

Stress: Young Person's Fact Sheet

What is stress?

Stress is a normal emotion that everyone will feel at some point in their lives. It can sometimes be useful to enhance our performance but it can become a problem when it interferes with our everyday life. For example, it might start to negatively impact our social life, academic performance and mood. This is when we might need some extra help.

Signs and Symptoms of stress

Signs

Are you?

- withdrawn
- isolated
- avoiding people/things
- taking on too much
- apprehensive/nervous
- eating poorly
- sleeping poorly
- finding it difficult to meet deadlines

Symptoms

Do you notice?

- tense muscles
- frequent colds/flu
- insomnia (can't sleep)
- a lack of energy
- chest pain/rapid heart beat
- heavy breathing
- sweating
- stomach aches

Top Tip!

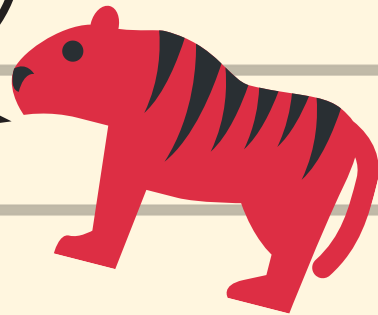
When feeling stressed, try to take deep breaths and change your focus of attentions by thinking 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste. This helps to distract your mind and gives you chance to calm down.

Why does this happen?

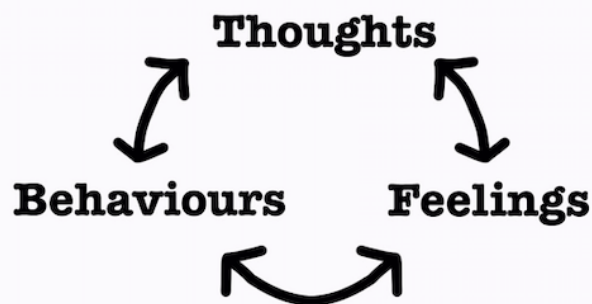
We all have the same automatic response to danger called the **FIGHT or FLIGHT** response. Humans developed this as cave men because it was a much more dangerous time to live back then (think running away from saber tooth tigers and hunting for food).

The fight or flight response meant that cave men's bodies went into survival mode whenever their brains sensed danger. This meant their heart rate and blood pressure would increase so they had a better chance of running away or fighting the danger!

Even though we don't face the same dangers today, our brains and bodies still react in the same way to the things we see as dangerous, stressful or worrying. This means our increased heart rate and blood pressure causes us to feel stressed!



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): It's all linked



Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours (what we do) are all linked together and all have an impact on each other. When we are feeling stressed, we can get stuck in a cycle of negative or unhelpful thoughts, feelings and behaviours. By using CBT techniques, you can break that cycle by making some changes to your **thoughts** and **behaviours** so that you start to feel better.

Thoughts

When we are feeling stressed, we tend to have more negative thoughts about ourselves and our abilities which then makes us feel even more stressed! It's a **vicious cycle**!

Negative Automatic Thoughts (NATS)

NATS are negative thoughts that happen automatically and can seem to come out of nowhere and are almost always untrue! By taking notice of our thoughts, we can challenge and change them rather than just believing them to be true.



The Poisonous Parrot

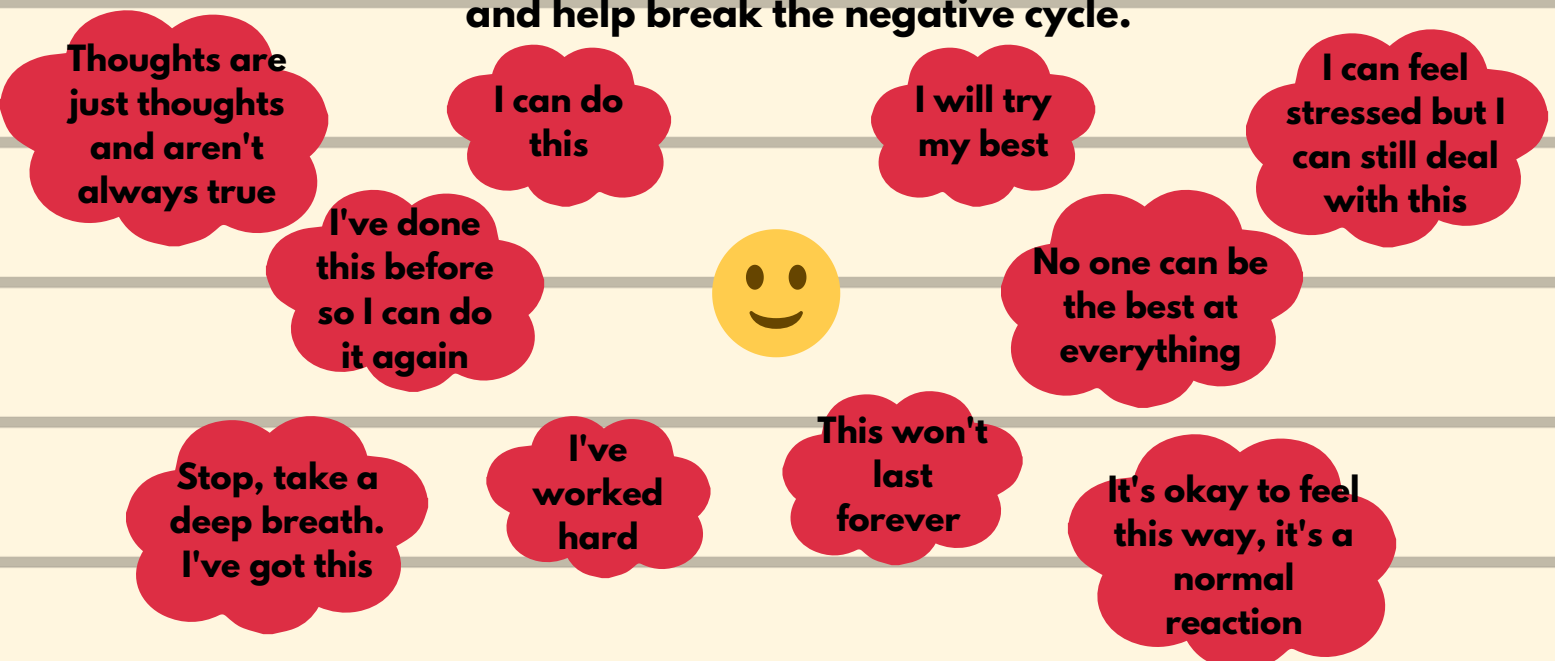
Imagine you have a pet parrot that sits on your shoulder all day and all the parrot can say is negative, poisonous things. "You're stupid", "you're going to fail this" and "you can't do this" are just some of the things it tells you all day long. What would you want to do with the parrot? Would you put up with it telling you these things?

Imagine your NATS are a poisonous parrot. You don't have to accept them and you can do things to help change them! Don't put up with your poisonous parrot!



Positive Self Talk

Try using positive self talk statements every time you notice a NAT popping in to your head. Remember, positive thoughts are linked to positive feelings and help break the negative cycle.



Behaviours

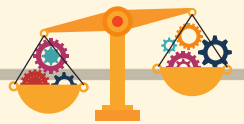
What we do also has a big impact on how stressed we feel. We all have to do things that can make us feel stressed at times in our lives however it's about finding a **balance** between doing these things and the things that help us feel good.

Fill in the table with the things that you do/would like to do which are part of your **routine**, **enjoyable** or **necessary** in your life.

Routine	Enjoyable	Necessary
e.g. washing hair, having a shower, walking the dog, cleaning room	e.g. seeing friends, listening to music, playing football, watching a movie	e.g. going to school/college, revision, appointments



Now make a weekly plan using your completed table.
Remember, to break the negative cycle we need a good **balance** between routine, necessary and enjoyable activities.



Day Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Top Tip!

When we feel stressed, we sometimes cope with this by **avoiding** doing the things that causes the stress. Though this might help in the **short term**, in the **long term** it keeps our vicious cycle going! Help to **break the negative cycle** by using your planner to face the things you're putting off.

Problem Solving

When we feel stressed, problems can feel overwhelming and can make it more difficult to break our negative cycle. If you're struggling with a problem, use this step by step guide which helps to break the problem down and makes it feel more manageable.

Step 1 Write down your problem in 1 or 2 sentences.

Step 2 Write down all the ideas you can think of to solve the problem (no matter what they are!).

Step 3 Make a table and write down ALL of the good things and ALL of the not so good things you can think of for each of your ideas.

Idea 1	Good things	Not so good things
Idea 2		

Step 4 Choose one idea that looks like it could work (if you struggle, see which one has the most good things). Ask yourself, is my idea realistic? If it isn't, choose a different idea.

Step 5 Make a plan! Write down the answers to these questions to create your plan of action!

1) What will you do?

2) When will you do it?

3) How will you do it?

4) Who will you do it with?

5) Could there be any difficulties? If so, what could you do to overcome these?

Step 6 DO IT!

After you've given your idea a go, review it.

Answer the following questions to help you reflect on how it went.

Was it helpful?

Did you achieve what you wanted to?

If not, could you do something differently/change something next time?

Did you achieve anything (no matter how small) towards solving your problem? Even tiny steps forward are big achievements.

What did you learn?

Tips for managing stress

Make sure you reward yourself for carrying out activities that cause stress by doing something that you enjoy and helps you feel more relaxed and happy.



- 1 Go for a walk/jog**
- 2 Spend time with a friend**
- 3 Go to the cinema**
- 4 Play a game**
- 5 Go to a yoga class**
- 6 Make a healthy snack**
- 7 Meditate**
- 8 Spend time with family**
- 9 Take a bath**
- 10 Watch your favourite movie/TV show**



Or, create your own list!