



PSYCHOLOGY FIRST AID SELF-CARE

TYPES OF STRESS

MANAGING YOUR STRESS ALLOWS YOU TO MAINTAIN YOUR HEALTH AND CONTINUE TO HELP THOSE AROUND YOU.

Note: day-to-day stresses can be caused by both positive and negative experiences!



DAY-to-DAY

Time management, bad weather, job interview, deadline for a project, technology issues



CUMULATIVE

Ability to pay rent, working long hours over period of time, hurtful relationships



EXTREME/TRAUMATIC

Death of a loved one, car accident (experienced, witnessed), assault, natural disaster



VICARIOUS

Stories of serious loss, supporting people with traumatic stress, overexposure to media



BURNOUT

When we are unable to cope with the stress of a situation (or many situations), have exhausted all our healthy coping strategies, or ignore the warning signs, we experience burnout. This usually happens slowly and goes unnoticed until suddenly all energy and willingness are gone. We do not immediately recover from burnout; it takes time and rest to recuperate. If left unattended, the effects of burnout get progressively worse.



COMPASSION FATIGUE

Another result of stress for many people (particularly those in the humanitarian field) who hear stories of tragedy and loss is compassion fatigue. This includes feelings of:

- Helplessness
- Hopelessness in one's work
- Negativity toward those impacted
- Self-doubt
- Incompetence



LOOK

Look out for sign of stress within yourself. Do you get headaches? Are you short-tempered? Do you feel sick or nauseous?



LISTEN

Listening to yourself is about self-assessment & awareness. Are the signs telling you to take a break? Have you noticed a change in yourself?



LINK

Linking is the action you take to ensure your needs are met. It might be a coffee with a friend, finding out more information, or engaging a service.



LIVE

In this context, "live" refers to a balanced, content state of being. It is the start (before something happens) and the eventual place you journey back to afterwards.

Common signs that indicate stress can include:

- PHYSICAL signs (e.g., stomach ache, tiredness, headaches)
- MENTAL signs (e.g., difficulty concentrating)
- Emotional signs (e.g., anxiety, depression, anger)
- SPIRITUAL signs (e.g., loss of faith)
- BEHAVIOURAL signs (e.g., recklessness, an increased use of alcohol or drugs)
- INTERPERSONAL signs (e.g., withdrawn, in conflict with others)

Once you recognize the signs of stress, it's time to check in with yourself. Acknowledge where you are mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Make no assumptions as to how you are feeling.

The Self Care Plan contains 2 questionnaires: one to assess day-to-day stress levels and one to assess cumulative stress levels. You can record your answers in the Self-Care Plan PDF.

Your links are the resources within your support systems:

- SELF: individual actions to help cope with stress. For example, going for a run, listening to music, or writing in a journal. This system also includes the things we have that make us feel safe, such as housing, job security, or money for necessities.
- RELATIONSHIPS: healthy, trusting relationships with family, friends, colleagues.
- COMMUNITY: connect with your neighbourhood, clubs, find support in your workplace (policies).

The eventual goal of looking, listening, and linking is to return to living. Certain experiences may impact us in challenging ways. Activities you can do to decompress:

- Rest, restful activities
- Focus on your accomplishments and take time to reflect on your experience
- Use calming strategies (e.g., meditation)
- Monitor yourself (and team members) for signs of stress
- Attend peer support or team meetings to debrief, reflect, and share feelings
- Take care of yourself after experiencing stress.



COPING

If you are in a stressful situation for a period of time, ensure you have coping strategies in place. Some example strategies include:

- Take breaks
- Develop realistic work expectations
- Listen to and support your team
- Maintain healthy habits (e.g., eating, sleeping, exercising)
- Practise stress management techniques (e.g., deep breathing, mindfulness)
- Maintain healthy relationships
- Ask for help if you need it

PERSONAL FACTORS

Identify Personal Factors that may keep you balanced, healthy and functional during stressful times (complete exercise in Self-Care Plan PDF).

