



DEALING WITH STRESS

WORKBOOK



Approved
training
provider
4206



Corporate
Member



Are you **stressed**? Yep, me too. We all are, I suppose. That's the trade-off for living in a **fast-paced** world where we all want something **INSTANTLY**. Thanks very much, Amazon Prime. I suppose the alternative is to live in a tree somewhere and just do without the latest episode of Game of Thrones though.

We have to get used to the way the world is developing. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't **tackle stress** and its causes. Stress can be a **killer**. And this course has been designed to help you understand it, how it can affect you, and how to **combat stress**.

STRESS- WHAT IS IT?

Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure. Well, that's the definition of it, anyway. But stress is more than that, depending on who you talk to. Stress is the body's reaction to harmful situations, whether those situations are real, or just perceived to be real.

"Why did you fail that exam?" "I was too stressed"

"Why are you so tired?" "I couldn't sleep last night, too stressed"

"You were perfect for that role, why didn't you get it?" "I wound myself up so tight that I became stressed and I let it get the better of me."

Stress is a scapegoat. For some, it's a constant pain in their life. For others, stressful situations can be motivating.

Because stress can come in many degrees of severity, and because different people have different reactions to levels of stress, often the word itself is misused, and not taken seriously. But being stressed can have some dire consequences:

- Full mental breakdown
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings
- Exacerbation of existing conditions, such as depression and personality disorders
- Exacerbation of existing physical conditions, such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease
- Heart attacks and stroke
- Headaches, confusion, heightened anxiety and sleep deprivation

Plus much more besides. Stress can be a serious business, so it's time you fought back against it.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GET STRESSED?

When you are in a potentially threatening situation, for example, facing ridicule, a possible telling off from the boss, or something else that might damage your mental state, a chemical reaction occurs in your body that allows you to act in a way that prevents or minimises injury. This is called a stress response, but some know it as a 'fight or flight situation'. During this stress response, your body prepares itself to act, so your heart rate increases, your breathing quickens, your blood pressure rises, and your muscles tighten.

That's just human nature. It's not always a bad thing either. Why did we develop such an odd way of dealing with this pressure? Well, in small doses, stress can actually keep you focussed. Driving a car is stressful, right? It can take the smallest incident to turn the meekest, most mild-mannered person into full-blown road rage when they are behind the wheel. And that's because you need to be on alert when you drive, stressed enough to slam on the brakes before you hit that car in front of you. We're designed to handle small amounts of stress, but we aren't equipped for long-term, chronic stress without further consequences.



THE 3 TYPES OF STRESS

As if stress wasn't already complicated enough to get our heads around, it turns out that there are at least 3 different types of stress. It's quite important to recognise which one we might have too, because you need to know what you're up against when you're planning to tackle it. Good thing we've got this handy guide then!

01.

Acute stress – The most common form of stress. Most of us have experienced this at some point in our lives, and it's most often caused by reactive thinking- thinking about things that have recently happened or upcoming situations, events or demands. Symptoms can be transient (lasting a short time only)

02.

Episodic Acute stress – People with episodic acute stress often have triggers in their life which set off stress. They might have too many responsibilities, too much pressure and disorganised to the point of chaos. Symptoms can be much more severe.

03.

Chronic stress – Extremely harmful, especially when left untreated for long periods. This may be caused by a variety or combination of factors, including but not limited to: Abuse in any form, poverty or homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, an unhappy marriage/ dysfunctional family or a poor/unsuitable work environment. Having chronic stress can significantly and irreversibly damage both your physical and mental health. Your neurobiology can change, affecting your brain and body, and could result in a mental breakdown, violent actions, homicide, psychosis or suicide.



Some common symptoms of stress might include emotional distress, including anger, anxiety, depression and irritability. They can also include transient physical distress such as tension, headaches, back/neck/jaw pain, pulled muscles, stomach and bowel problems, heartburn and constipation.

Depending on the type and severity of the stress you are experiencing, you may also suffer from a compromised immune system, meaning you pick up colds/flu more frequently, asthma attacks may be triggered, and allergic reactions may become more common. You may also have high blood pressure, a rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, migraines, insomnia, chest pain and palpitations.

Stress can grind you down. It affects people day after day, year after year. It destroys lives, bodies and minds, and can get much worse untreated.

Now you see why stress should be kept in check.



HOW TO SPOT STRESS IN OTHERS

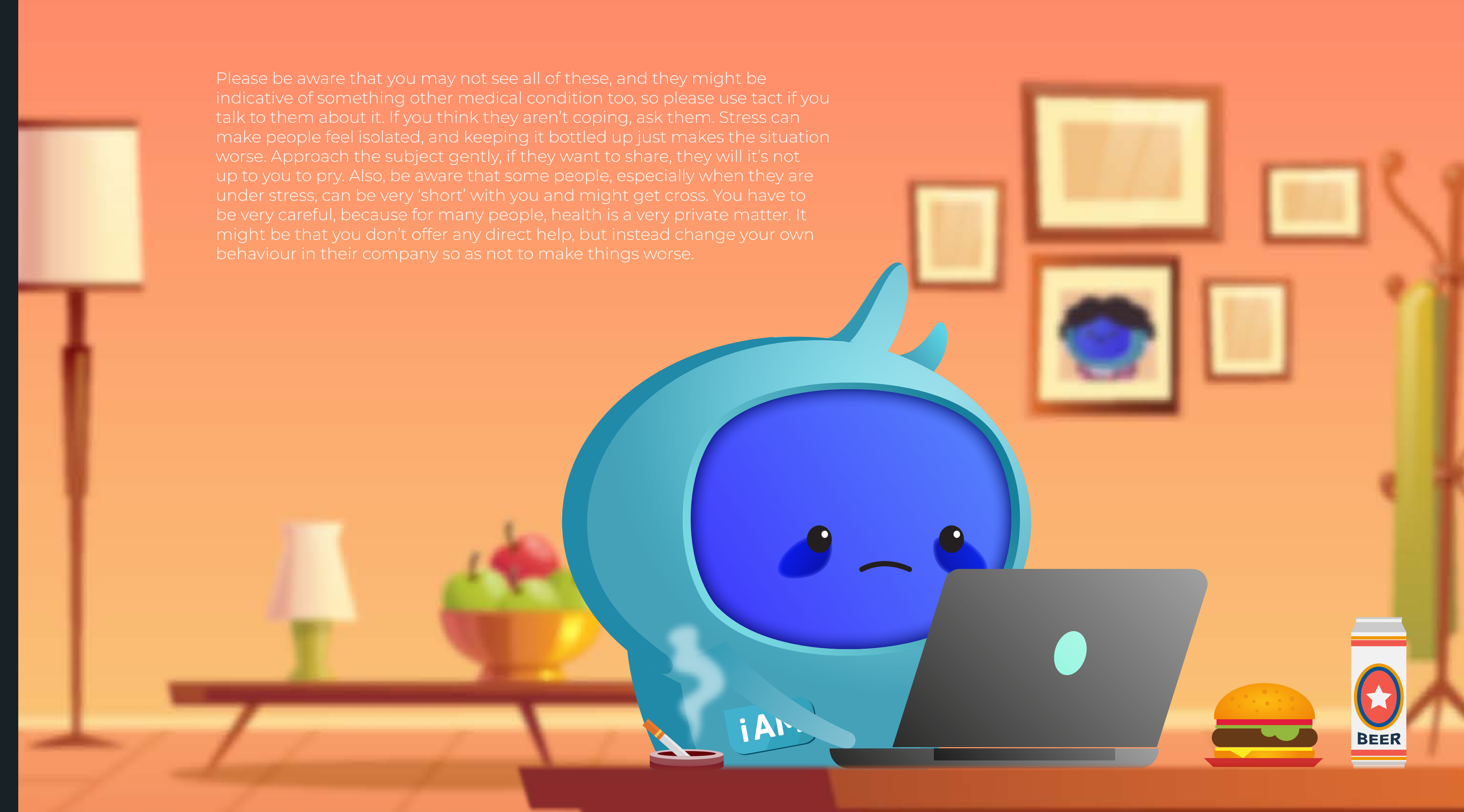
Maybe you're lucky enough to not be affected by stress, at least on a regular basis. Lucky you. But if you think that someone else might be stressed, you may feel that you want to offer some assistance. After all, you could be saving a life. The best thing is that you don't need to be a councillor to have this conversation, you just have to be a good listener. Talking through issues could help them find a solution to their problems.

The human body reacts to stress in different, physical ways, so it's tricky to spot some things.

- Drinking or smoking more than usual
- Sweating more than normal
- A nervous twitch developing
- Eating lots of junk food or having little to no appetite
- They may have confided in you that they aren't sleeping very well, or that they are suffering from headaches, sickness or dizziness more frequently
- Do they seem more irritable? Losing their temper?
- Are they always worried?
- Have they lost their sense of humour?
- Do they have uncharacteristically low self-esteem?



Please be aware that you may not see all of these, and they might be indicative of something other medical condition too, so please use tact if you talk to them about it. If you think they aren't coping, ask them. Stress can make people feel isolated, and keeping it bottled up just makes the situation worse. Approach the subject gently, if they want to share, they will it's not up to you to pry. Also, be aware that some people, especially when they are under stress, can be very 'short' with you and might get cross. You have to be very careful, because for many people, health is a very private matter. It might be that you don't offer any direct help, but instead change your own behaviour in their company so as not to make things worse.



TACKLING STRESS

Stress is by no means an easy thing to overcome, but there are many tried and tested ways of helping you control and conquer it. Stress can be managed by building your emotional strength, making use of a good social network (not Facebook/Twitter, etc. but your friends, colleagues and family), taking control of your situation and adopting a positive outlook. Here are some top tips for tackling stress:

01. AVOID UNHEALTHY HABITS

Drinking, narcotics and smoking are really unhelpful. Don't turn to those things to help you 'cope', because these will just create new problems, even if you may get some temporary relief.

02. ACCEPT THAT YOU CAN'T CHANGE EVERYTHING

Some situations are just out of your control, so focus on the things you can control instead. Every solution has a problem, so when you can take control at the appropriate time, you empower yourself, which is crucial to finding a solution to a stressful problem.

03. BE ACTIVE

Exercise is known to reduce stress, helping you clear your thoughts and become more calm.



04. REACH OUT TO YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Stay connected with your family and friends who will help you take your mind off your stresses.

05. HELP OTHER PEOPLE

Evidence suggests that voluntary or community work helps to keep your problems in perspective. If you don't have that time, little things can help: help your elderly neighbour with their shopping or just get a brew run in.

06. TAKE SOME TIME FOR YOURSELF

You need to ensure you relax, socialise and exercise away from a work environment. Book yourself some 'me' time.

07. TRY TO BE POSITIVE

Sometimes they are hard to spot, but they will be there. Appreciate the things you do have rather than lamenting the things you don't.

Of course, in the short term, simple things such as deep breaths, counting to 10, taking short time-outs as well as sleeping and eating properly can help you relieve the symptoms of stress. But ultimately, they don't combat the source of your stress, so can only be used to support your recovery.

SUMMARY

We all encounter stress in our lives, sure, but stress can vary from person to person as well as in intensity. Just because you have handled a stressful situation once doesn't mean you'll handle it well the next time. The advice provided in this course will pre-arm you with some good techniques to conquer stress whenever it rears its ugly head and help you to recognise the symptoms in yourself and others. Understanding stress is the first step towards ridding yourself of it.

Further resources:

MIND

(a mental health charity)

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/self-care-for-anxiety/#.XUfyJZnKhTY>

Anxiety UK

(specialist charity for stress and anxiety)

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/>

British Heart Foundation

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/health-and-emotional-support/stress>



iAM

DEALING WITH STRESS



Approved
training
provider
4206



Corporate
Member

iamlearningcontent.com 0330 38 39 315