



STRESS REDUCTION

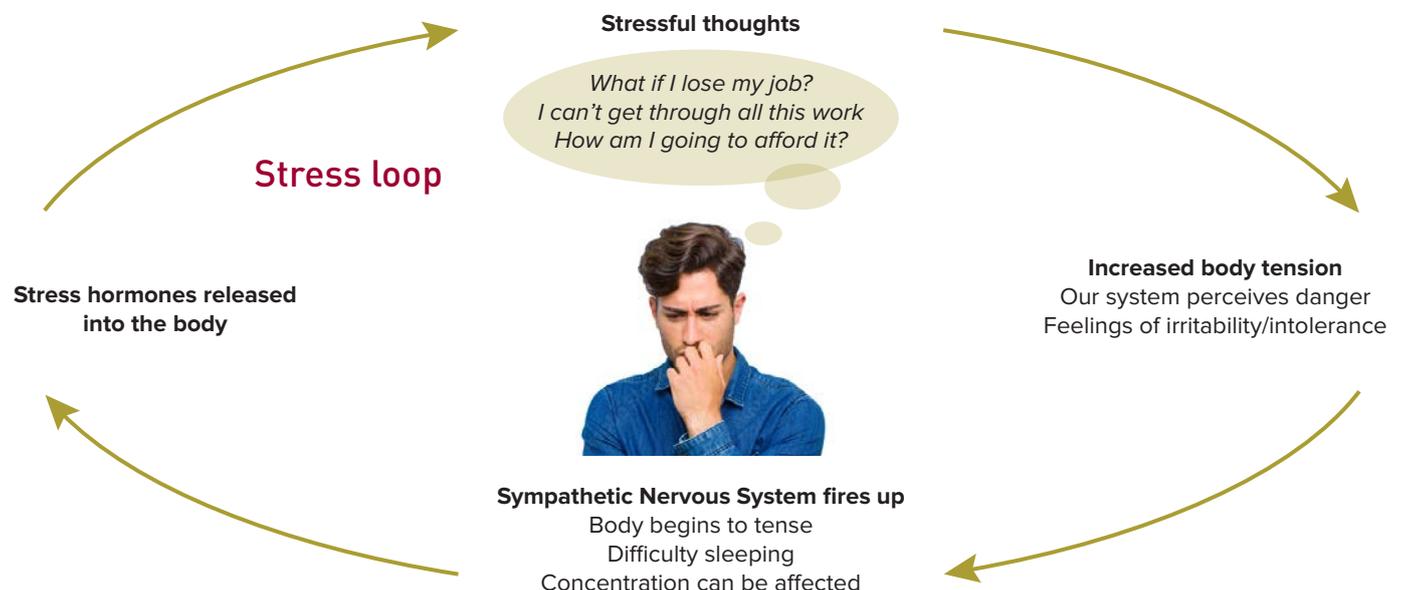


Stress is a normal response to challenging situations. Most people experience stress occasionally, which is not the same as anxiety or depression. While it is fine to experience a little stress from time to time, ongoing, severe stress can lead to a range of physical and mental health problems. If you have felt stressed, overwhelmed, or have found it difficult to relax for more than two weeks, it is a good idea to prioritise stress management.

Signs of stress

Everyone experiences stress differently; however, many people get on a 'stress loop' that can be difficult to move beyond. Can you recognise this process in your own experience?

It is important to identify the stress loop as early as possible, as it is easier to reduce and manage stress in the early stages.



Ways to reduce stress

The good news is that most people can manage stress by making some active decisions each day. Sometimes these decisions can seem difficult or selfish at first. Still, it is important to remember that your well-being is important.

1. Delay major life changes

Sometimes we can't put off major life changes; however, if you are feeling stressed, it can help to delay or put off major life changes until you feel better. This might involve delaying things like starting a new job or career, ending or starting a significant relationship, or moving house.

2. Change your work/life balance

If your work/life ratio is out of balance and you work many hours, consider making changes. If work has dramatically increased your stress levels for more than a few weeks, it is probably time to reassess. This might include saying 'no' to taking on more responsibilities or avoiding working long hours.

3. Settle personal conflicts

It is not always easy to settle personal conflicts, and sometimes we cannot get the resolution we want. Learning to address problems or conflicts is an important first step toward reducing stress. If you find this difficult, talk to a counsellor or psychologist. They are skilled at helping people find a resolution to ongoing conflicts.

4. Focus on the things that make you well

Doing the things that make you happy or well is an important part of staying mentally well. If you feel stressed and overwhelmed, try taking a few hours or days out of your normal routine to do things you enjoy.

This could include simple things, like spending time with friends or family, getting away for a long weekend, or just hanging out at home listening to music or gardening.

5. Move around

It is easy to put off physical exercise when stressed; however, physical activity will help you feel better. Whether it is going for a walk, playing a team sport or having a swim, physical exercise helps.

6. Find a way to relax

If you feel stressed, you might find that your body feels tight, uncomfortable, or generally unwell. Perhaps you are clenching your jaw or holding tension in your shoulders. Maybe your stomach is upset. Whatever is happening to you, try to lessen the impact of stress with regular breathing, stretching and relaxation exercises. Some people find yoga and pilates helpful for this. Other people incorporate mindful breathing and healthy eating into their day.

6. Get help

Talking to a friend or mental health professional is a great way to work through stress. Remember, recognising that you feel stressed and asking for help is healthy. Do not be afraid to ask for support if you feel overwhelmed.

Further information

The Cairnmillar Institute offers a range of in-person and telehealth psychology services. Reach out to us today on: 1800 391 393 or request an appointment at: www.cairnmillar.org.au/forms/request-an-appointment