

how to manage

STRESS

WHAT IS STRESS?

We've all experienced it from time to time but many people don't really know why we get it and how to manage it. Most of the time we have ways of coping with day-to-day pressures, but if we aren't able to release that pressure in healthy ways it becomes stress.

Your HSC year may be one of the most stressful experiences of your life. Other common stressors are things like family problems, health concerns, relationship issues, being a victim of bullying or harassment and financial problems. Even unemployment can be highly stressful as it brings its own anxieties about not being able to find work, and the lack of self worth it can cause as well as having financial and social implications.

WHY DO I GET STRESSED?

Stress symptoms are our body's way of telling us that something's not right, or that there's some kind of danger or threat. It's a biological response where we are flooded with a bunch of hormones that help us quickly respond to that danger by activating our "fight or flight" response. Usually once the danger has passed, we revert back to normal but sometimes during a longer period of stress, say the HSC, we find it hard to break the cycle.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M STRESSED?

Look out for some of these common symptoms:

PHYSICAL

headaches
digestive problems
increased sensitivity
to allergies or
illness

EMOTIONAL

moody
crying
tired
lethargic

BEHAVIOURAL

withdrawal from
others
not sleeping
changes to eating
patterns

If you can identify which symptoms you personally experience, then you can recognise when stress might be setting in and take early action.

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HOW DO I DEAL WITH STRESS?

Get moving!

Exercising is a good way to relieve stress. It helps to get rid of all that pent up energy and can leave you feeling much calmer. Any sort of exercise can be good. You may want to go and kick a footy with friends or head to the gym. Put on some high energy music (avoid those with negative lyrics) and go walking, running, riding, skating, surfing, basically anything that gets you active. Besides being good for your health, exercise releases those "feel good" hormones which increase our mood.

Hang Out with Friends

If you're feeling stressed you may need to take your mind off things for a while. Hanging out with friends is one way of doing that. You may find that they experience similar stresses and so talking about your problems with them can be helpful. Find out if they have any other strategies that they've found helpful and share your ideas. Talking about it is a good way to get it out of your head. If you can't talk to someone, write it down in a journal or diary.

Take Some Deep Breaths

Deep breathing can help to relax the body and calm you down. Taking deep breaths before an exam, game, job interview or before going on stage may help calm you down and focus on what it is you are about to do. Try this by breathing in slowly on the count of 5 then out for a count of 5 and do this for 5 minutes. Focus on a relaxing scene in your mind.

Have Multiple Options

There is never just one way to achieve something. While you might bomb out on an exam or job interview there's often other ways to get to the same end point. It's important to gain a healthy perspective and realise it's not the end of the world if you don't get your first outcome.

Watch What You're Thinking

Your outlook, attitude and thoughts influence the way you see things. Is your cup half full or half empty? A healthy dose of optimism can help you make the best out of stressful circumstances. Stop negative thoughts taking hold and find positive statements to replace them with.

Speak to Someone

If you're finding you're always stressed and it's hard to carry on with day to day stuff, it may be helpful to talk to someone about it. Parents, teachers, a school counsellor or a youth worker are people that may be able to help you cope. It is important that you deal with the feelings and reactions you are having so that they don't become overwhelming.

More info

Check out websites such as Beyond Blue or Reach Out for plenty of useful info and fact sheets you can download.

NEED HELP?

SALVOS COUNSELLING

salvos.org.au/more/get-help/stress