



Stress Handout: Introduction

1. Stress is a normal reaction that everyone experiences
2. Stress refers to demands or incidents that impact on your ability to respond comfortably or appropriately. Stress might occur as a result of a specific event or ongoing pressure.
3. The stress response is the way your body responds to stress and includes negative feelings, thoughts and behaviour (review handout).
4. The first step is to recognise stress. Often it is your friends or family that first notice a change in the way you behave, and/or your physical functioning, and/or your expression of emotion and/or your thoughts.
5. Given positive environmental circumstances and good application of stress reducing activities, the stress response most often resolves with time. Examples of stress reducing activities and circumstances include the support of colleagues and family, adequate time-off, good exercise and diet and involvement in de-stressing activities.
6. In some situations professional help is necessary to resolve or speed up the resolution of stress. Seeking such help is sensible and responsible and not a sign of “craziness” or weakness. Rather it is a sign that you accept that in you have experiencing incidents and high level demands that are stressful.
7. Note also that to a degree, our life experiences and stage in life dictates what we will find stressful. For example, someone with young kids might be more affected by death of a child than someone without the current closeness to the experience of raising kids.
8. One way to decide if stress is having an effect on you is to reduce it and then evaluate the outcome. For example, take some time off, start an

exercise programme, spend more time with close friends or family, engage in fun activities that are not work related or go and see a Psychologist for a few individual sessions.

9. Psychologists can help in terms of education about stress, encouraging you to draw on your resilience and known stress reducing activities while under stress, teach you additional stress busting skills and if appropriate providing more intensive services where persisting symptoms develop.



Stress Handout for: Helpful Hints for Reducing the Impact of Stress



For Client:

1. Re-establish a normal schedule

- Avoid staying up late playing on computers or watching tv.
- Work to re-establish a normal sleep pattern
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even when you don't feel like it)
- Avoid junk foods – now is the time to eat well.

2. Exercise

- Physical activity is often helpful. Try to keep up a regular and reasonable level of exercise. Now is when you really need it!
- Even if you don't feel like it - go for a walk

3. Have contact with friends or family.

- Talk to or just spend time with the people who love you.
- Let them know how you are feeling up front

4. Allow yourself to get through the experience

- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal when you have experienced a highly arousing event that your body could not process. They will decrease over time and become less painful. Let it happen.



For Family and Friends:

1. Offer to listen or assist

- offer to listen even if they have not asked for help
- listen carefully and don't advise
- don't tell them that "they are lucky" ...that won't help
- don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- offer to help with everyday tasks

2. Give them time

- Give them some time on their own
- Spend quiet time with them



Stress Handout: Common Signs and Signals of a Stress Reaction

Your Body*	Thinking	Feelings	Behaviour
Chills	Confusion	Fear	Withdrawal
Thirst	Nightmares	Guilt	Antisocial acts
Fatigue	Uncertainty	Grief	Inability to rest
Nausea	Hypervigilance	Panic	Pacing
Fainting	Suspiciousness	Denial	Erratic movement
Twitches	Intrusive images	Anxiety	Change in social activity
Vomiting	Blaming someone	Agitation	Change in speech patterns
Dizziness	Poor problem solving	Irritability	Loss or increase in appetite
Weakness	Poor abstract thinking	Depression	Change in communication style
Chest pain	Poor attention	Intense anger	
Headaches	Poor memory	Apprehension	
Elevated blood pressure	Disorientation	Shock	
Rapid heart rate	Heightened or lowered alertness	Emotional outbursts	
Muscle tremors		Overwhelmed	
Grinding of teeth		Loss of control	
Visual problems		Inappropriate emotional responses	
Profuse sweating			
Difficulty breathing			

* If any of these symptoms persist over weeks it may indicate the need to see your Doctor.