



Stress

facing the beast

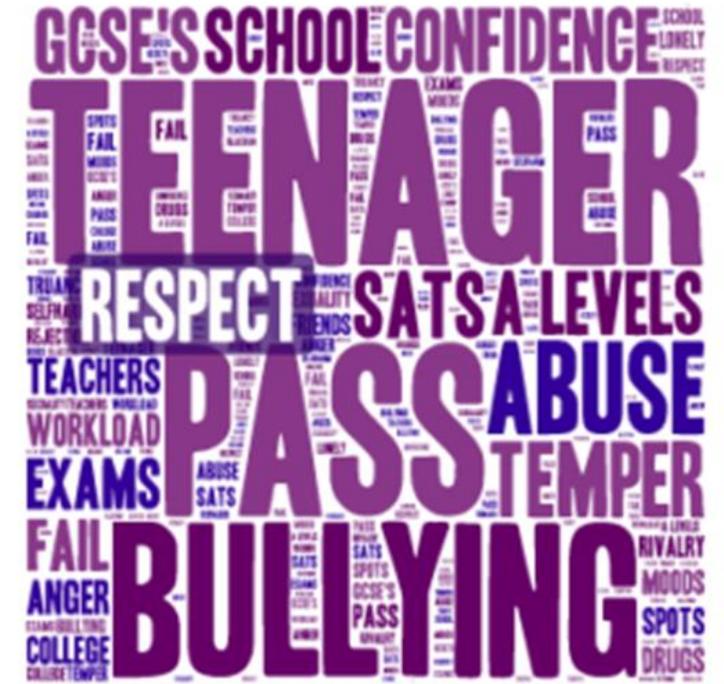
**NO
LIMITS**
Helping Young People
Help Themselves

Stress Test

- ❖ Do you feel like too much is on your plate?
- ❖ Do you struggle to cope with the demands of everyday life?
- ❖ Are you feeling overwhelmed – like you can't manage everything?

If you said 'yes' to any of those questions you may well be stressed.

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What is stress and why do I feel it?

Quite simply, we feel stress because it is an emotion. The why, however, can be a little more complicated. Because our brains and bodies are amazing things they are able to react to certain outside or inside threats and pressures.

What causes these bodily reactions actually varies from person to person. We may feel stress because we are living in a difficult home environment, or are facing unexpected life changes. Any outside factor can cause stress, whether this is a demand from school or family discord. Similarly, inside threats such as sickness or our genes can mean we are more prone to stress!

Certain things like our biology can make us more likely to experience stress. Traits such as a high concentration of the stress hormone 'cortisol' can mean that over a period of time your immune system is weakened. But, this does not mean that you cannot do something about the difficulties you are experiencing.

On the other hand, the way we think about stress may also impact on our ability to handle it. If we feel low and anxious due to stress we can begin to think more negatively about ourselves and others. You may begin to think that you are the problem, that you're unable to cope and that the demands on you are greater than your ability to manage.



So why Stress?

When we are stressed our body reacts as if it were in danger. Symptoms of stress can often be called 'fight', 'flight' or 'freeze' responses. These responses are how our body prepares us either to 'fight', protecting us from the perceived threat, to escape and run – 'flight', or to do nothing and 'freeze' up.

Some of these responses can include:

- ❖ Sweating to cool us down
- ❖ Taking deeper, quicker breaths to supply oxygen to our muscles
- ❖ Making our heart beat faster to supply more blood to our muscles

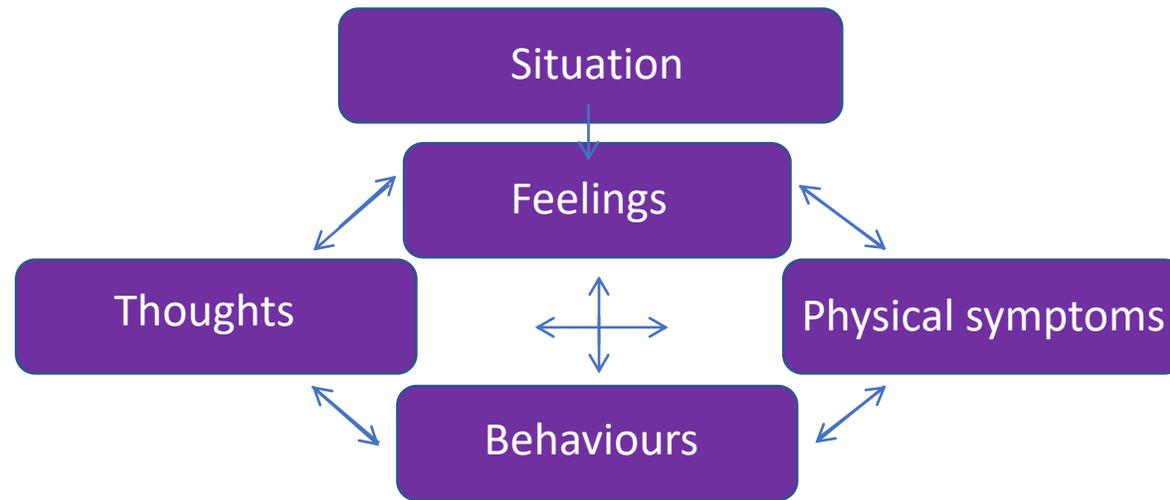
These types of responses are normal and a part of our bodies healthy protection system! However, they can of course concern us. Therefore, understanding their normality is key. Allow these feelings to pass rather than responding and reacting to them.

Take a moment right now to think about how you feel:

- ❖ Do you feel hot or cold?
- ❖ What is currently taking up your thoughts? Do you stay up thinking about anything?
- ❖ Have you had an increased appetite? Are you hungry at all?

Maybe your body or your brain are trying to indicate that you are stressed. It is helpful to know what exactly you feel and why you feel that way in order to tackle it.

Understanding your stress - Why not draw out the diagram below and fill it in now?



Unhelpful thinking patterns

Unhelpful thinking patterns can mean that we struggle to deal with stress.

- ❖ Catastrophising – when we worry about something and begin to predict things going wrong, blowing things out of proportion. For example: “What if I lose my job?” “What if my girlfriend dumps me?”
- ❖ Focusing on the negatives and ignoring positives – when we ignore what’s going well to give our attention to what isn’t. For example, you have lots of friends and one person who doesn’t like you and so all your thoughts are on the person who dislikes you.
- ❖ Black & White/Perfectionism – when something isn’t done perfectly it’s not worth doing. For example, “I failed my driving test so it was a waste of time!”

How can I address the stress?

Talking to someone. A burden shared is a burden halved!

Chop up the big tasks into smaller ones

Stretching your legs – why not go for a walk?



What are you grateful for? Write it down!

Challenging unhelpful thoughts – “catch it, check it, change it”

“Catch it, check it, change it”

Sometimes intrusive thoughts come into our minds. Thoughts that aren't helpful and are even critical towards ourself. When these thoughts come it's important we catch them, check them and then change them. That means recognise the thoughts, check whether they are true or if they are just unkind and then decide to think something nicer.

Follow the link to watch a short video showing you how to “catch it, check it, change it”:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/stress/>

How else can I combat Stress?

Set a SMART goal! When trying to achieve something consider making goals which are SMART to reduce stress. By setting specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based goals you can ensure that you are not overloading or asking too much of yourself which can lead to stress. You can even make a SMART goal to reduce your stress.

Remember, your goal needs to be specific. A poor goal might be “I will reduce stress in my life”. Instead, a SMART goal may sound something like “I will reduce stress in my life by meditating to improve my sleep”

Why not have a go at making your own with help from the tool below?

- 1** **SPECIFIC**
What do I want to accomplish?
- 2** **MEASURABLE**
How will I know when it is accomplished?
- 3** **ACHIEVABLE**
How can the goal be accomplished?
- 4** **RELEVANT**
Does this seem worthwhile?
- 5** **TIME BOUND**
When can I accomplish this goal?

SMART Goals Guide

Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» What exactly needs to be accomplished?» Who else will be involved?» Where will this take place?» Why do I want to accomplish the goal?
Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» How will I know I've succeeded?» How much change needs to occur?» How many accomplishments or actions will it take?
Attainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Do I have, or can I get, the resources needed to achieve the goal?» Is the goal a reasonable stretch for me? (neither out of reach nor too easy)» Are the actions I plan to take likely to bring success?
Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Is this a worthwhile goal for me right now?» Is it meaningful to me—or just something others think I should do?» Would it delay or prevent me from achieving a more important goal?» Am I willing to commit to achieving this goal?
Time-bound	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» What is the deadline for reaching the goal?» When do I need to take action?» What can I do today?

Five large, empty rounded rectangular boxes for writing SMART goals, corresponding to the categories in the table above.

Other helpful resources:

- ❖ <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/struggling-with-stress>
- ❖ <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/stress/>