



Taking Time to De-Stress

Paycare

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At Paycare, we want to share some insight on what stress is, how we can identify when it becomes too much, and what to do if stress is playing a bigger role in life than it should...

Stress is essentially our body's response to pressures from a certain situation or life event and is needed to trigger the flight or fight response. Many of us experience completely healthy levels of stress everyday and it works to keep us safe from harm.

But experiencing too much stress can lead to feeling overwhelmed, which in turn can lead to mental health problems or make existing problems even worse. Unlike physical injuries or illnesses, stress is faceless, and can impact everyday life and how we act, from confidence and self-esteem, to concentration and motivation.



Prolonged periods of stress can have its mark on us physically too, causing or worsening cardiovascular disease including heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke, as well as increasing our risk of diseases such as cancer and weakening our immune systems. Too much is not good!

Despite the wide-ranging health risks, it's still a huge problem nationally, with **74% of people having felt so stressed they have been overwhelmed or unable to cope.**

Of this YouGov study on stress, **36% of all adults** stated their stressor was their own or a friend / relative's long-term health condition, **22% felt stressed due to debt**, and **12% feeling the pressure to respond to messages instantly.**

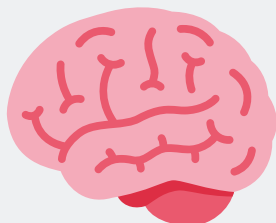
Stress Awareness Days and Weeks across the year continue to raise awareness of the impact of stress on our minds and bodies, and break down barriers so that people experiencing pressure can talk openly and without stigma.

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Paycare
Everyday Health Cover since 1874

At Paycare, we're passionate about ensuring our Policyholders take care of their **health and wellbeing**, and these small but effective tips can help to not only alleviate the impact of stress, but reduce it too:



The Signs of Stress

You may notice physical, emotional, and mental signs that you're experiencing high levels of stress — understanding your own response will help you to recognise it and put measures in place to manage it. These signs might include fast heartbeats, trouble sleeping, eating too much or too little, finding decisions difficult, being irritable, having headaches, and sweating.

Deep Breathing

Luckily, we breathe on autopilot, but when we're stressed we can forget to breathe meaningfully and deeply, which can actually lower our heart rate and help us to feel calmer. One tactic that we learned from our Lifestyle Intervention Consultant, Laura Butler, was to breathe in for seven seconds, hold for five seconds, and breathe out for seven seconds. It's simple, but hugely effective.

Meditation

Studies have found that mindfulness can help reduce stress and improve your mood, so it's worth giving this a try if you've never done it before (there are loads of free meditation apps to choose from)



Time Management

Feeling overwhelmed by your to-do list and taking on more than you can handle can cause you to feel stressed. Take some time to prioritise your workload or schedule, and split out your time to work through things one by one (try to keep distractions to a minimum too) - remember, if you can't do it all, you can always ask for help.

Nutrition

Some stress can be attributed to our diets, so it's important to review what we're consuming and make sure that we're getting all the basics we need (plenty of vitamins, minerals, and fruit and veg)



Talk About It

Talking to others about how you're feeling can be useful and help to ease the weight on your shoulders. If you don't have anyone you feel comfortable talking to, there are many organisations that can help (detailed below) and **don't forget that as a Paycare Policyholder**, you can use our **Counselling Service** or **Employee Assistance Programme** (if your plan is provided through work) for confidential support. These can be used for a wide range of things — whether it be financial worry, physical pain or discomfort, or grief, depression and anxiety — just visit your **Paycare Log In area** to find out more.

Useful Contacts:

Mental Health Foundation

020 7803 1101

Improving the lives of those with mental health problems or learning difficulties.

Anxiety UK

08444 775 774

Works to relieve and support those living with anxiety disorders by providing information, support and understanding via an extensive range of services, including 1:1 therapy.

Together

020 7780 7300

Supports people through mental health services.

The Centre for Mental Health

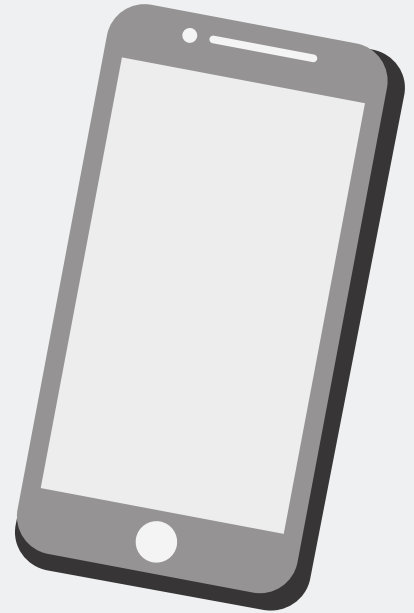
020 7827 8300

Working to improve the quality of life for people with mental health problems.

PANDAS Foundation

0843 28 98 401 (every day from 9am-8pm)

PANDAS Foundation vision is to support every individual with pre (antenatal), postnatal depression or postnatal psychosis in England, Wales and Scotland. We campaign to raise awareness and remove the stigma. We provide our PANDAS Help Line, Support Groups offer online advice to all and much more.



If you liked this post and think someone you know would appreciate it, please do share, and don't forget to follow the Paycare team on Twitter @MyPaycare and Facebook.

References:

1 | <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/news/stressed-scotland-74-scotland-overwhelmed-or-unable-cope-past-year>