

Raising your Resilience

Tips for Surviving Stressful Times

What is stress?

Put simply, stress is the response that we have as individuals when our ability to cope with what is being asked of us, or what we are asking of ourselves, exceeds what we can deliver.

In times of greatest pressure and stress we tend to forget about ourselves. We are often too busy, too worried or too tired to look after ourselves. However, it's times like these that we need to give ourselves the best chance of surviving the stressful time by being fit, healthy and as relaxed as possible.

Some useful tips:

- ▶ Think differently
- ▶ Act differently
- ▶ Have a healthy lifestyle

Think differently

You may well say "thinking differently" is a very big ask! And in many ways you are right. But that doesn't mean it isn't worth a try to nurture your resilience and improve your well-being.

Our thoughts tend to direct how we feel. For example, if you think to yourself "there is way too much work for me to do, and no one else seems to care about trying to help me....", it is very likely you will feel stressed, angry, depressed or all of the above. If instead you think to yourself "I will take things a step at a time and do the very best I can in the time I have...." your feelings will tend to match what you are thinking – and you will feel calmer, more in control and up for the challenge!

Helping a person to think differently is often the focus of counselling sessions, and receiving counselling based individual support to notice your "self-talk" and re-focus your inner chatter in a more positive and helpful way can be of great benefit. Thinking differently can be achieved without professional assistance. It takes self-discipline, commitment and focus, but it will be worth it!



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Act differently

Have you ever noticed the impact adding something positive into your life has on how you feel? Or how ceasing negative behaviours can also result in you feeling more positive and energised?

Human beings are creatures of habit, but not all our habits are helpful for our resilience. For example, a habit of agreeing to requests for babysitting your sister's kids, which results in you having 6 kids running around the house on a Saturday afternoon (when you had hoped to have some family time for yourself). Or another example might be a habit of saying no to invitations to go for a drink after work on a Friday with your work mates.....

It is important to be aware of your activities or habits that are nurturing and helpful for your resilience, in contrast to those that "drain the emotional petrol tank dry".

What activities make you smile? Where do you find yourself feeling the most relaxed? Whose company do you most enjoy? When you know the answer to these types of questions, you can act to ensure you have them in your daily or weekly schedule.

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got!

Have a Healthy Lifestyle

If the ideas of changing your thinking, or acting differently seems to overwhelming to consider, then the very least you can do is to live a healthy lifestyle.

Physical activity levels and the food we eat play a vital role in our mental well-being, and significant benefits can be obtained from regular exercise, and a well balanced diet. Exercise releases hormones into our body that counteract stress and assist our mental resilience.

If you do nothing else to improve your mental health management, the very least you can do is physical activity three times a week for 20-30 mins, and reduce your consumption of fast food and replace with fruit, vegetables and other healthy food options.

Other Resources

- ▶ Employee Assistance Providers (EAP) can assist you during challenging times. EAPs provide access to free counselling support to employees. Check into if your organisation has an EAP.
- ▶ Check out: www.mindtools.com

