

Stress Awareness

&

Management Techniques

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Stress Awareness

In the modern workplace, stress awareness has become a growing concern, with Health and Safety urging us to look beyond physical dangers and hazards to recognize the need for employee well-being management.

We should be aware of the negative effects of stress on our health so that we can make the best decisions for ourselves and the people in our environment.



Stress Management

Stress Management is:

“a set of techniques and programs intended to help people deal more effectively with stress in their lives by analysing the specific stressors and taking positive actions to minimize their effects”

(Gale Encyclopaedia of Medicine, 2008)



7 Tips for Stress Management

Steps 1 - 3 already discussed in Unit 1 & 2 of this module but here is a quick reminder:



1. Understand your stress

How do you deal with stress? It can be different for each individual. You can be more prepared and reach for your stress management toolbox when needed if you know what stress looks like for you.



2. Identify your stress source

What is it that makes you feel stressed? Work, family, change, or any of the other tens of thousands of potential triggers.



3. Recognize the signs of stress

As we all react to stress in different ways, it's crucial to be aware of your own stress symptoms. What internal warning bells are ringing in your head? Low tolerance, headaches, stomach-aches, or a mix of the aforementioned are all 'stress symptoms.'



7 Tips for Stress Management

Next you should:



4. Recognize your stress management techniques

What is your go-to method for de-stressing? These are often learned behaviours that aren't always the healthiest option. Some people, for example, self-medicate with alcohol or overeating in order to cope with stress.



5. Use healthy stress management techniques

It's a good idea to be aware of any present unhealthy coping strategies so you can replace them with healthier ones.



6. Make self-care a priority

When we set aside time for ourselves, we prioritize our own well-being over that of others. This may appear selfish at first, but it's similar to the airplane analogy: we must first put our own oxygen mask on before helping others. The most basic aspects of well-being, such as enough sleep, food, rest, and exercise, are sometimes disregarded.



7. Ask for support if needed

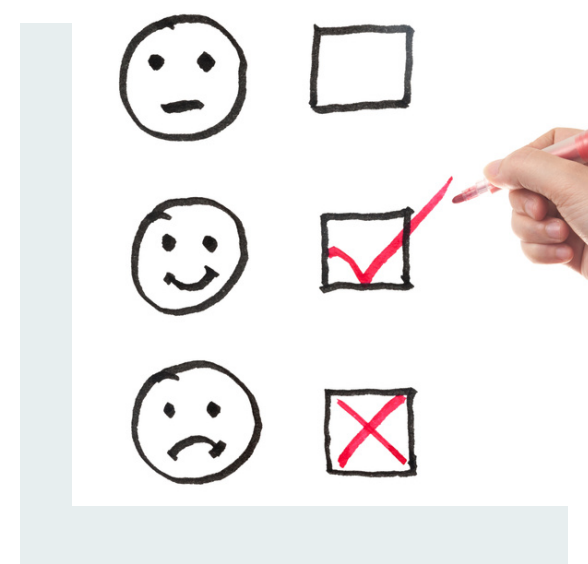
Reach out to a friend or family member who can help you if you're feeling overwhelmed. Speaking with a healthcare expert can also help us acquire healthy coping methods and reduce stress.



Steps for Stress Management



Step 1:
Action-
Orientated
Approaches



Step 2:
Emotion-
Orientated
Approaches



Step 3:
Acceptance-
Oriented
Methodologies

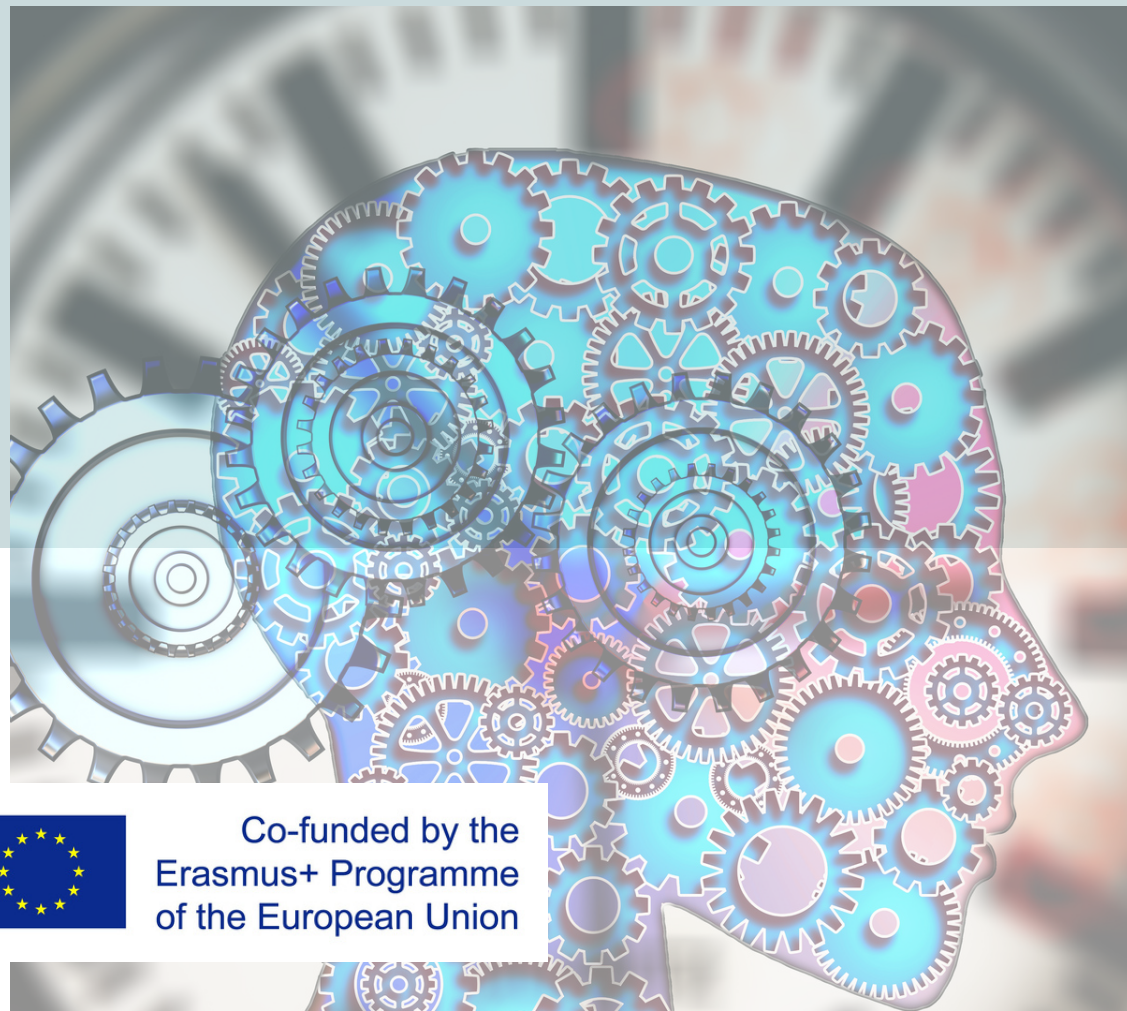


Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

Action-oriented approaches allow us to take action and change the stressful situation

When confronted with a difficult circumstance that can be changed by taking action, this strategy is most useful.

When you take steps to change a stressful situation, the situation can improve and stress levels can be reduced. Taking action can also give you a sense of control and empowerment.

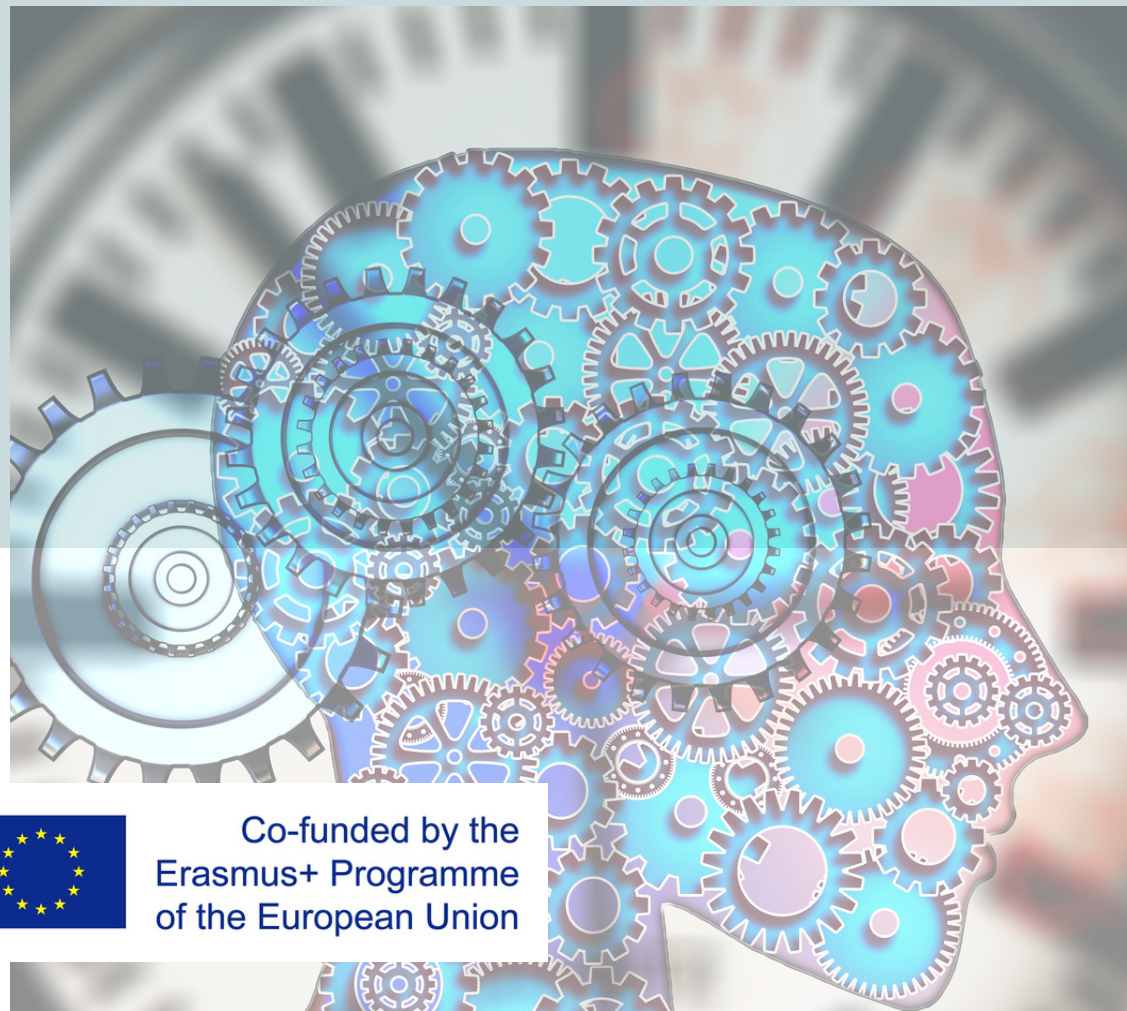


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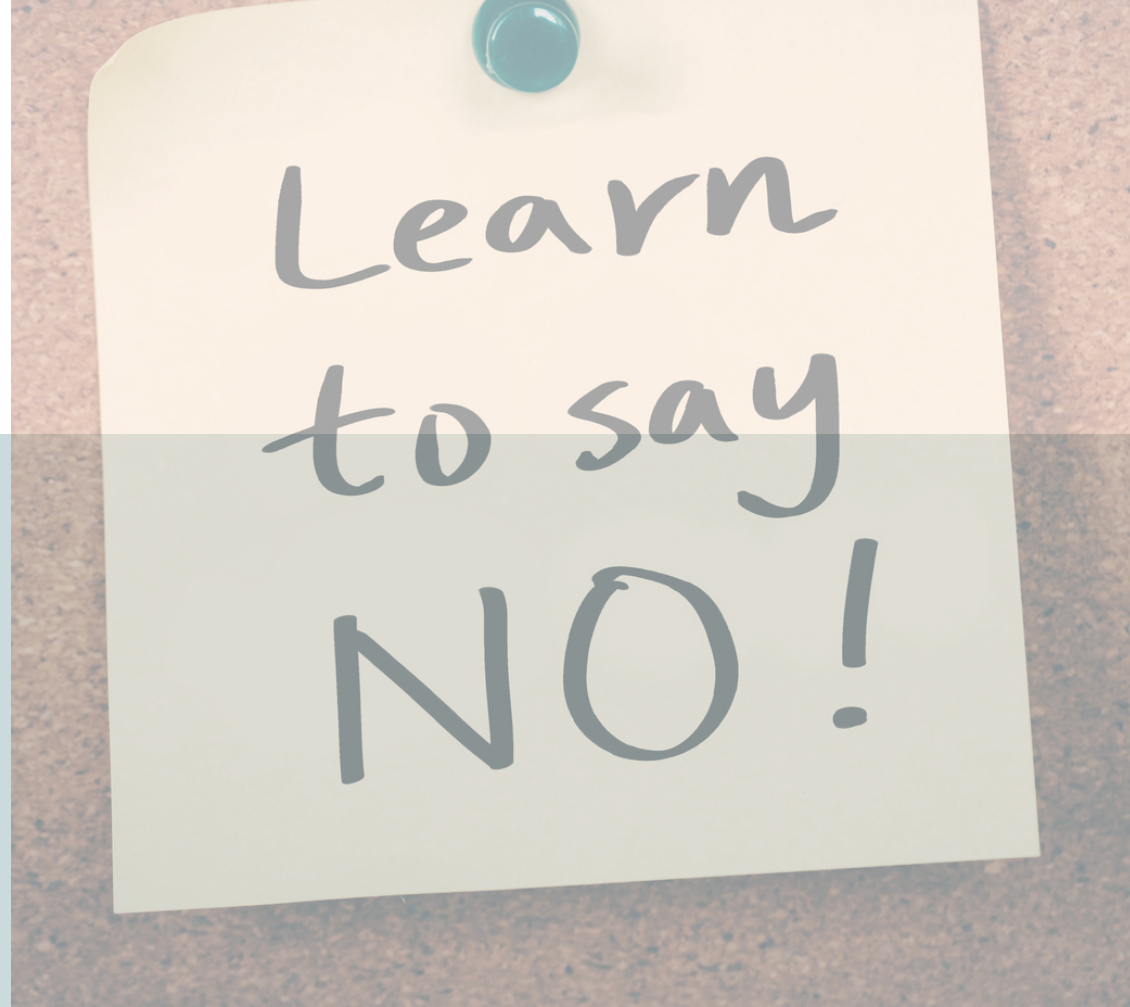
Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

Examples of action-oriented stress management strategies

1.a. Delegating: It's practically hard for one individual to do all of the duties that require attention, especially while living with a chronic disease or chronic pain. Stress can be caused by taking on too many obligations. Delegating responsibilities, such as asking a co-worker to replace you if you are not feeling well, can all help to relieve stress.



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Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

1.b. Defining parameters: Everyone's time, energy, and resources are limited. Setting personal boundaries can help you avoid overextending yourself, which can lead to increased stress. It's critical to say "no" to requests or activities that go beyond those boundaries once they've been established. Although saying "no" can be tough, it is an important element of stress management.

1.c. Standards are being relaxed: When personal expectations are set excessively high, stress can be self-inflicted. Stress can be reduced by lowering personal standards. It's impossible to expect perfection from any task.



Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

1.d. Time management: Failure to adequately manage time can result in unmet obligations, sleep deprivation, and a lack of self-care, all of which can lead to stress. Prioritizing the most important or time-sensitive tasks and delaying less crucial chores to a less chaotic period is a key part of effective time management. Stress management requires creating realistic schedules and to-do lists that include time for proper sleep, relaxation, self-care, and time with friends and family.

1.e. Assertiveness: When communicating with people, it is critical to assert personal needs, feelings, ideas, and values. Being too passive might lead to unmet demands and a sense of worthlessness. It's critical not to blur the line between assertiveness and aggression.



Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:



1.f. Avoiding: It is possible to avoid certain stressful circumstances. Making a small modification, such as avoiding a nasty co-worker, or choosing to talk calmly to an angry passenger, can often lessen stress.

1.g. Resolving issues: Problem-solving steps can be useful if you're not sure what to do in response to a difficult circumstance. The following are some problem-solving steps:

- Describing the problem or stressful situation in detail
- Brainstorming options for improving or solving the problem
- Making and then executing an action plan



Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

2. Be self-confident: Being assertive requires clear and effective communication. We can ask for what we want or need and also convey what is upsetting us when we are assertive. The goal is to do it in a fair and firm manner while maintaining empathy for others around you. You may speak up for yourself and take proactive steps to change the unpleasant circumstance once you've identified what you need to say

3. Reduce the amount of noise: We can slow down by turning off all technology, screen time, and continual stimulus. It is worthwhile to make a change for your own sake. Every day, set aside some time for silence, maybe during your break. You may find that all of the seemingly essential tasks we need to complete become less important and crisis-like. Remember that recharging is a fantastic approach to deal with stress.



Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

4. Establishing limits: Boundaries are the rules we make for ourselves on an internal level. They spell down what behaviours we will and will not tolerate, as well as how much time and space we require from others and what our priorities are. A stress-free life necessitates healthy limits. When we have healthy boundaries, we respect ourselves and take care of our well-being by communicating them to others explicitly.

5. Get your mind out of the gutter: It's sometimes preferable not to even try to deal with rushing thoughts. It's okay to take a break now and again. Distract yourself from the situation. Watch a movie, call or text a buddy, go for a stroll, or do something nice that you know will distract you.





Step 1: Action-Orientated Approaches:

While using an action-oriented approach to stress management will not totally eliminate a stressful circumstance, it will almost certainly lessen stress levels.

To further reduce stress, an action-oriented strategy can be paired with other techniques to stress management, such as an emotion-oriented (Step 2) or acceptance-oriented approach (Step3).



Step 2: Emotion–Orientated Approaches

Emotion-focused coping is a method of stress management that aims to lessen stress-related negative emotional responses.

Individuals use a variety of coping techniques to lessen or eliminate negative feelings such as shame, fear, worry, melancholy, enthusiasm, and irritation. When the source of stress is beyond a person's control, emotion-focused treatments may be the only viable alternative.



Step 2: Emotion–Orientated Approaches

There are several ways for dealing with emotion:

- Distraction: such as keeping oneself occupied to divert your attention away from the problem.
- Emotional transparency: This entails expressing intense emotions by speaking or writing about the terrible circumstances that triggered them. This is a crucial aspect of psychotherapy.
- Mindfulness meditation.
- Increasing the amount of food consumed, such as comfort food.



Step 2: Emotion-Orientated Approaches

More...

- Journaling, such as keeping a gratitude journal.
- Reappraisal of the mind. This is a type of cognitive shift that entails reinterpreting an emotionally arousing circumstance in a way that alters its emotional impact. Negative thoughts or emotions are suppressed (stopped/inhibited). Long-term suppression of emotions weakens immunological competence and results in poor physical health



Self-Activities to try



1. Changing the way you think about the circumstance

Instead than focusing on the unpleasant aspects of a situation, shifting your attention to the positive aspects might help you relax. If a conversation with passenger asking for information did not go very well, focusing on the fact that this experience can serve as an exmaple for better preparation when a similar conversation stricks, turning the experience into a positive rather than a negative one.



Self-Activities to try

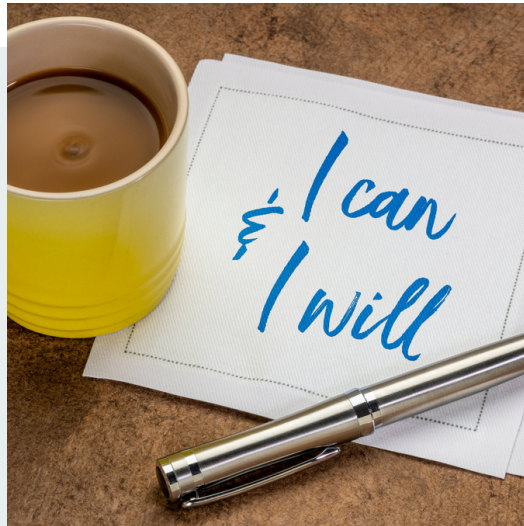


2. Using cognitive remodelling techniques

Negative thoughts are identified and restructured into positive ones through cognitive restructuring. Negative thinking tendencies include black-and-white thinking, overgeneralization, and catastrophizing. Recognizing negative thought patterns, questioning assumptions that contribute to those thoughts, acquiring data that may contradict them, and producing rational and positive alternative explanations are all part of cognitive restructuring.

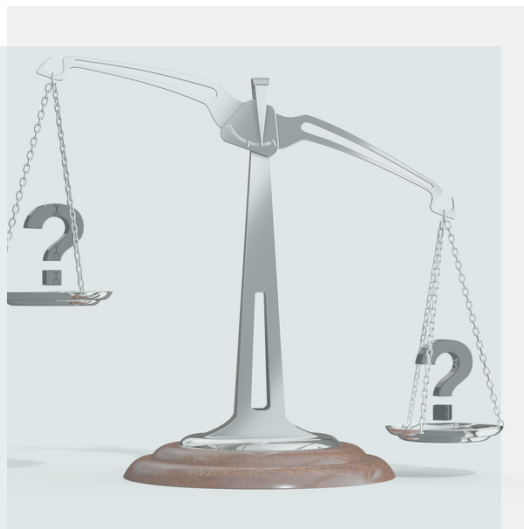


Self-Activities to try



3. Making up positive affirmations

Positive affirmations or mantras can help you feel better and have a better outlook in difficult situations. Silently repeating phrases such as "I can achieve more than I think" or "Positivity is a decision I choose to make" might be beneficial.

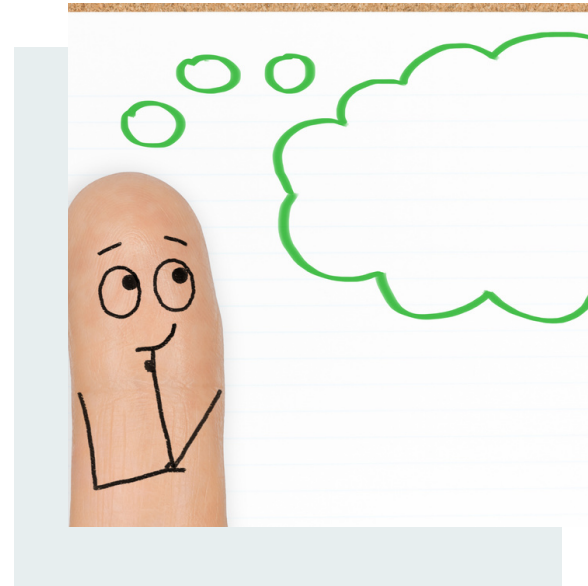


4. Taking the big picture into consideration

A stressful situation can sometimes appear to be much worse than it is. One method to put a situation into perspective is to ask, "Will this matter in five years?" This can help you feel less overwhelmed in a difficult scenario.

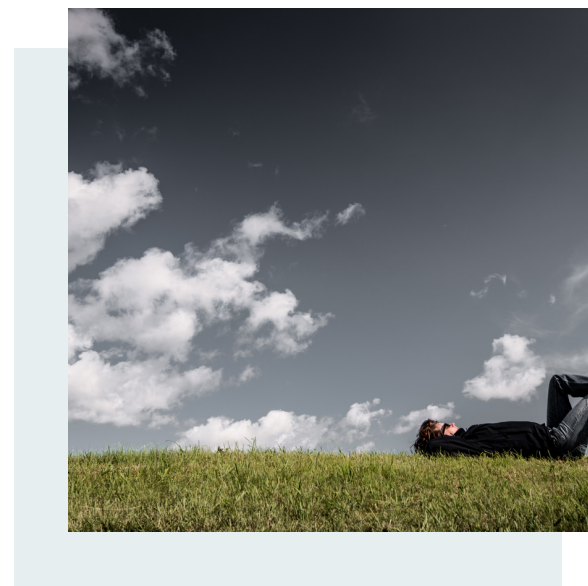


Self-Activities to try



5. Visualizations and affirmations

The use of positive imagery and affirmations to boost positive emotion has now been scientifically demonstrated. How? Your brain views a happy event as a reality when you think of it. So, challenge and modify the way you perceive and experience the world by replacing those negative beliefs with positive affirmations.

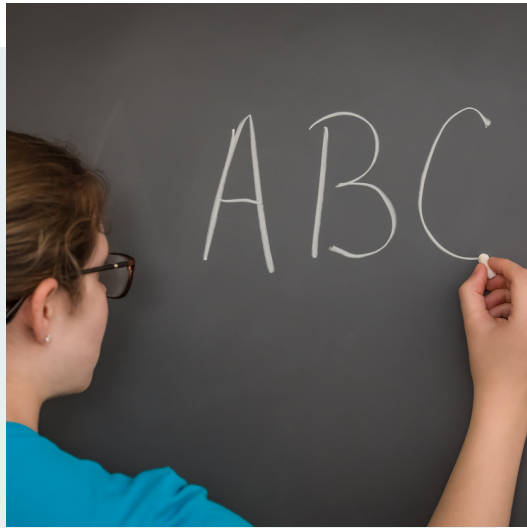


6. Restructuring of the Mind:

Try cognitive restructuring, a technique for understanding negative emotions and addressing the often inaccurate assumptions that generate them, in the mid-1950s. Cognitive reorganization is an important part of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).



Self-Activities to try



7. The ABC Method

Try the ABC approach, where the letters stand for: A - Adversity, or a stressful situation is represented by the letters ABC. B – Your views, or how you react to the situation. Then there's C - consequences, which are the acts and outcomes of your beliefs. Basically, the more hopeful your beliefs are, the better the outcome will be.

While an emotion-focused approach to stress management may not alter the reality of a difficult circumstance, it can alter personal feelings and reactions to it. To lower stress even further, an emotion-oriented strategy might be combined with an action-oriented or acceptance-oriented approach.





Step 3: Acceptance-Oriented Methodologies

Acceptance-based approaches can help you cope with difficult situations over which you have no control.

- 1. Exercise and Diet:** You have probably heard it before, but what you eat determines who you are. Make an effort to eat a well-balanced and healthful diet. Simple dietary modifications, such as cutting less on alcohol, coffee, and sweets, have been shown to reduce anxiety. Exercising is another sure-fire technique to de-stress. It has also been shown to be just as helpful as antidepressants in the treatment of mild depression.



Step 3: Acceptance-Oriented Methodologies



2. Physical relaxation and meditation: Deep breathing, guided visualizations, yoga, and guided body scans are some of the approaches you can use. These activities aid in physical relaxation. Below are some sample samples for you to try out.

3. Develop resiliency: Our ability to bounce back from stressful or unfavourable circumstances is referred to as resiliency. To put it another way, resilient people are capable of recognizing that a circumstance has occurred, learning from it, and moving on.

4. Get some rest: A good night's sleep is critical for recharging and dealing with stressful situations as effectively as possible. While the actual quantity of sleep required varies from person to person, an undisturbed sleep of roughly 8 hours is generally advised.





Step 3: Acceptance-Oriented Methodologies

5. Have a discussion: Don't keep everything within. Talk to someone close to you about your concerns or the issues that are bothering you. Sharing your anxieties can help you cut them in half while also allowing you to laugh at potentially silly situations. When we voice our worries out loud, they sound a lot less frightening. If you don't want to share them, writing them down is a terrific way to get them out. Alternatively, you might work with a freelancer. There are many services accessible, including some that are free, and you may easily google what is available in your city to see what is available.



Personal strategies for stress management

Based on Steps 1, 2 & 3 we advise you to follow Personal strategies for stress management and to:

- *Set realistic deadlines;*
- *Take a lunch break;*
- *Go home on time;*
- *Take your holiday leave;*
- *Leave work at work;*
- *Participate in work functions;*
- *Establish open and professional communication;*
- *Respect other employees;*
- *Do not tolerate discrimination of any sort, report any instances;*
- *Sign up for workplace training programs to develop and improve your skills;*
- *If required, seek therapy to manage and develop skills to cope with workplace stressors;*
- *Develop a healthy work-life balance, creating time for exercise.*





Coping with Stress



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Cognitive

- Therapy
- Hobbies
- Mindfulness
- Planning
- Reading
- Time management
- Meditation



Environmental

- Music
- Nature
- Pets
- Spa visits





Coping with Stress



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Physical

- Artistic expression
- Deep breathing
- Natural medicine
- Physical exercise
- Relaxation
- Yoga



Other

- Conflict resolution
- Prayer



The steps provided have been used widely in a variety of settings and countries.

