

MANAGING STRESS

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR TRANSPORT WORKERS

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. When external and internal demands are greater than the resources we have to meet those demands, we experience stress. Stress is a normal part of life but when stress is too much and for too long it can lead to physical and mental illness.

KEY FACTS

- Stress is the body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure. It is very common and can be motivating to help us achieve things in our daily life.
- Too much accumulative stress, or chronic stress can increase the risk of developing depression if you are not coping with the stress well.
- Stress and anxiety may seem similar, but they are not the same. Stress is a response to daily pressures or threatening situation, while anxiety is a reaction to stress.
- While it may seem like there is nothing you can do about stress at work and home, there are steps you can easily take to relieve the stress and regain control.
- Effective stress management helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive.
- There are also effective psychological and pharmacological treatments for moderate and severe depression.

WHY IS MANAGING STRESS IMPORTANT?

- If you are living with high levels of stress, you are putting your entire well-being at risk. Stress wreaks havoc on your emotional equilibrium, as well as your physical health. It narrows your ability to think clearly, function effectively, and enjoy life.
- Stress is linked to some of the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, and suicide.
- Chronic stress can lead to number of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety disorder.
- Research has found that stress can negatively affect the immune system.
- Stress also becomes harmful when people engage in the compulsive use of substances or behaviours to try to relieve their stress. These substances or behaviours include food, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gambling, sex, shopping, and the internet.
- Stress spills into our personal lives in many ways, affecting the quality of our close relationships.

- Chronic stress can affect job performance in many ways, including: physical symptoms on workdays (like upset stomach, headaches), difficulty making decisions and accidents due to human error etc.

RECOGNISING EARLY SIGNS OF STRESS

It is very important that we recognise the signs and symptoms of stress at an early stage. The earlier we recognise and identify its signs, better we will be able to manage it. Following are some common signs and symptoms of stress:

- Difficulty in sleep and insomnia
- Abnormal appetite and weight changes
- Frequent headaches
- Stomach upsets and frequent urination
- Trembling, sweating and restricted breathing
- Tearful or crying spells
- Increased heart/respiratory rate
- Dehydration, dizziness and fainting
- Blurred eye sight/sore eyes
- Inability to get things done
- Isolation and increased relationship conflict
- Substance abuse

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS

- Keep a positive attitude and accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. Assert your feelings, opinions, or beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive, or passive.

- A healthy body can help you manage stress. Get enough rest and sleep, eat healthy food, stay hydrated and exercise regularly. Go easy on the caffeine.
- Learn and practice relaxation techniques; try meditation, yoga, or controlled breathing
- Strike a better work-life balance. Learn to manage your time more effectively. Make time for hobbies and interests.
- Remember to take breaks when you feel worried or stuck. Do something relaxing every day. Sing, dance, and laugh – anything to burn off the energy.
- Set limits appropriately and say no to requests that would create excessive stress in your life.
- Do not rely on alcohol, drugs, or compulsive behaviours to reduce stress.
- Do not suffer in silence and build up your support network at home and at work.
- Build resilience. We all possess this, which helps us to adapt to adversity successfully and bounce back. A growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset helps build it.
- Planning your day ahead gives you the ability to accomplish more and gain better control of your life. Create a “to-do” list that highlights what is urgent and important.
- Identify what is contributing to stress. Many things can trigger stress: worries about home, relationship problems, tension between colleagues, bullying & harassment, too much work and less rest. Make a list of things that are worrying you or talk it over with someone you trust to identify the main causes of stress.



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REACHING OUT AND WHERE TO GET HELP AND SUPPORT

- Seek help if you are feeling low through most of the day continuously for more than 2 weeks.
- If you have lost interest in daily activities/ pleasurable activities.
- If anxiety is interfering with your daily routine and feel like you cannot regulate your emotions.
- If you develop thoughts about suicide/self-harm.

If you are still not feeling well after talking to your friend or colleague about your emotions and feelings. Then you need to seek support from outside. Call the 24/7 psychological helpline services that are available in many countries; see a doctor/psychologist. ITF affiliates organizing seafarers are also implementing 24/7 help line in local languages for their members. NUSI Sahara number is 1800-102-5110(toll free from India) or Skype "NUSI Sahara. AMOSUP number is +632 8241 9463/8241 9465.

You can be also in touch with the ITF through free ITF Wellbeing app or ITF Wellbeing Facebook page to get guidance on mental health issues.



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