

ASHCLIFFE EAP Newsletter

May, 2023

Welcome to the latest edition of the Ashcliffe EAP Newsletter. The focus of this newsletter is "Stress", a common problem in today's busy and demanding world.



There are many things that contribute to the stress of our day-to-day life. Few people are stress free. Most of us have constant demands on our time and energy, have to deal with problem situations and problem people and we have those days when things go wrong.

People frequently report having stress at work and stress at home that they struggle with. Here are seven simple stress management strategies to help put you in control of your emotions in a way that helps you to deal with situations and lower your stress levels.

7 Tips to Reduce Stress

- 1. Slow down** - Close your eyes and take a big deep breath, slow your breathing rate and focus on the next important task you have to do.
- 2. Focus your mind on good things** - Direct your mind to the positive. Remember the good things in your life. Remember the good people around you who are important because they support and assist you.
- 3. Look at the "big picture"** - When a situation seems bad, consider that it might not be that bad if you look at an overview of that situation. Rather than getting stuck, look at things in context and consider the big picture.
- 4. Exercise** - When you're feeling down and under stress, take time to exercise. Go for a walk. Exercise is a great way to relieve stress, depression and anxiety.
- 5. Use active problem-solving** - Things rarely get better just because you sit around feeling upset. Take a piece of paper and write down your options. Think of the choices you have to solve the problem and take action.
- 6. Use positive words** - Rather than complain and moan about your situation, stop and take a deep breath. Make a positive comment. Negative words will undermine your confidence, motivation and energy.
- 7. Use physical tension release** - Breathe in, tense all your muscles for 5 seconds, then release all the tension as you breathe out. Stand in a doorway, hold your breath, then press against the doorframe for 5 seconds. These types of tension release exercises relax the muscles and make it easier to reduce stress.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Studies have revealed that 2.8 million Australian adults (15.6%) reported experiencing anxiety in the past year. Anxiety has overtaken depression as the second-most common mental health issue. Most of this anxiety is seen as stress, a condition we all have to deal with from time to time. Keep in mind that when stress becomes a problem, we can help.

Remember, if you or someone in your immediate family has a concern that may benefit from the support of one of our EAP counsellors, please give us a call on 0455 455 855. We are here to help.

Employee Assistance

How can EAP support help someone impacted by stress? Ashcliffe Psychology provides a counselling service for your organisation's employees and their immediate family members. This is a confidential, short-term, support service, paid for by your employer. Counselling can help you to reduce stress by making sense of events or experiences and exploring options for dealing more effectively with the events and situations which put you under pressure.

Four Facts About Counselling

ONE: Talking with a counsellor offers a confidential, psychological space that friends and family usually cannot provide.

TWO: The 'severity' of a person's problem is relative. If something doesn't feel right, then counselling is valid whether others the concern as minimal or major.

THREE: People who engage in the counselling process usually find it helpful in gathering new insights and personal strategies to reduce stress in their life.

FOUR: Talking can help people find a new or different view about a situation creating stress in their life.

ASHCLIFFE PSYCHOLOGY
Employee Assistance

0455 455 855

Alcohol is a frequently-used stress management self-medication. However, it can be a problem.



Facts about Alcohol Abuse in Australia

- Alcohol is the most widely used drug in Australia.
- The percentage of people with alcohol addiction is increasing.
- Alcohol is involved in more than one-third of falls and drownings.
- One quarter of Emergency Department consultations are alcohol related.
- Heavy drinking is a major contributor to heart disease, cancer and stroke.
- One in ten people who drink alcohol will become addicted to alcohol.
- Alcohol addiction is a disease and requires appropriate treatment.
- Less than 5% of people addicted to alcohol seek treatment.
- Alcohol is a factor in around 80% of domestic violence cases.
- Alcohol abuse costs the community more than \$40 billion each year.
- Around 70,000 people are the target of alcohol fuelled assault each year.
- 1 in 8 people admit to driving under the influence of alcohol (2010 study).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Medical Association.

Taking the Time to Relax:

Relaxation techniques are a great way to help with stress management. Relaxation isn't just about peace of mind or enjoying a hobby. It's a process that decreases the effects of stress on both your mind and body. Relaxation techniques can help you cope with everyday stress and with stress related to various health problems.

Relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms by:

- Slowing your heart rate
- Lowering blood pressure
- Slowing your breathing rate
- Reducing activity of stress hormones
- Increasing blood flow to major muscles
- Reducing tension and chronic pain
- Improving concentration and mood.

Here are three well-used and successful techniques:

Progressive muscle relaxation. In this relaxation technique, you focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. This helps you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. You become more aware of physical sensations.

One method of progressive muscle relaxation is to start by tensing and relaxing the muscles in your toes and progressively working your way up to your neck and head. You can also start with your head and neck and work down to your toes. Tense your muscles for at least five seconds and then relax for 30 seconds, and repeat.

Autogenic relaxation. Autogenic means something that comes from within you. In this relaxation technique, you use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress.

You repeat words or suggestions in your mind to relax and reduce muscle tension. For example, you may

imagine a peaceful setting and then focus on controlled, relaxing breathing, slowing your heart rate or feeling different physical sensations, such as relaxing each arm or leg one by one.

3. Visualization. In this relaxation technique, you form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation.

During visualization, try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound and touch. If you imagine relaxing at the ocean, for instance, think about the smell of salt water, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on your body. You may want to close your eyes, sit in a quiet spot and loosen any tight clothing.

Remember that relaxation techniques are skills. As with any skill, your ability to relax improves with practice. Be patient with yourself. Don't let your effort to practice relaxation techniques become yet another stressor. If one relaxation technique doesn't work for you, try another.



"I'm learning how to relax, doctor — but I want to relax better and faster! I want to be on the cutting edge of relaxation!"

This Newsletter is presented for general information only. Please be aware any advice provided in this publication may not apply to your particular situation. Ashcliffe urges all readers to seek specific professional guidance before taking any action on a personal problem.