce any unwanted stress during these challenging times.

- **Get moving:** Physical exercise can help relieve tension and relax your mind. Engaging in physical activity every day - whether it's a socially distanced walk or an online fitness class at home - will benefit your mind as well as your body.
- **Stay connected:** We all enjoy the feeling of being connected with our loved ones. If possible, catch up with a friend or family member at a safe distance. Make sure that you keep up to date with the latest government guidelines in your area. If meeting in person is not possible, arrange to stay in touch by phone, video calls or social media.
- **Be kind to others:** Supporting and helping others allows us to take a break from our hectic schedules. This can help us gain some perspective and better equip us to

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handle stressful situations. Also, carrying out acts of kindness will boost endorphins giving you the 'feel good' factor.

- **Self-care:** When we feel stressed, the things that bring us happiness often get side-lined. Make sure that you schedule some time for you to relax and take part in your favourite hobbies which may include reading a good book, a countryside walk or an online pub quiz with your friends. As a result, if you feel stressed or overwhelmed, you have something to look forward to and help you shift to a more positive mindset.
- **Relax your mind:** Mindfulness practises and breathing techniques can help you stop worrying about the future and allow you to focus on the present. There are a variety of wellbeing apps including the Health Assured App, online videos and tutorials that can help you deal with difficult emotions and relax your mind.

This International Stress Awareness Week, think about the role that stress plays in your life. If you feel that you experience stress regularly, spend some time researching ways that can help reduce your stress.

Please remember that our Employee Assistance Programme which is provided by **Health Assured** remains available to all our employees. Health Assured can provide support on a wide range of wellbeing issues. Health Assured can be contacted 24/7 on **0800 030 5182** where professionally trained counsellors are available to take your call and provide confidential advice and support on any issue that may be concerning you. There is no cost to you for accessing the service.

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