



# Wellbeing Resources

## The Disabled Police Association

### 'I Feel Stressed?'

#### What is Stress?

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to demands in our lives. It is the way our bodies react physically, emotionally, mentally and behaviorally to any change in the status quo. Even imagined change can cause stress. Stress is highly individual, a situation that one person may find stressful many not bother another person. Stress occurs when something happens that we feel imposes a demand on us. When we perceive that we cannot cope, or feel inadequate to meet the demand we begin to feel stressed. Stress is not entirely bad. We need a certain amount of stress in our lives because it is stimulating and motivating. It gives us the energy to try harder and keeps us alert. But when we find ourselves in situations that challenge us too much, we react with the 'fight or flight' stress response.



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#### What are the Possible Symptoms of Stress?

The list can go on...and will vary from person to person, however symptoms can include:

**Mental symptoms** – forgetfulness, nervousness, confusion, poor concentration, lethargy, negativity, overly busy mind

**Physical symptoms** - tension, fatigue, insomnia, muscle aches, digestive upset, appetite change, headaches, restlessness.

**Emotional symptoms** – anxiety, mood swings, irritability, depression, resentment, anger, impatience, worrying, and feeling pressured.

**Social or behavioural symptoms** – lashing out, decreased sex drive, lack of intimacy, isolation, intolerance, loneliness, avoiding social situations, overuse of alcohol and other substances

**Spiritual symptoms** – apathy, loss of direction, emptiness, loss of life's meaning, unforgiving, no sense of purpose.

#### How does Stress Affect our Health and our Lives?

Worldwide, 75/90% of all Doctors' visits are for stress related ailments and complaints. It can also be linked to other conditions such as heart disease, skin disorders, and gastrointestinal problems. In 2016/17, stress, depression and musculoskeletal disorders accounted for the majority of days lost due to work related ill health. On average, each person took around 23.8 day's sick leave.



#### What Can We Do About Stress?

Reactions to stress is determined by a combination of factors including physiology, past successes and failures in coping with stress and interpretations of stressful events in your life. Managing stress effectively is a complex skill – one which can be learnt through time and active participation. It's not easy, but the following strategies can help:

#### Physical techniques

- ✓ Exercise regularly and aim for 20/30 minutes at least 3 times a week

- ✓ Eat in moderation and choose a healthy diet
- ✓ Stop smoking
- ✓ Reduce alcohol
- ✓ Limit caffeine
- ✓ Get adequate rest

### Psychological techniques

- ✓ Learn to relax, both mind and body, try deep/abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and visualizing positive outcomes, mindfulness
- ✓ Build some fun into your routine
- ✓ Use humour
- ✓ Learn to look differently at situations that cause stress
- ✓ Learning to get along better with others
- ✓ Find ways to manage your time effectively
- ✓ Establish realistic expectations for yourself and others

### Environmental techniques

- ✓ Develop a social support network
- ✓ Maintain a neat, clean, comfortable work area
- ✓ Improve lighting
- ✓ **Reduce noise**
- ✓ Take time away from the workstation
- ✓ Take a proper lunch break away from the desk
- ✓ Set yourself limits and understand those limits

### What Treatments are there for Stress?

Stress isn't a medical diagnosis, so there is no specific treatment for it. However if you are finding it hard to cope with things that are going on in your life and are experiencing lots of signs of stress there are treatments which can help. To access most treatments, the first step is to talk to your Doctor.

Taking Treatments: talking with a trained professional can help you to learn to deal with stress and become more aware of your thoughts and feelings. Common types include cognitive behavioural therapy which helps you to understand your thought patterns and recognise trigger points, identifying positive actions you can take.

Mindfulness based stress reduction: which combines mindfulness, mediation and yoga with a particular focus on reducing stress.

Medication: as feelings of stress are a reaction to things happening in your life and not a specific mental health condition, there is no specific medication that can be prescribed. However there are various medications available which can help to reduce or manage some of the signs of stress. This can include medications to help with insomnia, anxiety/depression or the more physical symptoms such as irritable bowel syndrome.

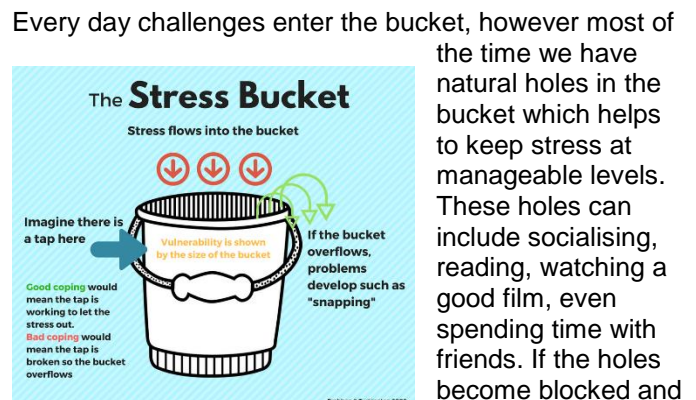
Ecotherapy: a way of improving wellbeing and self-esteem by spending time in nature. This can include physical exercise in green spaces or taking part in a gardening or conservation project.

Complementary therapies: these can include things like yoga, meditation, acupuncture, aromatherapy, and massage.

### The Stress Bucket

A simple way to look at stress is by depicting our lives like a bucket.

Depending on all the factors discussed and our resilience levels, our bucket may be deep or it may be shallow.



there is no release from the everyday challenges that we face, then the bucket can get to a point where it overflows. This may take a long time, or for some can happen quite rapidly. When people are also unwell then there is a tendency to block up the holes ourselves so that there is no release from the pressure, leading to an increased level of stress.

### When to ask for help?

Feeling stressed is a normal reaction, but it's about recognising when the stress you are experiencing is unmanageable. Talk to your line manager, friends, and family to look at how workloads, and expectations can be managed. Also go and speak to your Doctor to talk about managing some of the symptoms of stress which may develop into other emotional wellbeing conditions such as anxiety and depression.

For further information please visit the Mind Website at [https://www.mind.org.uk/?qclid=EAlaIqobChMI9fHc557V2QIVuArTCh29dQ7IEAAYASAAEgIPh\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.mind.org.uk/?qclid=EAlaIqobChMI9fHc557V2QIVuArTCh29dQ7IEAAYASAAEgIPh_D_BwE)