

# MANAGING STRESS

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THAT POSES A THREAT OR PRESSURE.



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### **Key facts**

- Stress is the body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure. It is very common and can help to motivate us to achieve things in our daily lives.
- But too much accumulative, or chronic, stress, can increase the risk of developing depression if you are not coping with the stress well.
- Stress and anxiety are not the same. Stress is a response to daily pressures or a threatening situation, while anxiety is a reaction to that stress.
- There are steps you can easily take to relieve and control stress, at work and at home.
- Effective stress management helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so that you can be happier, healthier, and more productive.
- There are also effective psychological and pharmacological treatments for moderate and severe anxiety and depression.
- Many things can trigger stress – such as worries about home, relationship problems, tension between colleagues, bullying and harassment, too much work and not enough rest.



## **Why is managing stress important?**

- If you are living with high levels of stress, you are putting your entire wellbeing at risk.
- Stress wreaks havoc on both your emotional and physical health. It narrows your ability to think clearly, function effectively, and enjoy life.
- Stress is linked to some of the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, and suicide.
- Chronic stress can lead to mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety disorder.
- Research has found that stress can negatively affect the immune system.
- Stress also becomes harmful when people engage in the compulsive use of substances or behaviours to try to relieve it – such as food, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gambling, sex, shopping, and the internet.
- Stress spills into our personal lives in many ways, affecting the quality of our close relationships.
- Chronic stress can affect job performance. For example, it can lead to physical symptoms on workdays (like upset stomach, headaches), difficulty making decisions, and accidents due to human error.

## **Recognising early signs of stress**

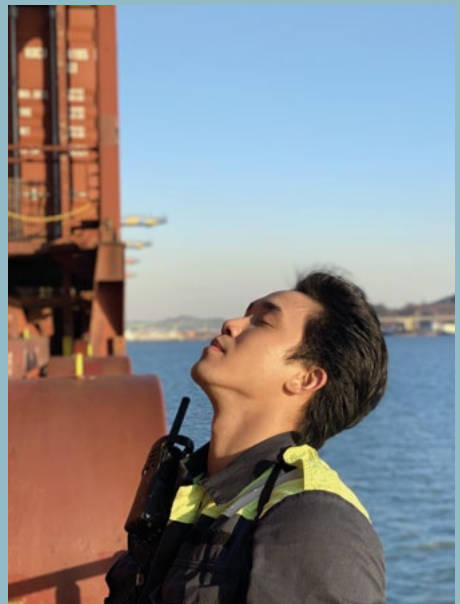
The earlier we recognise the signs and symptoms of stress, the better we will be able to manage it. These are some common signs and symptoms:

- Difficulty in sleeping, and insomnia.
- Abnormal appetite and weight changes.
- Frequent headaches.
- Stomach upsets and frequent urination.
- Trembling, sweating and restricted breathing.
- Periods of being tearful or crying.
- Increased heart/respiratory rate.

- Dehydration, dizziness and fainting.
- Blurred eyesight, or sore eyes.
- Inability to get things done.
- Isolation and increased conflict in relationships.
- Substance abuse.
- Problems with memory and concentration, and difficulty making decisions.
- Feeling nervous, anxious, angry, irritable or easily frustrated.

## **Practical tips for managing stress**

- Stay positive and accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. Assert your feelings, opinions or beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive or passive.
- Keep healthy. Get enough rest and sleep, eat healthy food, stay hydrated and exercise regularly. Go easy on the caffeine.



- Learn and practice relaxation techniques – try meditation, yoga, or controlled breathing.
- Strike a better work-life balance. Learn to manage your time more effectively, and make time for hobbies and interests. Remember to take breaks when you feel worried or stuck. Do something relaxing every day.
- Set limits appropriately and say no to requests that would create excessive stress in your life.
- Do not rely on alcohol, drugs, or compulsive behaviours to reduce stress.
- Build your resilience to stress – being prepared for periods of stress can make it easier to get through them; and knowing how to manage your wellbeing can help you recover after a stressful event.
- Plan the day ahead. This helps you to accomplish more and gain better control of your life. For example, create a 'to-do' list that highlights what is urgent and important.
- Identify what is contributing to your stress. Make a list of things that are worrying you, or talk to someone you trust to help you recognise what is causing your stress.
- Do not suffer in silence. Build up your support network at home and at work.

## **Getting help and support**

Seek help if:

- You are feeling low through most of the day continuously for more than two weeks.
- You have lost interest in daily activities/ pleasurable activities.
- Anxiety is interfering with your daily routine, and you feel as if you cannot regulate your emotions.
- You develop thoughts about suicide or self-harm.

If you are still not feeling well after talking to a friend or colleague about your emotions and feelings, you need to seek professional support from outside:

- Call the 24/7 psychological helpline services that are available in many countries.
- See a doctor or psychologist.
- Contact the 24/7 helplines run by ITF-affiliated seafarer unions for their members. These offer support in English and local languages.
  - NUSI Sahara (India) number is 1800-102-5110 (toll free from India) or Skype 'NUSI Sahara'.
  - AMOSUP (Philippines) number is +632 8241 9463/8241 9465.



**YOU CAN GET IN TOUCH WITH US THROUGH THE ITFWELLBEING FACEBOOK PAGE (ITFWELLBEING) FOR GUIDANCE ON MANAGING STRESS.**

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