

Keeping mentally healthy

A resource package for students

Adapted from resources by Headspace and ReachOut for the purpose of providing information to secondary students in Western Australian public schools. This package is part of a range of online resources.

What is stress?

Stress is a physical and emotional response to pressure when we're faced with challenging situations. It's our body's way of motivating us to respond to these situations and protect ourselves from harm

Stress is a normal part of life and it's something everyone experiences.

While it can be uncomfortable, stress isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, the right amount of stress can help us feel more alert and motivated, and help us do important tasks like work or study.

When stress kicks in and gives you the energy, focus and rapid decision-making you need to pull off an assignment, it's useful. This type of stress is called *eustress*.

But, when you feel so stressed it stops you from being able to sleep or concentrate, it can be a problem.

When we experience too much stress, life can feel overwhelming. By learning more about stress, we can make changes that help us to find the balance between being motivated and feeling like we can't cope. This is *distress*.

The stress bucket can help us understand this.

What is a stress bucket?

Let's imagine this bucket represents your capacity to cope with stress. Imagine stress is the water that fills up your bucket.



Some days your bucket will be pretty full, other days you'll have more room.

Is everyone's stress bucket the same?



There are lots of things out of our control or in our past that can influence our capacity to cope.

Depending on things like your past experiences, family history or individual coping styles, your bucket may look completely different to someone else's.

It's important to be kind to yourself and others. We all experience and cope with stress differently.

With a little bit of water (stress), you can feel OK, and handle the challenges that come with day-to-day life.

As your bucket fills, you can start to feel more stressed.



It can help to get into the habit of noticing what happens when you become stressed.

Understanding our response to stress can help us know when to step in and make some changes.

Some early warning signs of stress are:

Physical:

- Low energy/tired
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Trouble sleeping
- Nervousness or shaking
- Clenched jaw or grinding teeth

Emotional/Cognitive :

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, teary, moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless
- Difficulty concentrating.

Social:

- Disagreeing or arguing with others
- Avoiding social situations
- Feeling easily irritated or annoyed by friends or family

If stress keeps filling up your bucket, it can overflow.

If you haven't learnt to recognise the early warning signs that your bucket is filling, you might only notice when your bucket overflows. It's often a sign we need to seek support or make a change.

What we may experience if our buckets overflow:

- Panic attacks
- Being unable to think clearly
- Using alcohol or other drugs to cope
- Using self injury to cope
- Thoughts about suicide

Before your bucket feels full or starts overflowing, it's important to take action.



Letting the water out of our buckets.

We all have the power to reduce the amount of stress in our bucket, and stop it from overflowing, by using coping strategies. These are like taps on the side of our bucket that we can turn on to let the water flow out.

Adding more taps or making your existing taps more effective is a good idea if things are feeling stressful.

Reducing your water levels will leave extra room in your bucket, making it easier to cope with day-to-day stuff.

Some taps (coping strategies) you could use:

- Eat well
- Do more things you enjoy
- Talk to family/friends/mob
- [Mindfulness \(Meditate without meditating\)](#)
- Stay active
- Problem solving
- Get good sleep
- Avoid using alcohol or other drugs
- Maintain positive connections with family and friends

WAYS TO CHILL FOR CHEAP



PRETEND YOU'RE AN ART CRITIC



DANCE TO DRAKE



DO A YOUTUBE YOGA CLASS

HAVE A SUNSET PICNIC



BAKE A PACKET CAKE



WATCH A WEB SERIES ON YOUTUBE



NAILED IT!



TAKE A NAP IN A BLANKET FORT



PRETEND YOU'RE A PHOTOGRAPHER

GO TO THE DOG PARK



DOWNLOAD THE 7 MINUTE WORKOUT APP.



BROWSE THE PODCAST APP



GOOGLE "OTTERS HOLDING HANDS"



HAVE A TOTALLY TECH-FREE HOUR



CHOOSE A RANDOM BOOK AT THE LIBRARY



MAKE A CUP OF TEA



Helpful links and resources

Websites:

- [Kids Helpline Teens](#)  Kids Helpline
Anytime | Any Reason
Check out information and advice on common issues affecting teenagers.
[Study stress fact sheet](#)
- [Bite Back](#) (Black Dog Institute)  Black Dog
Institute
Learn how to amplify the good stuff in life. Through activities, videos and fact sheets you can learn how to increase your levels of wellbeing, deal with stress and harness your strengths so you can live your best life.
- [ReachOut](#)  REACH
OUT.COM
Practical support, tools and tips to help young people get through anything from everyday issues to tough times.
[Coping during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) fact sheet](#)
- [Headspace](#)  headspace
Learn about mental health, or if you need support, get in-touch with someone who can help.
[Tips for a healthy headspace](#)
- [eSafety for Young People](#) - Helpful information to keep you safe online.

Apps:

- [Smiling Mind](#)
- [The Check-in app](#)
- [Worry Time](#)
- [ReachOut Breathe](#)
- [Niggle](#)

Helplines:

- Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800
- Urgent Mental Health response line for children and families
1800 048 636
- Lifeline
13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467

e-Mental Health programs:

- [MindStrength](#) (Black Dog Institute)  Black Dog
Institute
MindStrength online courses are short interactive modules aimed at increasing understanding of resilience and developing useful resilience-building strategies, including: mindfulness meditation, taming your emotions, identifying and using your strengths, problem solving.
The MindStrength courses are suitable for young people, their parents and carers who want to boost their resilience. Using MindStrength is free.
- [BRAVE](#) (University of Queensland)  THE BRAVE PROGRAM.
The BRAVE program is a free, online self-help program that contains both resources and information for children, teenagers and their parents. It is designed specifically to help young people with anxiety overcome their worries and improve the quality of their lives.

My Self Care Plan

My Warning Signs

- Trouble breathing
- Tightness in chest
- Change in moods
- Feeling tired
- Poor sleep
- _____
- _____
- Racing thoughts
- Changes to eating habits
- Feeling hopeless
- Struggling with normal routine
- Getting into disagreements with people
- _____
- _____

What will help me relax?

- Breathing exercises
- Journal writing
- Listening to music
- Going for a walk
- Watching videos
- _____
- _____
- Reading
- Drawing or colouring in
- Spending time in nature
- Talking to a friend
- Meditation or mindfulness activities
- _____
- _____

What do I like to do when I'm in a good mood?

- Listen to music
- Play sport
- Read
- Do something creative
- Hang out with friends
- _____
- _____
- Spend time with family
- Enjoy nature
- Spend time with pets
- Cook
- Play games
- _____
- _____

People I can connect with

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Things and people to avoid when I'm having a hard time

- Too much caffeine
- Missing school
- Staying in bed all day
- Listening to sad music
- People I have negative interactions with
- _____
- _____