



## Dealing with stress

Four steps to help you regain control of your life when you feel stressed and overwhelmed.

Pressure can be a positive stimulus but under stress you are unlikely to be feeling or working at your best. There is no simple way to beat stress, but here are a series of steps to help you regain control of your life.

### Recognize the problem

The most important step is to recognize that the problem exists. Try to take a step back from your life to think about how you're feeling. See if you recognize any of the symptoms described in our briefing **Understanding Stress**. If you don't have time to assess your symptoms or stress levels, then you probably are stressed.

### Take a few moments to calm down

You can learn to deal with the underlying causes of your stress, both the pressures in your life and the way you react to them. If your first thought is that you don't have time to stop and review things, take a few moments to calm down. Take a look at our factsheet on **Relaxation Techniques** if you need a few ideas.

### Identify and deal with the causes

Sometimes you will know intuitively what's making you stressed; other times it may seem like everything is going wrong and you are unable to identify the cause of your stress. Remember that stress is rarely caused by an event in itself, and more often by doubts about your ability to cope with that event. You need to be very honest with yourself and face up to issues that could cause some distress.

It can be helpful to discuss things with someone else.

- Sharing your issues with a friend, family member or colleague is often a good start. If your stress is work-related, you will need to address organizational issues. Talk to colleagues or your mentor (if you have one), or to your manager or supervisor. They cannot help you unless they know a problem exists.
- If you belong to an education association, you may want to consult your representative who will have expertise in handling school issues.

## Take more control of your lifestyle

By making a change to your lifestyle you can assert control over your life and adjust the way you think about your situation. Small shifts can quickly free up creative energy and increase your options. Different things work for different people but the important thing is to take action of some kind and find out what works best for you. Unfortunately the more stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted we feel, the harder it is to be proactive.

Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Try listing everything that's bothering you and then work out which things you can control and which you can't. Ignore those you can't influence and work on practical solutions to the others.
- Take up a physical activity. It doesn't have to be 'exercise': a brisk, 20-minute walk daily will give you valuable breathing space.
- Muscular tension often parallels and exacerbates mental stress. Relaxing physically at the end of the day is important and sometimes hard to do. Try the relaxation techniques listed in the InfoCenter and pick one that works for you.
- Try to avoid increasing your consumption of alcohol or caffeine. Although smoking may seem to help, it really doesn't.
- Do something that forces you to think actively about something else. Meet friends, cook a meal, do a Sudoku puzzle...
- Get a good night's sleep. Relax before you go to bed to avoid lying awake and worrying.

## Where can I go for further support?

If you are an educator from one of the districts that have signed up to this service and you wish to speak to a qualified counselor, you can call the toll free Educator Support Line on 1-877-876-4327.