

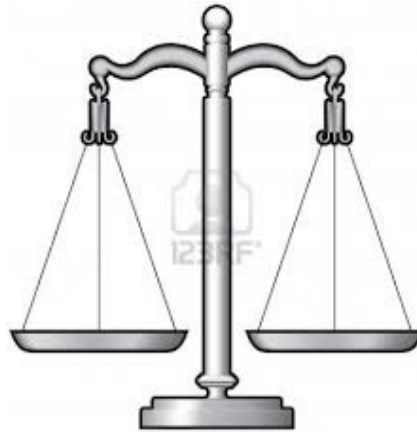


D2: Tackle stress, anxiety and low mood

Definition of stress: “The demands being made on you exceed the resources you have to deal with them”

On the other hand, stress can also result from boredom or from decreased demands being made on you (think about caged animals in a zoo).

Think of stress as a set of scales with demands on one side and resources on the other. You might feel stressed if there is an imbalance on either side.



RESOURCES

DEMANDS

How to recognize when you are under stress

Stress not only causes muscle tension, it also alters how we think, how we feel and how we behave.

Mental / emotional (thoughts and feelings) symptoms can include:

- Inability to concentrate
- loss of self confidence
- undue tiredness
- muddled thinking and tendency to lose perspective.

When we are stressed, simple worries can seem overwhelming.

Emotional symptoms can include:

- anger or irritability
- anxiety
- panic
- feeling hopeless
- hostile or resentful
- You may also feel angry or cry more than usual.

Physical symptoms can include:

- tense muscles, especially aching shoulders, neck pain and increased back pain.
- breathing may be shallow or erratic
- dry mouth
- upset stomach/butterflies/indigestion,
- clenched jaw or fists
- sweating.

(You may be able to add several more to this list as you become more aware of how stress affects you.)



Behaviors and habits may include:

- increased smoking or alcohol intake
- increased or decreased appetite
- increased or decreased sleep
- nail biting or mannerisms such as finger tapping, fidgeting etc.

It is helpful to make a list of how stress affects you personally. When you begin to recognise that you are under stress, you will then be better able to prevent or minimise its effect.

My stress profile

My mental and emotional symptoms (thoughts and feelings)

My physical symptoms (the feelings in my body)

My behavioural symptoms (ask you family/friends how they can tell if you are stressed)