



UCAN

stress
LESS



Stress is normal



Stress is a feeling of being under abnormal pressure, but it's actually a completely normal part of life. It's a natural reaction to difficult situations. At times though, when there's a bit too much going on, things can feel overwhelming.

It could be a family argument, or just some day-to-day stuff that all adds up. It's really easy for these things to get out of hand, and have a more long term, serious effect.

But the good news is that it doesn't have to be like that. This booklet is designed to help. It won't make you stress-free (that's not normal at all), but it will help you find your own ways to stress less. If you recognise and manage stress in a healthy way, it can make you more alert and better at things in certain situations — for instance, think about how the pressure of exams can motivate you to study harder. See, stress can actually be a positive thing!



Your body is pretty clever. When you're in a situation you find stressful, it looks after you by releasing hormones like adrenaline and cortisol to help you deal with the 'threat'. These can increase your heart rate and blood pressure. You might get sweaty palms or feel a knot in your stomach. This response is known as 'fight, flight or freeze'. It's your body's natural way of protecting you against danger, but you can see how it could be unhelpful in day-to-day situations.

Sometimes this rush of hormones can make it hard to relax or think clearly — sometimes it's even tough to think about anything other than the stress. It can make you feel irritated, withdrawn or even tearful. And if you have to take extra care of your physical health because you've been diagnosed with a health condition, stress can make your symptoms worse over a long period of time. But you don't have to let stress control your life.

Where do you feel stress?

How does your
head feel?

How are
your eyes?

How's your neck?

Is your
mouth dry?

What about
your palms?

How's
your back?

How are your legs?

How are
your feet?

Don't stress... de-stress



Recognise it

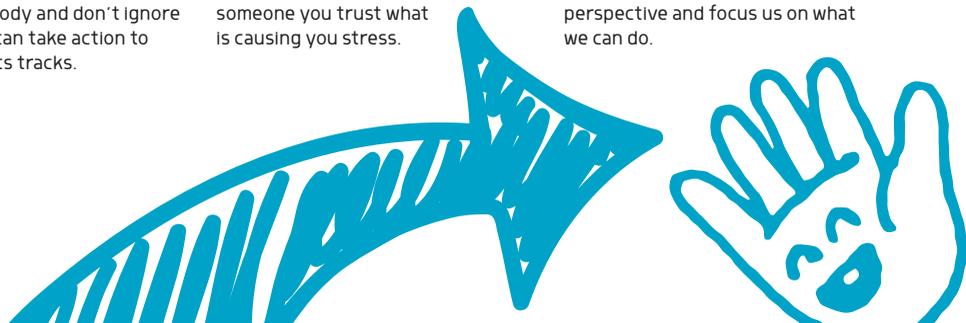
Stress isn't all bad. Some stress is healthy, like that feeling of motivation you get before exams. Get to know what this kind of normal stress looks like. When stress is building up and becoming more of a problem — like when things are getting too hard to cope with — listen to your body and don't ignore the signs. You can take action to stop stress in its tracks.

Name it

If you're feeling stressed out, telling someone can be helpful. But if you're not quite ready to chat, write down the reasons why you're feeling that way. Even if writing things down doesn't give you the solution straight away, it can make it easier for you to describe to someone you trust what is causing you stress.

Beat it

Not everything in your life that puts you under pressure has a quick solution. Some things will sort themselves out in time and some things we don't have any control over. When we have named what is causing us stress though, it can make it easier to put things into perspective and focus us on what we can do.



What works for you?

Break it down



We want to help you deal with stress in a way that works for you. So using this table, why not **list the things stressing you out, and then think about the steps needed to solve them?** Perhaps your first step is to speak to someone who can help you make these changes, like a parent or teacher.

My stress list

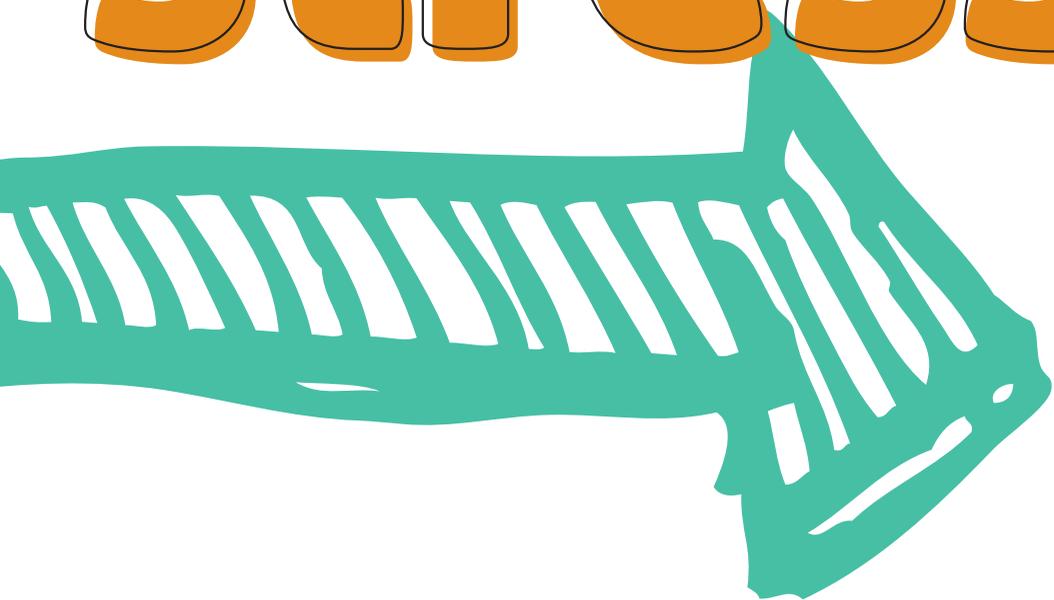
Thing that's stressing me out	There's a practical solution	It just needs time	It's out of my control

Write stuff here

Put what you can do here...

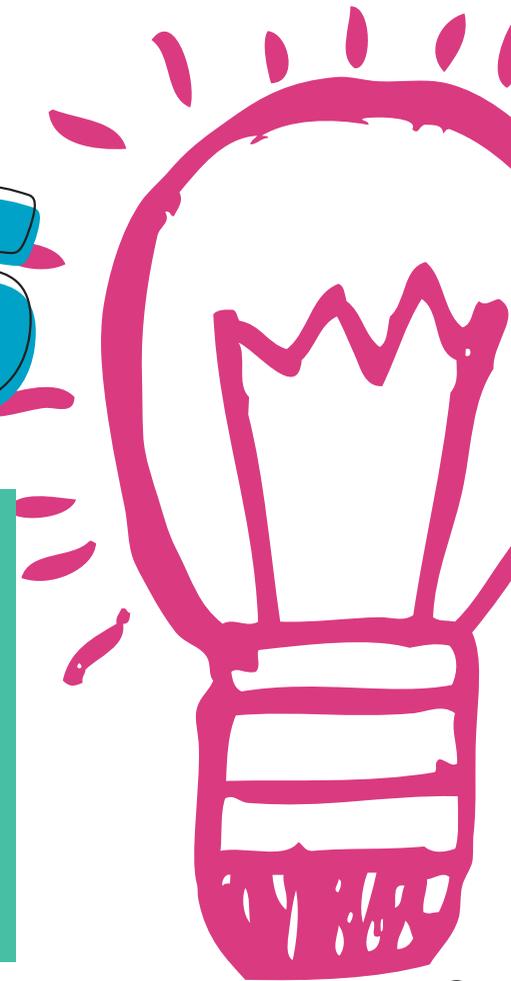
... or tick one of these

7 ways to stress less



You're not alone. Everyone wants less stress in their lives. So it's a good idea to develop some daily habits to help manage stress, just in the same way you'd look after your physical health.

Here are **seven top tips** for staying mentally well.



1



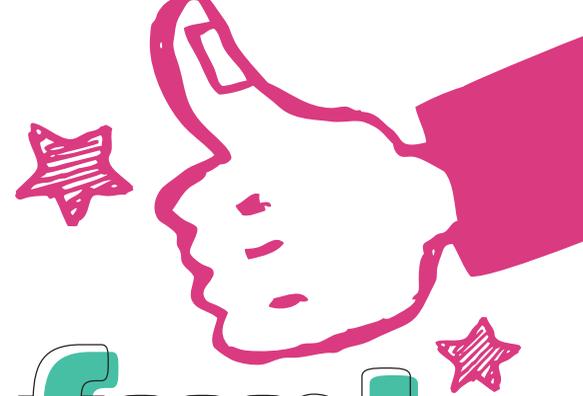
You do you

No one knows you better than you. So when it comes to looking after your mental health, take some time to get to know what makes you feel good.

When you're getting to know yourself, it's important to feel good about the person you are and the person you're becoming. And go easy on yourself! Sometimes when we're stressed out, this can be easier said than done. Listen to the things you say to yourself in your head. If you wouldn't speak to a friend that way, why should it be okay to treat yourself the same way?



2



Have fun!

Make time regularly to do things you enjoy. If you enjoy doing something, it probably means you're good at it, which can make you feel like you're achieving something.



This is great for your self-esteem, your mental health and beating stress. Doing something you enjoy is also a good distraction from day-to-day pressures. And even when you've stopped doing it, your mood will be lifted, so you'll be better able to face the more stressful things you have going on — with a clearer, happier mind.

What works for you?
Just do it

What do you love doing?

What activities can you lose yourself in?

3

Try talking about your feelings regularly. You'll probably talk to different people about different things, and some people are particularly good listeners.

Talk it out

When someone listens, you feel more supported, which helps to make stress feel more manageable. If you're comfortable talking about your feelings, it can encourage friends and family to talk about theirs, so in turn they feel better too.

These conversations don't need to be a big deal — they should develop naturally. For instance, if someone asks how your day has been, talk about what you got up to and how it made you feel. Get used to discussing your smaller day-to-day worries first, so when something bigger comes along you'll find it easier to talk about.



Sure, it's not always easy to describe how you're feeling, particularly if you're stressed. So here's what to do — wait until you feel calm to practise ways of talking about your feelings. Then when things get more stressful, remember how you started speaking when you were calm — this will make it easier to talk rather than having to think on the spot.

Ucards

If you have a physical health condition, you might feel OK sometimes, but at other times it can affect you emotionally as well as physically. Whatever's going on for you, Ucards are a helpful tool to put into words how these changes affect you, and what you need from people around you. They are also a good way to kick-start a conversation.



What works for you? Describe it

On a good day, I feel...

On an OK day, I feel...

On a bad day, I feel...

My go-to people are...

Stay in touch

4

It's good to feel connected to people — it makes you feel cared for and part of something.

Your friends and family can help you deal with the stresses of life by offering different views from your own. Some people might be able to relate to your interests or experiences in ways that make you feel you're not alone. There are loads of ways to stay in touch. Social media for one, but bear in mind it only gives you a snapshot of people's lives. Research shows that some young people find social media stressful, as they compare their lives or how they look to how others appear online. They worry about how many 'likes' they get, and how other people respond to what they post. Don't let that stress you out — social media is good for staying in touch, but it's no replacement for a 'genuine' face-to-face relationship where we can get a fuller picture of someone.

For tips on how to stay safe online, visit young.scot/DigiAye



What works for you?

Mate date



I caught up with...

We went...

We chatted about...

I felt...

Take a break



Change is good for your mental health, like a change of scene or a change of pace. It helps you step away from all the things on your mind or your 'to do' list.

You could go for a walk, get active or simply put your feet up and listen to some music.

Taking just a few minutes' break can help you think more clearly. Maybe you've heard of mindfulness? It's a way of really focusing on the present moment. Mindfulness can help you tune into your thoughts and feelings, acting as a breather for your brain. With even a short break you'll feel calmer and less overwhelmed.

Much as you might love movies, Facebook and computer games, it's good to take a break from screen time too. Televisions, mobiles,

computers etc. can put our brain 'on alert', which can then contribute to sleep difficulties. The blue light from screens interrupts the release of your sleep hormone, melatonin, so it's important to turn everything off an hour or so before you go to bed, and do something non-screen related, like read a book, take a bath, or put on some chilled out music.



What works for you?

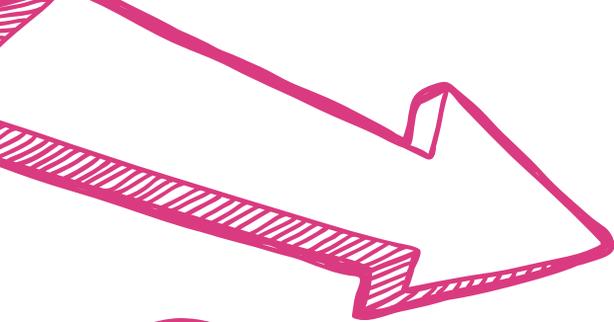
Happy music

My theme tune...

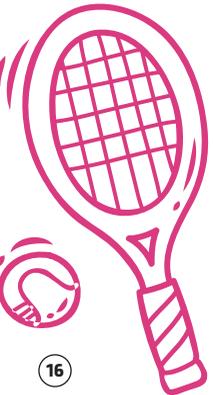
My favourite song lyric...

My stressless playlist

Song...	Artist...	Makes me feel...



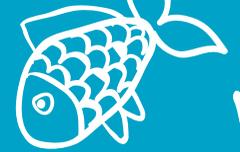
Feel-good factor



Looking after your physical health is amazing for your mental health! It can release chemicals in the brain that make you feel good.

Exercise means different things to different people. A high energy sport works for some, while for others something more gentle is a better fit, like perhaps yoga, or even just getting outdoors. And if you have a specific condition and need to take special care of your physical health, your doctor might suggest particular kinds of movement to help with that. It's important to find what works for you — whether it relaxes you, energises you, or helps you manage pain.

Exercise and a good diet go hand in hand. Together, they'll keep your body in shape; and give your brain the mix of nutrients it needs in order to stay healthy and function well long term. What we eat may affect how we feel in the short term too — for instance, too much caffeine or sugar isn't good for you as it can stimulate your central nervous system, which can add to stress.



What works for you? Mood food

Lots of healthy nutrients are good for your mood. Nutrients are things like complex carbohydrates, essential fats, amino acids, vitamins, minerals and water. This table shows all the nutrients you need. **Over the next week, tick what you have each day.**

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Water							
Breads, grains & cereals							
Meat, fish & nuts							
Milk, cheese & yoghurt							
5-a-day fruit & veg							

Share your care

So far we've focused a lot on being kind to yourself. Caring for others, and keeping up positive relationships with people, is also really good for your mental health.

Making a difference to someone, whether that's on a personal level or by getting involved in a good cause, can make you feel needed and valued, and that boosts your self-esteem. It also helps you see the world from other angles, which can help put your own problems in perspective.

Caring for a pet can improve your wellbeing too. Pets can feel like one of the family, and the bond between you and your pet can be as strong as between people. Having a pet can bring structure to your day, and also help you to feel connected if you're having trouble putting things into words.



What works for you?

Feel the love

Who I care about...

What I care about...

How I show that I care...



Mental Health
Foundation
Scotland

In partnership with



ARTHRITIS CARE
SCOTLAND



Children's
Health Scotland