

## **How To – Help yourself**

It is important that all employees take responsibility for their health and wellbeing and look out for stress triggers and [signs of stress](#).

In addition, employees have a duty to take all reasonable steps to promote and protect their own health and wellbeing. In order to manage your own levels of stress, you are encouraged to:

### **Take care of yourself**

#### ***Get enough sleep***

Sleep is very important for your emotional and physical wellbeing. Lack of sleep can negatively impact on your ability to handle stress, be productive, and to function properly.

#### ***Maintain proper nutrition***

Low blood sugar can make you feel anxious and irritable, while eating too much can make you lethargic. By eating small but frequent healthy meals, you can help your body maintain an even level of blood sugar, keep your energy up, stay focused and avoid mood swings.

#### ***Exercise regularly***

Exercise can be great for you physically and mentally. It provides a stress release and keeps your body healthy. It also helps your body release endorphins, which increase your feelings of overall wellbeing

#### ***Maintain social support***

Social support can keep you healthier and happier. Friends can also pick you up when you're sad, provide insights when you're confused, and help you have fun.

#### ***Relax***

Relaxation allows the body and mind some time off to slow down and recover from life's pressures and can be really effective in preventing the build-up of stress. This may be a long soak in the bath, listening to some relaxing music, or something more structured like a yoga class, massage or meditation practice.

#### ***Drink in moderation and avoid nicotine***

Alcohol temporarily reduces anxiety and worry, but too much can then cause anxiety when it wears off. Similarly, smoking when you feel stressed and overwhelmed may

seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant leading to higher, not lower, levels of anxiety.

### ***Take your lunch break***

It is all too easy to sit at your desk, eat and carry on working. However; this could potentially lead to stress and lower your mood as you have not had any time to yourself or down time during the day, which makes it much harder to switch off in the evening.

### ***Take your annual leave***

Make sure you take all your annual leave entitlement. It is important to ensure that work does not become your entire life and that you 'have a life' away from work. Take time to invest in family, friendships, pets, hobbies and your own emotional welfare.

### ***Think positively***

Much of what you experience in life can feel more stressful or less so depending on your point of view. It is possible to train yourself to be more positive about life and, if you change your perspective, you may see your situation from a more positive point of view.

## **Improve your work habits**

### ***Communication***

Advise your manager, at the earliest opportunity, of any concerns you have about work-related pressures and stress. If it is felt that it would not be appropriate to speak to your line manager, you should speak to the next person in the chain of command.

### ***Time management and organisation skills***

There are a number of things which can be improved in this area. The best ones include developing a 'to do' list that works, prioritising your work, learning to say "no", asking for help when you need it, delegating where appropriate and not setting unrealistic goals for yourself.

### ***Manage taking work home***

If taking work home cannot be avoided, it is important that you manage how you do it. Have a break when you get home before starting work and limit the number of hours you spend working in the evening. You may find that you are more productive

if a specific amount of time is allocated for the required work rather than having unlimited time.

### ***Behavioural skills***

Effective behavioural skills such as assertiveness can lessen the stress that you may be feeling.

### ***Reflection***

It is important to make time to reflect on what has happened, what you have achieved in the day and what needs to be done the following day. If you do not allow time for reflection, you may find that you are reflecting when you are at home. This will impact on your ability to relax, to enjoy your life outside work and also on your ability to maintain a good sleeping pattern.

### ***Accept the things you can't change***

Changing a difficult situation isn't always possible. If this is the case, recognise and accept things as they are and concentrate on the things that you do have control over.