

Hello and welcome to this podcast. My name is Alan Anderson. This podcast is part of a series that brings together insights from our experts to help support your mental, physical, financial, and social well-being.

Stress affects almost everyone. Sometimes, it can be a good thing because it can give us the energy we need to meet challenges. But if you don't manage your stress, it can negatively affect your health, relationships, and life.

This podcast will help you identify common signs of stress and show you five ways you can manage it in your life.

You might be wondering how you can tell that the stress in your life is becoming a problem.

The common symptoms of stress include difficulty sleeping, headaches, neck and back aches, stomach pain, irritability, depression, and mood swings.

Some people also may begin to abuse alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription drugs during periods of extreme stress.

You need to get the opinion of a medical professional or counsellor if any of these symptoms feel familiar. If you have recently experienced these, you could be under stress.

There are things you can do to help alleviate some of the common causes and symptoms of stress in your daily life. Here are five tips that can help:

Tip number one:

Try to identify the source of your stress and find a practical way to resolve it. If you're worried that your manager is concerned about your performance, ask them if they have any feedback for you and if there is anything you can do to improve your work. If your to-do list is out of control, you can review it and then block out time to tackle it. Often addressing the source of your stress will minimise the impact it has on your life.

Tip number two:

Accept that some problems and challenges can't be solved directly. Instead, you may need time to come to terms with them. Some sources of stress—such as caring for an older relative—require *us* to make an attitude change rather than fix an external problem. Reaching out to a mental health professional will help you gain perspective.

Tip number three:

Stop overscheduling. Feeling constantly stretched is a major stressor. Make a plan for a calm morning and make sleep a priority in the evening. By slowing down, you can tune in to what your body needs and build resilience for the challenges you have to face.

Tip number four:

Take care of yourself. Eating a healthy diet will help you find the energy you need to cope with stress. Exercising regularly can also help keep it under control. This is because exercising for as little as 20 minutes a day can rev up your endorphins, which are natural feel-good chemicals in the brain that help to reduce stress. Practising mindfulness and relaxation techniques might help you ease the tension in your life. You can find resources on both by searching the Support and Resources section of the assistance programme website.

Tip number five:

Make time for family and friends. Research shows that having strong ties to others has a positive effect on a person's ability to cope with stress.

These five tips are drawn from the knowledge and first-hand experience of our well-being experts who are helping clients round the clock every day.

If you find yourself struggling to cope with the stress in your life, contact your assistance programme. Counsellors are available to speak to you 24/7. You can also talk to a health care professional who can offer additional resources and support.

Thank you for listening to this podcast. You can find more helpful podcasts, articles, and videos on a variety of topics by searching the Support and Resources section of the assistance programme app and website.