

HOW STRESSED ARE YOU? Tip Sheet Audit

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		Time Management	Self esteem	Sleep hygiene / Fatigue	Burnout	Anxiety	Anger management	Procrastination	Enhanced wellbeing	Work-life balance	Financial strain	Relationships
1	I find there are not enough hours in the day to finish everything I have to do	X			X					X		
2	I am anxious/nervous about how I am performing at work		X									
3	People don't seem to notice whether I do a good job or not		X						X			
4	I am tired and feel I don't have the energy to do all I need to get done			X								
5	I am irritable and easily bothered by things people do				X		X					
6	I worry about things happening in my family (health, relationships etc.)					X			X			
7	I'm worried about my finances and having enough money to pay the bills										X	
8	I don't have enough time for fun	X			X					X		
9	I'm unhappy with my body (looks, weight, fitness)		X									
10	My family and friends count on me to help them with their problems	X			X							
11	I'm concerned about my current relationships or lack of relationships								X			x
12	I'm intolerant / impatient with the weaknesses of others								X			x
13	My home is a mess, and I'm embarrassed to have others visit and see it		X					X				
14	I worry about my future and being able to support myself / my family					X			X		X	
15	I worry that people don't like me or think I'm someone they'd like to befriend		X						X			

Stress issue	Tips and strategies
<p>Motivation and procrastination</p>	<p>Procrastinating, unmotivated, demotivated, uninspired? Call it what you want, we all know the feeling. If you want to make things happen, the ability to motivate yourself is a crucial skill. At work, home and everywhere in between, people use motivation to get results.</p> <p>Motivation requires a delicate balance of communication, structure, and incentives. These strategies for getting motivated both at work and in life are not silver bullets – there will be times where you simply can't get motivated to do something and must do it anyway. If there is too much that is happening in your life, you might be confused and distracted. We all know that motivation is not there all the time. There are some instances where it suddenly decreases, and procrastination can creep in.</p> <p>Here are some helpful tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep focused on <u>just one goal</u> – what is your purpose. • Have a clear outline of what you need to achieve; many people find that lists help them to focus and ticking something off is motivational; but be careful to start small, be realistic about the number of items on that list – try just 3. • Identify your support network - You will have more energy and inspiration to get on with work if there are people who support you. • Avoid thinking of how hard something is before actually starting it. Instead, start thinking what you can do and of its benefits, you will more likely attain it. • Do away with negative thoughts. Remember that what you think will tend to happen. Stop yourself when you begin negative self- talking as it will not help you. • Reward yourself for completing a task – this can even be ticking off an item on a 'to-do' list.
<p>Self-esteem</p>	<p>Self-esteem is a term used in psychology to reflect a person's overall evaluation of their own worth. Low self-esteem can be a constant companion for many people. If you are one of these people, you may go through periods of life needlessly feeling bad about yourself.</p> <p>Low self-esteem keeps you from enjoying life, doing the things you want to do, and working toward personal goals.</p> <p>You have a right to feel good about yourself... it is easy to be drawn into a downward spiral of lowered self-esteem during times of stress, pressure or ongoing change.</p> <p>This can be affected by feeling like you are not performing as highly as expect from yourself or others at work or when your contribution is not recognised, when relationships at work or home are stressful or unsupported or when personal factors are involved.</p> <p>Here are some helpful tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to your own needs and wants • Eat healthy foods and avoid highly processed fast foods • Exercise • Take time to do things you enjoy • Get something done that you have been putting off • Do things that make use of your own special talents and abilities • Dress in clothes that make you feel good about yourself

- Give yourself rewards
- Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself
- Make your living space a place that honours the person you are
- Display items that you find attractive
- Learn something new or improve your skills
- Begin doing those things that you know will make you feel better about yourself
- Do something nice for another person

Fatigue and sleep hygiene/ Sleep and fatigue

“The spring in my step is currently experiencing technical difficulties. Any matters requiring concentration will be subject to significant delays.” Sound familiar?

According to most of the research in fatigue management, the first and fundamental step to this problem is getting enough sleep. There simply is no substitute to restoring the body’s energy levels.

While people vary in their sleep requirements, it is generally regarded that between seven and eight hours will provide the body with the time it needs to restore the nervous system among many other rejuvenating functions. Conversely, sleep deprivation has been found to have the equivalent impact of a .05% alcohol reading (Canadian Trucking Association). This is naturally a concerning thought for anyone behind the wheel of a car or other forms of machinery. To make matters worse, sleep deprivation has also been linked with a range of illnesses and a shorter life span!

Stress and anxiety are considered by most experts to be the number one cause of sleeping problems. Worrying about not being able to sleep and worrying when in bed are major causes of insomnia.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Get to bed at the same time with no more than a half hour variation.
- Develop a ‘switching off’ ritual after work and using self-talk, for example deciding not to worry about how much sleep you will get (telling yourself the worst-case scenario is you will be tired the next day).
- A warm shower before bed will generally assist the body to feel more sleepy.
- Regular relaxation can assist sleep patterns and can also be used in bed to assist falling asleep. Techniques include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, yoga, listening to a relaxation tape or peaceful music, visual imagery and aromatherapy.
- If you wake during the night and worry about your concerns, get out of bed for a while, jot down your concerns and any solutions. This will help you put them to one side, able to pick them up again in the morning.
- Ensure your room is sufficiently dark. This will give your sleep a much deeper quality of restoration.
- Lifestyle strategies include regular exercise but not within 2 hours of bedtime, not napping during the day, waiting until you are sleepy before going to bed, getting out of bed and doing a calming activity if you have not fallen asleep within 30 minutes,
- Avoid eating big meals before bed, eating a healthy diet and avoiding heavy foods or foods containing caffeine before bed (e.g. coffee, chocolate, cola).
- If the problem persists, it is advisable to discuss the issue with your local doctor.

Stress and burnout

Burnout is the result of prolonged work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.

It's a mix of exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. Signs include feeling emotionally drained, physically exhausted, overwhelmed, and helpless, the loss of caring and performance takes a dive. There is even risk of health problems like cardiovascular disease.

Burnout is not just exhaustion or job dissatisfaction. Overworked employees may be tired. They may hate their jobs. They may say they're "burning out." These people need a break. Job burnout can result from various factors, including:

Lack of control. An inability to influence decisions that affect your job — such as your schedule, assignments or workload — could lead to job burnout. So could a lack of the resources you need to do your work.

Unclear job expectations. If you're unclear about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor or others expect from you, you're not likely to feel comfortable at work.

Dysfunctional workplace dynamics. Perhaps you work with an office bully, or you feel undermined by colleagues or your boss micromanages your work. This can contribute to job stress.

Extremes of activity. When a job is monotonous or chaotic, you need constant energy to remain focused — which can lead to fatigue and job burnout.

Lack of social support. If you feel isolated at work and in your personal life, you might feel more stressed.

Work-life imbalance. If your work takes up so much of your time and effort that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends, you might burn out quickly.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Set boundaries on work and work hours
- Try to set goals for what must get done and what can wait.
- Take your lunch break
- Use your annual leave
- If you're sick, stay home
- Open up communications and be honest about what's bothering you and help resolve the issue.
- Eat a healthy diet
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise
- Try a relaxing activity
- Mindfulness
- Make time for recovery and schedule downtime into every day to reflect and enjoy friends and family
- Make small changes e.g. use five-minute chunks once an hour to chat with a co-worker or walk around the block.

- Fight perfectionism - people who set high personal achievement standards show lower rates of burnout, but fear-based perfectionism is linked to higher burnout.
- Seek support

Burnout Symptoms

Symptoms of Exhaustion	Symptoms of Cynicism and Detachment	Symptoms of Ineffectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of motivation • Irritability • Fatigue • Insomnia • Memory issues • Feeling hopeless • Nervousness • Headaches • Irritability • Change in appetite • Trouble concentrating • Cynicism • Depression • Increased illness • Loss of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Lack of enjoyment • Apathy • Impatience • Being critical • Feeling persecuted • Hopelessness • Negative attitude • Excessive use of sarcasm • Disillusionment with work • Loss of job satisfaction • Self-medication • Dread of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of productivity • Poor performance • Missing deadlines • Habitual complaining • Missing work goals

Anxiety and worry

Worries, doubts, and anxieties are a normal part of life. It's natural to worry about an unpaid bill, an upcoming job interview, or a first date. But "normal" worry becomes excessive when it's persistent and uncontrollable. You worry every day about "what ifs" and worst-case scenarios, you can't get anxious thoughts out of your head, and it interferes with your daily life.

Constant worrying, negative thinking, and always expecting the worst can take a toll on your emotional and physical health. It can sap your emotional energy, leave you feeling restless and jumpy, cause insomnia, headaches, stomach problems, and muscle tension, and make it difficult to concentrate.

We feel the effects primarily in three ways:

- Physical: Racing heart, sweating, breathlessness, dizziness.
- Thoughts: repetitive, fixed view of a situation with little relation to reality.
- Behaviour: withdrawal/avoiding situations.

Here are some helpful tips:

Managing anxiety

- Remember that severe anxiety and panic is preventable
- Breathe slowly
- Focus on an object to help concentration
- Slow down, relax
- Learn what triggers your anxiety

Managing worry

- Create a "worry period." Choose a set time and place for worrying. During your worry period, you're allowed to worry about whatever's on your mind. The rest of the day, however, is a worry-free zone.
- Write down your worries. If an anxious thought or worry comes into your head during the day, make a brief note of it and then continue about your day.

	<p>Writing down your thoughts is much harder work than simply thinking them, so your worries are more likely to lose their power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go over your “worry list” during the worry period. As you examine your worries, you’ll often find it easier to develop a more balanced perspective. If your worries don’t seem important anymore, cut your worry period short and enjoy the rest of your day. <p>Where we know our triggers, we can be prepared and think ahead of the strategies we can use. Building our knowledge of ourselves in these ways is often referred to as insight and can assist us in realising our potential and developing good self-awareness.</p> <p>Symptoms may vary, but persistent feelings of high anxiety causes discomfort and disruption to everyday living. If anxiety continues to adversely affect how you live your life then it is recommended that you seek professional help.</p>
<p>Irritability and anger</p>	<p>Irritability is a feeling of agitation. Regardless of the term you use, when you’re irritable, you’re likely to become frustrated or upset easily. The causes of irritability can vary from stress and anxiety, sleep deprivation, lack of exercise, physical illness or a medical condition, medication or substance withdrawal (including caffeine). Most people feel irritable from time to time. For example, it’s normal to feel irritable after a poor night’s rest. Be mindful of this not escalating to behaviours of anger.</p> <p>Anger is a natural emotion. It is often the simplest indication that something is just not right. Anger is generally a reaction to an event (a defensive response), involving a mixture of complex feelings that trigger a response in our body, behaviours and thought processes. But mismanaged anger can become a problem.</p> <p>In addition to psychological changes, like any emotion, anger is accompanied by physiological changes. When you get angry your adrenaline flows, your heart rate increases, and your blood pressure escalates.</p> <p>When expressed appropriately, it’s an entirely normal response. However people who ‘fly off the handle’ easily may be at risk for heart disease or other illnesses, so it is important to know how often you place yourself at risk.</p> <p>Irritability and anger are signs that something is wrong, and if those signs are recognised, they can be used positively and energise us to deal with situations; help us to express our feelings; and inform us about people and situations. It is the way that we view and interpret the event that causes us to respond with anger.</p> <p>Signals to watch for are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When anger is too frequent. • When anger is too intense. • When anger lasts too long. • When anger leads to aggression. • When anger disturbs work or our personal relationships. <p>Here are some helpful tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself: ‘Will the object of my anger matter months/ years from now?’ ‘What is the worst consequence of my anger?’ ‘Did that person do this to me on purpose?’ • Say ‘I was wrong’ to someone. • Think about when and where you learned your reactions to anger. • Spend 10 minutes outside sitting in a park or garden.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laugh at a joke, situation, or yourself. • Avoid doing two things at once (such as eating and reading). • Talk to someone who you are not feeling angry with. • Slow down – try a deep muscle relaxation technique. • Try some ‘new and improved’ variations of counting to ten. For instance, try counting to ten with a deep slow breath in between each number. Deep breathing - from your diaphragm - helps people relax. This may not address the anger directly, but it can minimise the damage you will do while angry.
<p>Work/life balance</p>	<p>Work-life balance refers to an equilibrium state, where one effectively balances work or career demands and those of their personal life. An individual who lacks a work-life balance has more work and home obligations, works longer hours, and lacks personal time.</p> <p>Employee-specific factors, such as employee personality and their stage in life play a role in establishing a workable work-life balance. So does the type of work and the environment within which your business operates.</p> <p>According to new findings researchers are now encouraging us to stop thinking about work-life balance as an achievement that you either hit or don't. Instead, they suggest it may be more of a lifelong process – a continuous, never-ending exercise that requires vigilance, self-awareness and timely tweaks.</p> <p>These days, work-life balance can seem like an impossible feat, despite some organisations supporting flexible hours, working from home and a shorter working week. Technology makes workers accessible around the clock. Fears of job loss or workplace culture or unstated expectations incentivise longer hours. The compounding stress from the never-ending workday can hurt relationships, health and overall happiness.</p> <p>Here are some helpful tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause and examine personal values and beliefs “What’s currently causing me stress?”, “Why should I work, work work?”. • Reflect on response and value you put on work, family and other activities; do they make you angry, sad, energised? • Reprioritise and engage with your manager regarding work design; flexibility and defining capacity. • Check in with yourself and shift or adapt your professional life to something that will better harmonise with your personal one. • Unplug from telecommuting to programs that make work easier, technology has helped our lives in many ways. But it has also created expectations of constant accessibility. The workday never seems to end. • Make quality time true quality time. • Exercise and health hygiene. Even when we’re busy, we make time for the crucial things in life. We eat. We go to the bathroom. We sleep, and yet one of our most crucial needs - exercise - is often the first thing to go when our calendars fill up. Exercise is an effective stress reducer. It pumps feel-good endorphins through your body. It helps lift your mood.
<p>Financial strain</p>	<p>If you're worried about money, you're not alone. Money is a common source of stress . This is pretty significant given financial stress is linked to so many health issues sense of self and identity, intimate relationships, self-esteem and stress.</p>

Although any stress can take a toll on your health, stress related to financial issues can be especially harmful:

- **Delayed healthcare:** With less money in the budget, people who are already under financial stress tend to cut corners in areas they shouldn't, like healthcare.
- **Poor mental health:** In many instances, the link between mental and financial health is cyclical—poor financial health can lead to poor mental health, which leads to increasingly poor financial health, and so on.
- **Poor physical health:** Ongoing stress about money has been linked to migraines, heart disease, diabetes, sleep problems, and more. Left untreated, these conditions can lead to life-threatening illnesses, which can plunge you even further into debt.
- **Unhealthy coping behaviours:** Financial stress can cause you to engage in a variety of unhealthy behaviours, from overeating to alcohol and drug misuse.

Learning to cope with financial stress and effectively manage your financial situation can help you feel more in control of your life, reduce your stress, and build a more secure future.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Create extra sources of income. If you're feeling stressed about finances, you likely already feel you need more money in your budget. There are several ways to relieve your stress e.g. sub rent your home, reduce debt, cut out the extras such as bought lunch, travel and parking.
- Declutter your budget. Since life is rarely constant, regular budget check-ups are helpful, by setting aside some time to schedule, organize, and declutter all of the money coming in and out of your bank account. The more control you have, the less stress you will feel.
- Don't forget general stress management. As you work on improving your financial situation, you can reduce stress by practicing stress-reducing techniques and making other changes to create a low-stress lifestyle.
- Share the strains and possible options with those close to you; often they can assist with lifestyle changes that are causing strain e.g. expensive activities that you do together.

Relationships in the workplace

Positive relationships in the workplace are an integral part of career success. When building relationships in the workplace, you will notice an increase in productivity and overall job satisfaction. By taking certain steps toward understanding your emotional intelligence and getting to know your co-workers, you can build lasting, professional relationships.

Good workplace relationships tend to have the following characteristics:

- **Trust and reliance on your co-workers.** If trust exists with your co-workers, less time is wasted on workplace conflict or miscommunication.
- **Acceptance, understanding and tolerance** of one another as people and in your specific roles. If you accept and encourage diversity in your co-workers, you value their involvement and ideas, and in return they will value yours.
- **Teamwork** with all doing their fair share of the work and giving credit when it is due. By working together, you create solutions built on a shared understanding, knowledge and vision.
- **Open communication** is crucial; encouraging open communication, asking questions and getting to know your co-workers is one of the first steps toward a working relationship. Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal, so it is important to be aware of your tone and body language, as well as the actual words you say and write when speaking to your colleagues. The more effectively you communicate with the people around you, the more positive and healthy your relationships will become. Just remember that honest and open communication equals a positive and healthy relationship.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Understand your strengths and weaknesses.
 - Self-awareness: identifying your own needs and wants in a relationship and what others need from you. People who are self-aware are mindful of others and attend to what they say without letting their own negative feelings affect others around them. Therefore, taking responsibility for your own words and actions is critical.
 - Self-regulation: of your own emotions and thoughts by keeping your long-term goals in mind.
 - Empathy: to understand another's situation.
 - Social skills: like teamwork, conflict resolution, communication and problem-solving skills are crucial when developing new relationships.
- Schedule time to develop relationships.
 - Try and dedicate a portion of your day towards building better relationships with those around you. For instance, try arranging time with a co-worker to catch up over a quick cup of coffee. However, it is also important to be clear about your boundaries, and be wary of how much time you dedicate throughout the day for social interactions
- Ask questions and listen.
 - Asking questions and actively listening will not only allow you to learn more about your co-workers but are also an important part of the process of building relationships. Give them the opportunity to share details about their life before sharing your own.
- Know when to offer or ask for assistance.
 - Relationships involve both give and take and you can demonstrate this by asking for and offering assistance if you see someone else is overwhelmed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone wants to feel that their work is appreciated, no matter what the job is. Sometimes, it might seem difficult to understand the challenges of another department and frustrations can lead to negative feelings. By keeping in mind that each department has different goals, you can appreciate each employee’s individual role with the organisation. ● Be present by paying attention to those around you. Rather than answering emails during a team meeting or working on your report during lunch. ● Be Positive. Positivity is contagious.
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<p>Compassion fatigue</p>	<p>Compassion fatigue is a condition that can include emotional, physical, and spiritual distress in those providing care to another, causing a decline in their ability to experience joy or to feel and care for others. As opposed to critical incident stress, which is being traumatised by something you actually experience or see, compassion fatigue is absorbing the trauma through the eyes and ears of others, resulting in very real emotional and physical symptoms in the person caring themselves. Compassion fatigue is often referred to as the ‘cost of caring’ and ‘a hazard for helping professions’.</p> <p>As compassion fatigue can result from working closely with those who are struggling, it would be helpful for those who are in caregiving or helper roles, to have an understanding of what it is, how to recognise it in yourself and others, and what you can do about it. This includes constant giving to family members, friends and even colleagues.</p> <p>The most critical need initially is for carers to be aware of the warning signs and recognise that they may be experiencing symptoms. These can include:</p> <p>Emotional symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling overwhelmed, helpless or powerless when hearing of others’ suffering Bottling up emotions Anger, irritability, sadness, anxiety Feeling emotionally, psychologically or physically exhausted, burnt out or numb Feeling hypersensitive or insensitive to stories we hear or see. <p>Behavioural symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-isolation and withdrawal Poor coping behaviours, such as self-medicating or substance use Relationship conflict Being less efficient or productive at work Reduced pleasure in activities we used to enjoy or reduced work satisfaction. <p>Cognitive symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant thinking about the suffering of others Constant self-blame or thoughts of “I should or could have done more” Changes in belief systems, cynical views about self, others, the world, the future, or Reduced sense of personal and occupational accomplishment or efficacy Difficulty concentrating, focusing or making decisions. <p>Physical symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling constantly tired Poor self-care Nausea, dizziness, headaches Difficulty sleeping and nightmares Being tense, agitated, on edge. <p>Here are some helpful tips:</p> <p>There are many practical things we can do to mitigate the feelings and symptoms of compassion fatigue. Awareness is the first step to taking control.</p>
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- Refocus on yourself. Before tending to and be sensitive to the needs of others, take care of your own well-being.
- Consciously take note of how you are feeling and of any signs that you are beginning to feel stressed and can take action before things get out of hand.
- Make self-care a priority – it’s not a luxury, it’s a necessity. Use the 5- areas of wellbeing as a guide.
- Know your personal need to revitalise and refuel yourself emotionally and what strategies or activities to use at the time.
- Share how you are feeling with someone you trust; a good friend, your manager, counsellor.

Suggestions for Enhanced Wellbeing

Be active	Doing something is more helpful than doing nothing e.g. walking, playing sport, meditating, or nurturing a hobby.
Be outgoing	Connect with others, be it friends, family or colleagues. Take steps to create new friendships if you feel your social circle could expand.
Be flexible	Practice being flexible in your actions and thoughts. Try new things and ask yourself, “Are there other ways of thinking about this?”
Be passionate	Find an activity you are passionate about and can look forward to doing.
Be compassionate	Practising ‘random acts of kindness’ or more structured ways of helping others benefits both you and the receiver.
Be focused	Be in the present, whatever you are doing, and practice letting go of worries about the past and future.
Be positive	Being optimistic improves your mental and physical wellbeing. Practice being more aware of the positives than the negatives.
Be realistic	Be aware of what you can and can’t control and explore your choices. Change your language from, “I have to” to, “I choose to.”
Be a problem solver	Ask yourself, “What do I do about this?”, How can I put this into action?” and, “When can I put this into action?”
Be a sensory seeker	Use your senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch to be more aware of your surroundings. Seek novelty and stimulation in your life.
Be connected	Being part of a community and feeling that your life has meaning and purpose increases happiness. Get involved in groups of like-minded people and explore your passions together.
Behave in a happy manner	Be like a method actor and practice the part of a happy person - imagine how they would think, feel and behave. You can use a happy person you know as a role model.

If you need support to achieve these goals or to try different strategies, contact your Vitae EAP to book an appointment to see a Counsellor on 0508 668 981