

Stress

Get off to a good start



This booklet is a guide for those experiencing stress. Here, you can get information about what stress symptoms you should be aware of and what you can do with respect to both yourself and your work. You will receive concrete advice for immediate use. If you do not experience sufficient improvement, we recommend that you talk to your manager, your HR department, a loved one or your doctor. Stress needs to be resolved at its source. It's important that you don't face it alone.



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Stress – Healthy or Harmful?



We all respond to stress to varying degrees. Stress can occur at the workplace, when we are faced with projects or developments that we perceive as challenging, or in our private lives, when there are adjustments and upheavals.

Stress is not necessarily an illness, but a hardship that can manifest itself both physically and psychologically. Reactions to stress can occur when demands from the outside, or demands that we consciously or unconsciously place on ourselves, exceed our physical and/or mental resources.

In the short run, stress often leads to a range of physical, mental and behavioural responses. These are healthy and natural reactions that help us to recognise the need for adjustments in our lives. When experiencing stress, it is absolutely essential that the body and mind are given the opportunity to recover and recharge.

If stress lasts for weeks or months without regular opportunities to unwind, it can develop into chronic stress. This is an undesirable condition, with persistent tension and a lack of enthusiasm. Chronic stress must be taken seriously and managed to avoid the development of further illness.

Recognise Your Symptoms

During a period of stress, the body will send a number of typical signals. Short-term stress does not make one ill, but the symptoms must be managed in order to maintain a balance between demands and inner reserves. Pay attention to the following symptoms which may indicate that something needs to be adjusted in your life.

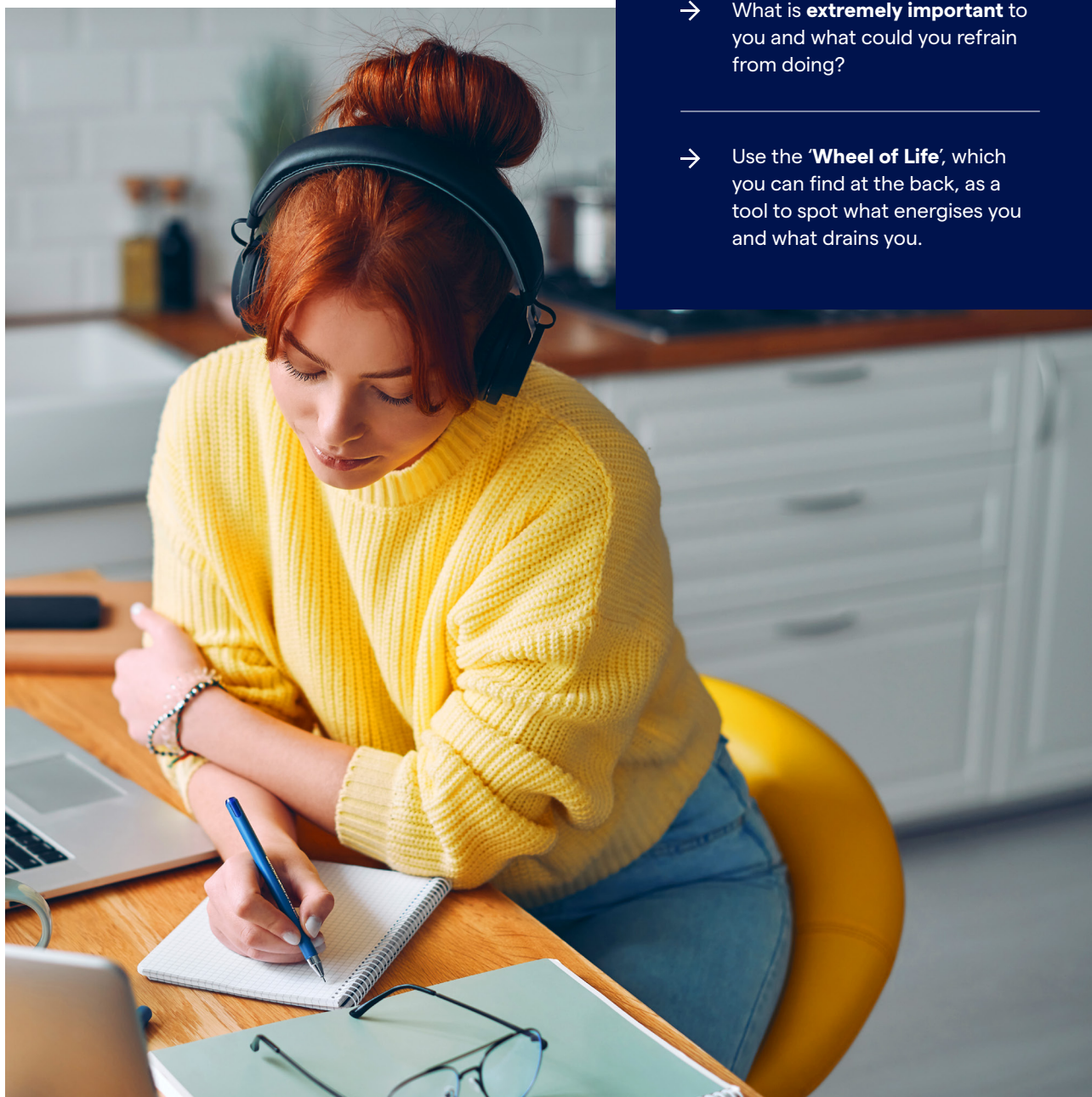
We don't react to stress in the same way, but you can become familiar with your own response. You need to be attentive to any variations. Ask your loved ones if and how they experience changes in you. It can be the first step to recovery.

 Tension	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you have trouble relaxing?• Are you irritable?• Are you tense?• Are you more tired than usual?
 Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you sleep poorly and restlessly compared to usual?• Do you have difficulty falling asleep compared to normal?• Do you wake up early without being able to fall back to sleep?• Do you experience sudden interruptions of sleep with multiple awakenings?
 Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you sadder than usual?• Do you lack confidence compared to normal?• Do you experience feelings of guilt or remorse?• Have you suddenly lost interest in everyday things?
 Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does your stomach hurt?• Do you have a headache?• Are you experiencing heart palpitations?• Do you have muscle tension for no apparent reason?
 Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has your concentration decreased compared to normal?• Do you have trouble thinking clearly compared to normal?• Do you find it hard to make decisions?• Has your memory decreased compared to normal?

Identify Your Triggers

Do you experience extra pressure at work or with family? Is there a balance between the two? Feel free to write this down. It increases your awareness, which can help you to prevent and manage stress.

Make a list of the chores and tasks that fill up your everyday life both at home and at work. This can help you to structure your day better. Many experience a sense of calm by getting everything down on paper, as it is then 'out of mind'.



Evaluate Your List:

- What causes you **stress**?

- What brings you **joy**?

- What is **extremely important** to you and what could you refrain from doing?

- Use the **'Wheel of Life'**, which you can find at the back, as a tool to spot what energises you and what drains you.

Understand Your Options

1

Talk to Others.

Your support network is a critical part of the solution.

You can take several useful steps on your own to prevent and treat stress. However, it is important not to face it entirely alone. Talk to others about how you are feeling and what problems you are experiencing. Ask for help if you need it. That, in itself, can reduce feelings of stress. It's a myth that stress increases if you talk about it. It increases if you don't make adjustments and recover.

Do You Experience Stress in Your Private Life?

By sharing your stress symptoms with people that you trust, you can gain an overview of your trigger points. If they are found within the family, jointly try to make a list of both stressors and things that bring joy. Then together, you can plan adjustments in your everyday lives (use the exercises on page 6, plus the 'Wheel of Life,' pages 10 - 11).

Do You Experience Stress at Your Workplace?

Preventing and managing stress at the workplace is a shared responsibility. In order for your manager to assist you, it is critical to have a dialogue about which challenges and possible adjustments need to be addressed. If your manager has not already reached out to you, ask for a meeting. If you find it difficult to talk to your manager about your stress symptoms, you can use the 'Wheel of Life' or this booklet to start a conversation.

If it's easier, you can choose to reach out to your HR department and ask for help on how to start a conversation. The important thing is to begin a dialogue and to clarify how, together, you can make the necessary adjustments to find a solution and to create space for your recovery.

Do You Need Professional Help?

Your own doctor is experienced in assessing and advising on stress management. Among other things, your GP can

help you evaluate whether there are underlying causes that require treatment and/or whether there are other risk factors that need to be considered. You should ask for a treatment plan that is linked to a plan for how you can manage your job with its current challenges.

The plan should take into account what you can handle and what accommodations should be made. You should feel that the plan will help you get better. You may consider bringing the 'Wheel of Life', or your list from page 6 to your doctor's appointment.

Your support network can contribute to a sense of calmness and peace of mind during periods of turmoil.

- A sense of community can be a strength when you need to prevent or recover from stress.
- Talk about your stress triggers and possible solutions with people you trust.
- Relax in the company of others by simply being together or by doing things that you enjoy.
- If you combine physical activity with socialising, you can kill two birds with one stone.

Understand Your Options

2 Ensure Your Healthy Recovery

Our mental health is closely related to our physical body. Constant regulation ensures a well-functioning life, both mentally and physically. It occurs completely automatically, but it requires an appropriate amount of recuperation to replenish both mental and physical reserves. It is a decisive factor in preventing and treating stress symptoms.

There are several paths to recuperation. Sleep is one of the most important, as well as finding ways that work for you personally. Pay attention to your lifestyle, both in relation to diet, movement, and breaks in various forms, including breathing exercises, meditation and time in nature. Choose the path that suits you best to regulate your resources and energy.

Sleep

A good night's sleep should be particularly highlighted, as it is the ultimate and most important form of recovery. When you sleep, both your body and mind recharge. Insomnia is often one of the first signs that something is wrong in your life, and it often can be linked to worry and stress. For inspiration on a good night's sleep, refer to the fact box.

Exercise and Lifestyle

Exercise and physical activity are important, also when you are stressed, because the response to a stress trigger is curbed when you are in good shape. It physically strengthens your brain. In a stressful situation, for example, you will not have the same high heart rate and your blood pressure will not rise as much. When you exercise, you are better able to burn the stress hormones that accumulate.

It's a simple way to boost your mental well-being. Even a little movement every day can make a difference, like walking the dog or going for a walk during your lunch break.

When feeling under pressure, it is easy to skip meals. But the body needs energy from nutritious food and lunch can provide a good break from work. So, stick to as good a food regimen as possible and drink plenty of water throughout the day. Replace stimulants such as sweets, soft drinks and coffee with alternatives such as nuts, fruit and tea.

Refer to the fact box for more inspiration on your everyday life.



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Tips for a Better Sleep

- 1** Sleep 7-8 hours in a good bed, in a cool room with fresh air, where you can avoid light and noise.
- 2** Try to find a consistent sleep schedule – go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, also at the weekend.
- 3** Be physically active, but not in the final hours before going to sleep.
- 4** Relax before you go to bed – avoid work, emails, conflicts and intense experiences in the last hours before you go to bed.
- 5** Limit food and drink intake before bed – in particular, avoid coffee, tea, coke and other caffeinated drinks after 4 pm.
- 6** If you can't sleep, get up. Spend about a half an hour reading, listening to calming music, etc. before you lie down again.
- 7** Avoid sleeping medication as much as possible. It is addictive and works for only a short period.
- 8** A small nap (approx. 30 min.) in the middle of the day can provide a boost of energy.



Tips to Increase Physical Activity

- 1** Discover how you like to exercise. Experiment with a little patience. Ideally, it should be nice, easy and fun.
- 2** Decide on fixed times during the week that you will engage in physical activity.
- 3** Get more daily exercise during transport – walk, bike, rollerblade, take the stairs. Schedule the time of week that you can be physically active in transit.
- 4** Arrange to be physically active together with others. It can be more enjoyable and you might be better able to stick to your exercise plan.

Understand Your Options

3 Evaluate, Prioritise and Plan

When experiencing stress, everything can feel overwhelming, and it can be difficult to identify where to take corrective measures. The 'Wheel of Life' is a simple and effective tool that can help you obtain a better overview.

With the 'Wheel of Life', you can easily understand which areas you need to adjust so that your life works well for you. Use it in conversations with your loved ones, your workplace or your doctor, as needed.

How to Use the 'Wheel of Life'

To fill out the 'Wheel of Life', sit in a quiet and peaceful place for 15-20 minutes. Imagine your life as a wheel divided into categories.

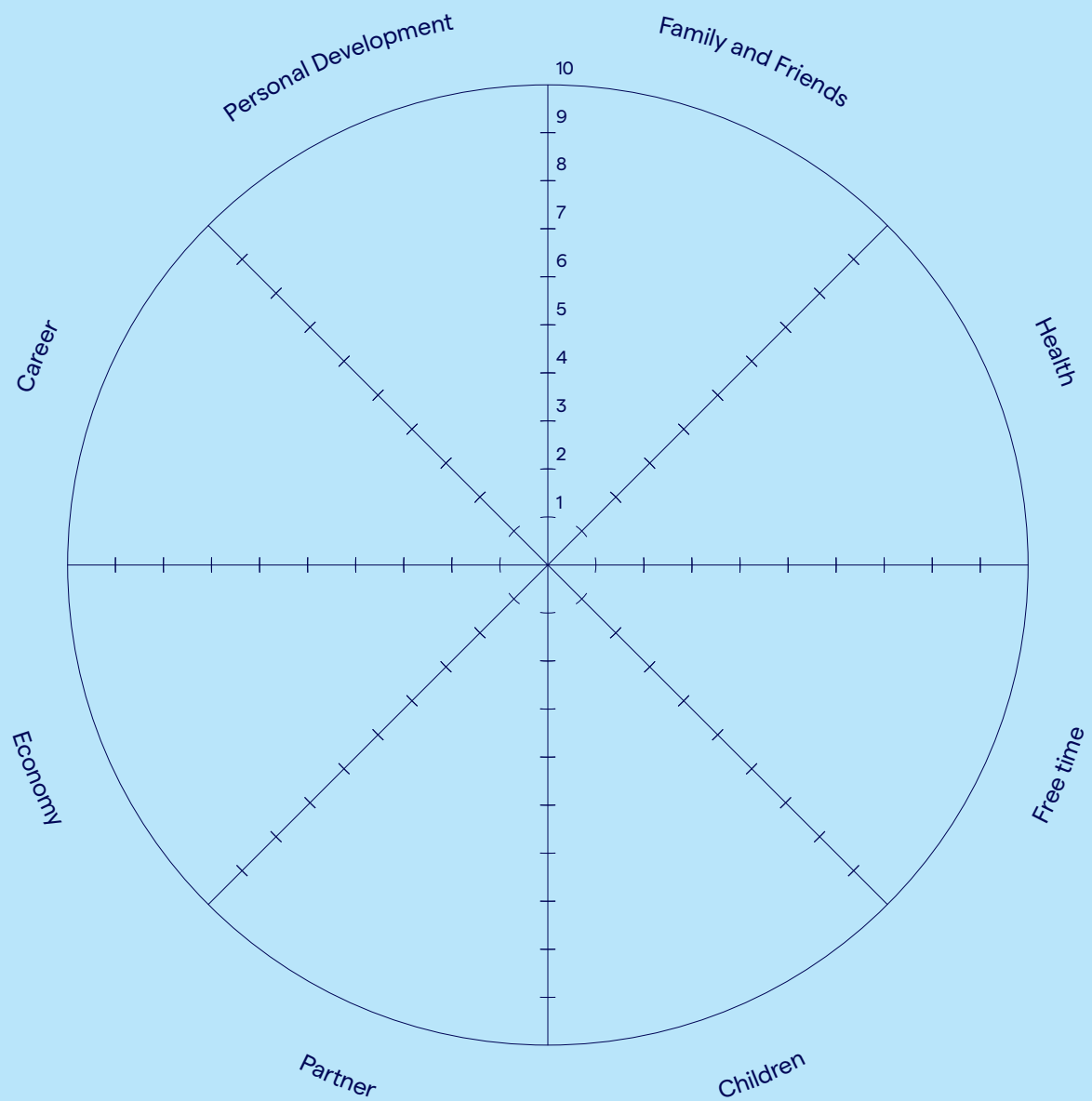
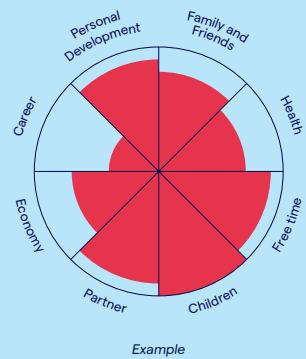
Each category represents a major area of your life. Focus on one area at a time. Rate each from 0-10, depending on how satisfied you are with that particular area. Shade in the area accordingly. Zero represents unsatisfied and is located at the centre of the circle, and 10 is fully satisfied and is located at the outer edge of the circle. Continue assessing and shading all the areas of the 'Wheel of Life'.

When the wheel is complete, evaluate it. What is your overall feeling about your wheel of life? It can vary according to different life phases. The important thing is whether there is anything that you need to change as things stand right now.

If you have the energy and desire, you can also fill out the 'Wheel of Life' in two other ways, by, once again, rating from 0 to 10. This time you can grade based on how much mental energy or time you spend on each area. This will tell you which areas take up the most of your mental energy and/or your time. You can use the 'Wheel of Life' in several ways to gain deeper insight and renewed awareness.

You Can Use the Completed 'Wheel of Life' in Three Ways:

- 1** Plan small adjustments in a few focus areas where you spend an excessive amount of time, energy or are least satisfied. Use the concrete advice in this booklet regarding what you can do yourself. Even small adjustments can have significant impact.
- 2** The 'Wheel of Life' can also be a conversation tool. Use it to talk to your loved ones and/or colleagues about how you are feeling. Often, there will be support available in your immediate network, including, for example, to help create an action plan.
- 3** Use the 'Wheel of Life' as a starting point to talk with your manager, regardless of whether your challenges are about work or other areas. Your manager can better support you in coping with stress when you have a dialogue about how you feeling. Afterwards, it may be possible to make small adjustments to working hours, tasks or anything else that you need.





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