

# Identifying and minimising the impact of stress

**Stress is a common part of everyday life with most people experiencing some form of stress in their day, and typically this is seen to be healthy if managed appropriately. Stress however becomes of concern when an individual is not able to cope with the demands of their environment i.e. when stress turns to distress.**

**There are a number of warning signs and symptoms that may allow you to spot when someone is suffering from stress. These include changes in the person in one or more of the following ways;**

## Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgement
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying – stuck on “what ifs”

## Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- General unhappiness

## Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Feeling sick

## Behavioural Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating/neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits

So how are you rating on the distress scale? If you were to rate yourself on a 10-point wellbeing scale – where would you be sitting?

If you are identifying higher levels of distress for yourself – then you need to take action. You need to:

- Consider what, if any support you may need from the workplace and discuss with your manager.
- Drink plenty of water and eat well (try to maintain the 5+ a day rule).
- Take regular breaks and get out of the office at lunch, even if it's just a quick 5-minute walk.
- Exercise and avoid alcohol.
- Try to get enough sleep (typically 8 hours or more a night is recommended for most people).
- Develop and keep to routines – including doing things that you enjoy each day.
- Keep perspective – and refrain from catastrophising.
- Identify the presenting problems – then consider and act on the solutions.
- Keep connected to people and reach out for support when you are struggling.
- Watch your thought patterns – and interrupt negative and self-limiting thoughts.
- Talk to EAP Services (0800 327 669) about things that are worrying you.
- Consult with your GP if the stress reaction does not reduce.

To arrange a confidential telephone, in-person, video or e-counselling appointment anytime, scan the QR code below, telephone our number or visit [www.eapservices.co.nz](http://www.eapservices.co.nz)

