

Handling stress

“I feel trapped. There is no way out. The walls are closing in on me. There is no door. I shout for help. No one answers. There is pressure on my chest. My heart is pounding. It seems as if it will burst. My head feels like it’s in a vice.”

Stress and Pressure

There is a difference between *stress* and *pressure*. Stress can be like a nightmare. It can stop you from doing things. Pressure can provide a way of urging you into new and interesting things. Without pressure life could be very tedious. The secret is for you to be in control of the pressure and not allow it to become stressful.

Understanding Stress

Make a list of events which have left you feeling stressed. Explain these events to a partner.

How did you handle the stress at the time?

How do you think you should have handled it?

Could you have avoided the stress? How?

Remember that individuals differ an enormous amount in what they find stressful.

Ways of Feeling Less Stressed

1. **Talk to Someone** *A problem shared is a problem halved.*

Who would you go to for help in these circumstances:

- when work is overwhelming?
- when you are feeling unable to cope with a personal problem?

Think of someone in school or at home who:

- can always be relied on.
- is going to cheer you up.
- is going to be honest with you.
- will listen to you.

Think, write, or talk about a time when you have turned to someone for help. What happened?

2. **Feel Healthy**

Do you know what your body needs?

Think about these points:

Do you get enough sleep?

Do you eat regularly and have breakfast every day?

Are you eating a healthy, varied diet?

Do you take regular exercise?

Are you about the right weight for your height?

Do you smoke?

Do you do relaxation exercises?

Discuss these points with a close friend, and write a report that describes yourself in ten sentences.

It is very difficult to break **bad habits** which are long established. Smokers, for example, know the harm that cigarettes are doing to them, but they blot this out and convince themselves it doesn't apply to them.

- The first stage is to admit to yourself there's a problem.
- The second stage is to decide on the best course of action.

If you aren't really committed to making a change, you won't succeed.

3. **Manage your time**

Look at how you manage your time. If you leave things to the last minute and then panic, ask yourself how you could start to change this habit.

Rewards: If you feel you can improve things, write down what you are going to do. Then write the reward you'll give yourself if you keep to the promise. Pin the piece of paper somewhere prominently at home.

4. **Be assertive — Stick up for yourself!**

- Learn to say no if that's what would be best in a particular situation.
- Sometimes you just have to say no to stop yourself being overloaded.
- Get things clear before you commit yourself to something.

Practise:

Role play: you have a lot of work to do and a friend wants to come for the evening for help with homework.

Role play: a friend wants you to watch a video when you really should be doing some school work.