

Stress Down Day

24th July 2009



What is Stress Down Day?

Stress Down Day is organised by Lifeline - a 24 hour counselling service where trained volunteers talk to 1200 people every day. You can also access your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with PPC Worldwide to discuss any work or personal issues, including stress. You may know of family or friends who do not have access to an EAP through their work. Remind them of Lifeline and on 24th July join in to help raise money to support Lifeline's 24 hour service - www.stressdown.org.au

What is stress?

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations and demands. For many people stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it can help you perform under pressure and motivate you to do your best. But when you're constantly running in emergency mode, your mind and body pay the price.

Stress is the body's way of dealing with pressure. An increase of pressure triggers an increase in energy and alertness. In some cases this is considered healthy as our body is helping us cope with the situation. For example, in emergency situations, stress can save your life - giving you extra strength to defend yourself or spurring you to slam on the brakes to avoid an accident. At work stress helps you rise to meet challenges and deadlines.

But beyond a certain point stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships and your quality of life.

What happens to your body when you are stressed?

- Heart pounds faster
- Muscles tighten
- Blood pressure rises
- Breath quickens
- Senses sharpen

These physical changes increase your strength and stamina, speed your reaction time and enhance your focus - preparing you to either fight or flee from the threat at hand.



What happens if you stress too much?

Long term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. **Chronic stress** disrupts nearly every system in your body. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility and speed up the aging process. Long term stress can even rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety, depression or even anger.

Stress can also affect you in the following ways:

- Increased drinking and smoking
- Skin conditions, such as eczema
- Obsessive compulsive behaviour
- Insomnia
- Nervousness
- Weight problems
- Accident proneness
- Digestive problems
- Pain of any kind
- Gambling
- Heart disease

What causes stress?

What causes stress will vary for each individual. Something that's stressful to you may not faze someone else. Life's predictable challenges can prove to be stressful for some people:

- Starting a new job
- Buying a new home
- Relationships
- Having children
- Moving location
- Return to work
- Retirement
- Managing money

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Let's also not forget life's less predictable crises which can cause high levels of stress for most people:

- **Family crises** - bereavement, caring for relatives, unplanned pregnancy, conflict over possessions
- **Personal crises** - divorce, separation, infertility/miscarriage, anxiety disorders, redundancy
- **Illness** - Diagnosis, terminal illness, depression, car accident, drug and alcohol misuse

Did you know...

- Workplace stress and general un-wellness is costing the Australian economy \$14.81 billion (Aug 2008)
- The average Australian misses over 3 days of work each year solely due to stress (Aug 2008)
- Those who miss work because of stress cost Australian employers AUS\$5.12 billion a year (Aug 2008) and costs New Zealand employers NZ\$2 billion a year (April 2009)
- Adding to the above cost is from those who present for work but cannot perform under the strain, bringing the cost to AUS\$14.81 billion in Australia (Aug 2008)
- In New Zealand 14% of women and 10% of men aged 32 years who were stressed at work suffered depression or anxiety (June 2009)



How can I manage stress?

- Talk to someone you trust - partner, friend, PPC Worldwide
- Have a health check with your GP
- Take up regular exercise
- Eat a healthy, well balanced diet - talk to a dietician, reduce alcohol, nicotine and caffeine
- Do other activities - sports, spas/massages, reading, dining out, theatres, sight seeing
- Take a holiday - enjoy some time out with family/friends or even by yourself

PPC Worldwide can help support you emotionally through times of need and explore possible strategies that will assist you to re-balance your life as soon as possible. No matter how small or large your life events are, many of them are an inevitable part of everyday life and can cause high or low levels of stress. PPC Worldwide can help you identify, predict and plan for these life events. Knowing how to deal with them will help you stay happy, healthy, fully focused on life and work and most importantly - stress free.

Through your EAP, you have access to confidential, professional and free counselling. If you wish to talk, please call to make an appointment on:

Australia - 1300 361 008 **New Zealand - 0800 327 669**

For more details on our services, visit our website: www.ppconline.info/au

Sources: www.helpguide.org
www.nzherald.co.nz

www.stressdown.org.au
www.nzdoctor.co.nz

www.news.com.au



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