



# Coping with stress and worry.

Recent research suggests that we're experiencing an epidemic of stress as a nation in the UK. With over three-quarters of us feeling the strain, this factsheet gives some practical pointers about how to deal with stress and worry and how to formulate your coping strategy.



# Under pressure

As a nation, we're under pressure, with a lot on our collective mind. A 2018 YouGov survey revealed that three-quarters of UK adults reported stress levels so high over the past year that they were left feeling unable to cope. What's more, Britons work more hours than any other European country, meaning our job worries leave us more tired and stressed out than our closest neighbours. According to occupational health expert Professor Cary Cooper, there is always a solution to a problem: the first important step is identifying a cause.

## What is stress?

Mental health charity Mind defines stress as events that place us under pressure, or our reaction to those stressful events. Stress can originate from a number of different causes:

- work pressures – change at work, requests from a boss or colleague, a demanding project
- personal pressures – relationship troubles, concern about children or caring responsibilities
- health problems and illness – either yours, or a partner's or family member's
- money worries – a change in circumstances like loss of income, or redundancy

In physical terms, our bodies produce stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline, which are designed to protect us from danger. This is known as the fight or flight response.

Are you going into fight or flight mode regularly? Your body's frequent production of stress hormones can have a negative impact on your physical and mental health.

## Your coping strategy

Living with a certain amount of stress and worry is normal. We can't fully get rid of the factors that cause us stress in life. However, what we can do is to formulate a coping strategy to help manage the effects of stress.

### Take a break

If something is getting to you, take a break from the situation if you can. If you're completing a difficult task at work, be sure to take regular breaks. If things at home are getting on top of you, go for a walk and it will help manage your feelings.

### Do something you enjoy

It's easy to focus on our commitments and concerns in life and forget what makes us feel content. Put some joy back

into your life by pursuing what you love. Whether it's gardening or geocaching, find time to follow your hobbies.

### Accept yourself as you are

Self-acceptance is one of the pillars of positive mental health. Negative thought patterns caused by stress are often made worse because we blame ourselves for not dealing with situations better. Liking yourself gives you the confidence to try new things and meet new people, which in turn builds your self-esteem.

### Fight worry with fitness

When worry is overwhelming, one way to quieten the mind is to do some exercise. What's your favourite form of activity? Going for a walk, jumping on your bike, or enjoying a swim all help to reduce stress hormones in your body and improve fitness as well as mood.

### Seek help

If you find it's all getting too much, reach out and ask for help. Stress and worry can cause physical symptoms as well as emotional and behavioural ones. Talk to your GP who will be experienced in treating stress and anxiety. They can recommend a number of options to help you feel better.



**Not taking control of the situation and doing nothing will only make your problems worse.**

**Professor Cary Cooper, University of Lancaster**