

**B**e realistic about what you can achieve. Don't take on too much.

**E**at a balanced, nutritious diet.

**A**ction plans – write down specific and realistic ways to deal with outstanding problems.

**T**ime management – plan your time – build in breaks. Don't make too many changes at once in your life, if possible.

**S**et priorities – if you could only do one thing, what would it be?

**T**alk things over with a friend/family member, someone you trust.

**R**elaxation or leisure time factored into each day can be beneficial.

**E**xercise regularly – at least 30 minutes, three times each week to help release stress.

**S**ay NO occasionally, when appropriate, if you are currently struggling to keep up with demands.

**S**eek professional help if you find you are not coping adequately with the stresses in your life.

## CSEAS

The CSEAS is available to offer support and guidance to employees who are experiencing personal or work related stress. These difficulties may be your own, or you may be feeling the impact of living with or being close to someone who is stressed. Where you are feeling the impact of stress, it is always better to address it as early as possible.

The CSEAS provides a confidential and supportive environment in which you can discuss the difficulties you may be experiencing.

**Stress is a fact of life – it need not be a way of life**



July 2014

## STRESS AWARENESS

### CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE (CSEAS)

Seirbhís Chúnaimh  
d'Fhostaithe na Státseirbhíse



Civil Service Employee  
Assistance Service

Phone: 0761 000 030  
email: [cseas@per.gov.ie](mailto:cseas@per.gov.ie)  
[www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie)

#### MISSION STATEMENT

*To offer a quality resource and support service for all staff which positively affects both individual health and well-being and organisational effectiveness*

## WHAT IS STRESS?

The World Health Organisation defines stress as “the reaction people may have when presented with demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope”.

## STRESSORS

Stressors are the triggers which cause an individual to experience stress.

Stressors remain neutral – our unique response to them and the stress they trigger in us, is dependent on our perception of the event.

An event (e.g. speaking in public) which is fun and pleasing for one person can be dreaded and stressful for another.

## COMMON TRIGGERS OF PERSONAL STRESS:

- Demands
- Health problems (mental/physical)
- Parenting/caring
- Financial difficulties
- Relationship demands
- Separation/divorce
- Bereavement/loss

## COMMON TRIGGERS OF WORKPLACE STRESS:

- Constant overload
- Mismatch between ability and work allotted
- Perceived lack of support
- Workplace interpersonal difficulties
- Exposure to aggressive behaviour

## SIGNS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS CAN INCLUDE:

### Physical signs

- Headaches
- Muscle tension or pain
- Stomach problems
- Excessive sweating
- Feeling dizzy
- Bowel or bladder problems
- Breathlessness or palpitations
- Dry mouth
- Tingling in body
- Sleep difficulties

### Emotional signs

- Feeling irritable
- Anxious
- Low mood
- Apathy
- Low in self esteem
- Mood swings
- Confusion
- Loss of motivation
- Poor concentration

## IS STRESS ALWAYS BAD?

Luckily, our stress response is not all bad news. Stress can be helpful during brief periods of pressure by improving concentration and endurance. It allows us to speed up for a little while and increase productivity. However, it is important to remember that any system that is left to run in over-drive for long periods is more susceptible to burn-out.

Stress of itself is not an illness. However, the long term effects of excessive stress can contribute to ill health. Stress can be a contributory factor in a wide range of illnesses such as:

- Depression
- Migraine
- Ulcers
- Strokes
- High blood pressure
- Increased vulnerability to common illness

## SOME STRATEGIES TO HELP WITH STRESS

- **Deep breathing** – interrupts the stress response and relaxes the nervous system.
- **Physical stretching** – interrupts the accumulation of muscular tension.
- **Thought stopping** – interrupts the overreactions and negative emotions that encourage the fight-or-flight response.
- **Separating a task into small manageable pieces** – helps to redirect the attention and re-establish a sense of control, accomplishment and self-confidence.
- **Rational thinking skills and positive self-talk** – help to temporarily distract the inner critic and interrupt negative thinking and the stress chemicals.
- **Sleep** – is vital for health and wellbeing. It is generally accepted that we should try to get sufficient sleep each night to allow the brain and body to naturally replenish.