

# Stress, Anxiety & Depression – the basics

## Stress

A state of mental or emotional tension, resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

Stress comes from pressures we feel in life.

Stress is when something disturbs the status quo and creates change.

The source of stress is a stressor – this can be physical in the external world or something emotional generated internally.

Some stress is good. Too much can lead to ill health i.e. anxiety.

Beyond the Nixon 'hump' stressors start to have a negative effect. You are no longer coping, and fatigue leads to exhaustion, ill health and eventually breakdown.

Our response to stressors depends on a number of things and we will each manage them differently

## Anxiety

### Effects on your body

a churning feeling in your stomach

feeling light-headed or dizzy

pins and needles

feeling restless or unable to sit still

headaches, backache or other aches and pains

faster breathing

a fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat

sweating or hot flushes

problems sleeping

grinding your teeth, especially at night

nausea (feeling sick)

needing the toilet more or less often

changes in your sex drive

having panic attacks.

# Stress, Anxiety & Depression – the basics

## Effects on your mind

feeling tense, nervous or unable to relax

having a sense of dread, or fearing the worst

feeling like the world is speeding up or slowing down

feeling like other people can see you're anxious and are looking at you

feeling like you can't stop worrying, or that bad things will happen if you stop worrying

worrying about anxiety itself, for example worrying about when panic attacks might happen

wanting lots of reassurance from other people or worrying that people are angry or upset with you

worrying that you're losing touch with reality

rumination – thinking a lot about bad experiences, or thinking over a situation again and again

depersonalisation – feeling disconnected from your mind or body, or like you're watching someone else (this is a type of dissociation)

derealisation – feeling disconnected from the world around you, or like the world isn't real (this is a type of dissociation)

## Strategies and tools for managing stress and anxiety

Building resilience

Time management & organisation

Removing stressors

Changing lifestyle

Talking to someone

Changing how you work

Changing your behaviour in relationships

In the moment – grounding tools etc.

# Stress, Anxiety & Depression – the basics

## Depression – signpost to professional

### Feelings

down, upset or tearful

restless, agitated or irritable

guilty, worthless and down on yourself

empty and numb

isolated and unable to relate to other people

finding no pleasure in life or things you usually enjoy

a sense of unreality

no self-confidence or self-esteem

hopeless and despairing

suicidal.

### Behaviour

avoiding social events and activities you usually enjoy

self-harming or suicidal behaviour

difficulty speaking, thinking clearly or making decisions

losing interest in sex

difficulty remembering or concentrating on things

using more tobacco, alcohol or other drugs than usual

difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much

feeling tired all the time

no appetite and losing weight, or eating too much and gaining weight

physical aches and pains with no obvious physical cause

moving very slowly/being restless and agitated.

<http://Mind.org.uk>

## Stress, Anxiety & Depression – the basics

### Some things to say to a colleague in distress

#### Validate

I hear you

That sounds really hard

I can't even imagine how difficult this is

I know how difficult this can be

I am here for you

I will help you through this

#### Engage

Can you tell me more about that

What are your concerns right now

I want to understand this more so I can help

Let's talk about it

#### Facilitate change and offer practical support

How can I help you?

What can I do for you?

What do you need?

# Taking care of people is taking care of business

## Training for resilience in the workspace

### What is resilience?

Resilience is the capacity to cope with the adverse events and relationships in our lives, in a way which prevents them overwhelming us, and allows us to continue to function successfully in the world.

What does resilience mean to you? Try creating a metaphor for it.

### Resilience

is not some magic ingredient that some of us have and others do not.

is not about keeping dry in the rain - it is about coping with getting wet.

is not looking on the bright side and being a glass half full kind of person.

is not the answer to the problem - it is the secure base from which we attend to the problem.

Think about why YOU would need to be resilient in the workplace.

Is there a pattern to where the stress and anxiety might develop for you.

### Rachel Cutler's Resilience Toolkit

#### What is in my *resilience toolkit* and how do I maintain it?

Resilience is not the same for each of us, we have different experiences, and we have different personalities, and these will impact greatly on what our toolkit looks like.

Building and maintaining our resilience is important business and our personal toolkit needs to be continually worked on, audited, and assessed. It is an everyday task.

My model holds four elements as key to building resilience.

1. Self-care - how you keep yourself safe and mentally and physically well.
2. Experiences - how you have responded to them.
3. Self-belief - how much faith you have in your ability.
4. Tolerance - how much pain and discomfort you can withstand.

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## Training for resilience in the workspace

### 1. Self-care

- Keep good boundaries – that means knowing where responsibility to others begins and ends and holding that boundary.
- Get useful, empathic support for yourself – partner, other family, friend, colleague, mentor. Choose with care and let them know what you want from them. Look for someone who is extremely comfortable with who they are and can also hold a good boundary with you.
- Check in regularly with yourself and with others on your own mental health.
- Identify triggers which impact negatively on your wellbeing. These may be, times, days, people, things, events. Then decide how to combat these triggers – may include, avoiding triggers, tolerating triggers to changing the way you relate to those who trigger us.
- Be practical - use professionals. Counsellors, coaches, nutritionists, reflexologists etc. Make time for doing something you love to do.
- I know we can think of many more ways to put ourselves first, that we avoid.

What do you need from your team? Ask for it.

### 2. Experience

- Assess and evaluate the times when your response to difficulties has created a positive outcome for you. Build these behaviours into your resilience toolkit.
- Assess and evaluate the times when your response to difficulties has created a negative outcome for you. How would you respond differently given a second chance?

Write a life experience which you would like to have managed differently – rewrite it the way you would have wanted it to go.

### 3. Self-belief

- Ask yourself who (family, teachers, friends, colleagues, others) have impacted on your self - belief, both positively and negatively.
- If yours could be stronger, think about what you may have 'swallowed whole' about yourself from significant others.
- Are they right about you?
- What are your strengths – what do you bring to others?
- What do you want to be true about you?

What would you like your legacy to be – can you believe in that?

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## Training for resilience in the workspace

### 4. Tolerance

- Having an awareness that you need to strengthen your self-belief is one thing – acting on that knowledge is another thing altogether. Building tolerance can help.
- Resilience requires us to be tolerant of uncomfortable and painful situations.
- Tolerance of discomfort, of self, of others, of events and decisions outside our control.
- We must also acknowledge when we must not tolerate something or someone.

Ask yourself:

Do I believe that I have the strength to tolerate another five minutes of this difficult conversation?

Can I put up with another hour of waiting for a response to a text to that significant person?

Can I wait one more day for that important meeting to be sorted?

How would I manage if I allow for another week of not knowing what is going on with the changes at work?

Your mutual wellbeing is dependent on your own resilience and the resilience of the group. So, all that you do for yourself, you translate to the team and generalise out to the firm. It needs to be in the DNA of the business.

Meet regularly to discuss wellbeing and assess the resilience of the group with reference to the criteria above. How does the group manage difficulties, does the group feel strong and robust, what can the group tolerate and is it a safe and comfortable space to inhabit?

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