

Recovery Resource 4: Coping with Stress.

What is stress?

Stress is a part of life. Each person experiences stress in different ways, and what is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. It is impossible to avoid stress altogether.

It is how we cope with stress that can determine how much it impacts on us.

Many factors can lead to feelings both positive and negative stress; even enjoyable activities can stress our bodies and minds. Sometimes, feeling very stressed can make symptoms of a mental illness worse, or in severe circumstances can cause them to arise.

The Stress Bucket:

Everyone has a "stress bucket". All of the stressful events that occur in your life, no matter how important or insignificant, are like drops of water slowly filling the bucket.

The key to effective stress management is to regularly reduce the amount in your bucket (relax, de-stress and problem solve), so that your bucket doesn't overflow and lead to a crisis.

Stress affects everyone in different ways and it is good to be aware of what happens to you when you feel stressed. When you notice your stress signs it is a signal that your stress bucket may be getting too full and you need to do something about it.

which stress symptoms apply to you?

- tight or tense muscles
- rapid breathing
- feeling tired
- racing or pounding heart
- excessive sweating
- inability to relax
- change in eating pattern
- difficulty with sleep
- difficulty concentrating
- other

- anxious
- stressed
- overwhelmed
- flat
- irritable
- angry
- other

- avoiding people
- getting agitated with others
- having trouble sleeping
- not doing enough
- becoming isolated
- other

What are some events that have recently been stressful for you?

- "I can't cope."
- "This is too hard."
- "I don't know what to do."
- other

Healthy ways of coping with stress:

Each person tries to manage stress in their own way. Sometimes the way we manage stress can be unhealthy and actually make things worse e.g. using substances or other unhelpful behaviours, avoiding people or situations, or being grumpy with people we care about.

It is important to address unhealthy ways of managing stress and replace them with more helpful, healthy ways.

which strategies currently help you?

- regular physical exercise
- relaxation exercise
- having a hobby
- gardening
- watching television
- going out with friends
- reducing caffeine
- saying no to demands
- reducing substances
- going for a walk or run
- reading
- slow breathing
- doing something creative
- finding a distraction
- listening to music
- watching a movie
- talking to somebody
- going to bed early
- eating healthy food
- doing a chore
- joining a group
- other

Stress Management Techniques:

Things you can do straight away:

- Identify what is making you feel stressed
- Take some time out
- Have a rest
- Write a list of things that need to be done
- Do something relaxing
- Write your problems down
- Go for a walk

Things you can learn:

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- Breathing Techniques
- Muscle Relaxation
- Mindfulness
- Cognitive behavioural Therapy
- Assertiveness Training

Ask your somebody who is involved in your care for more information on these therapies.