

Balance your life

People often get so busy with things like study or work that they neglect themselves, their friends, family and often their spiritual needs. It is important to take time out to enjoy yourself.

Deal with anger

It is OK to get angry and it is healthy to express anger as long as it does not hurt anybody or damage anything. If anger is not expressed, it can lead to stress. Write, paint, stomp your feet, scream into a pillow, go for a run or talk to someone.

Look at the cause

Look at the underlying causes of stress. Don't ignore or try and hide stress by using alcohol or other drugs. Often stress will not go away unless you make some changes or learn new ways to cope.

Change

It is important to accept that there are some things in life like traffic lights or the neighbour's barking dog, that you cannot change. If someone's behaviour is causing you stress it is important to talk with someone who can help you learn to deal with the problem.

Seek help

Many organisations including schools, universities and workplaces have processes to deal with stressful problems such as harassment, bullying, victimisation and discrimination. There are also legal processes, which have been put in place to help in some situations. It is important to explore all of your options.

More information

- Talk to a GP.
- Call Lifeline on 131 114.
- Call Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800.
- Call your local Community Health Centre (look under Health Services in the information pages at the front of your phone book).
- www.reachout.asn.au
- www.thesource.gov.au

If these services can't help you they can usually give you the contact details of a service in your area that can.

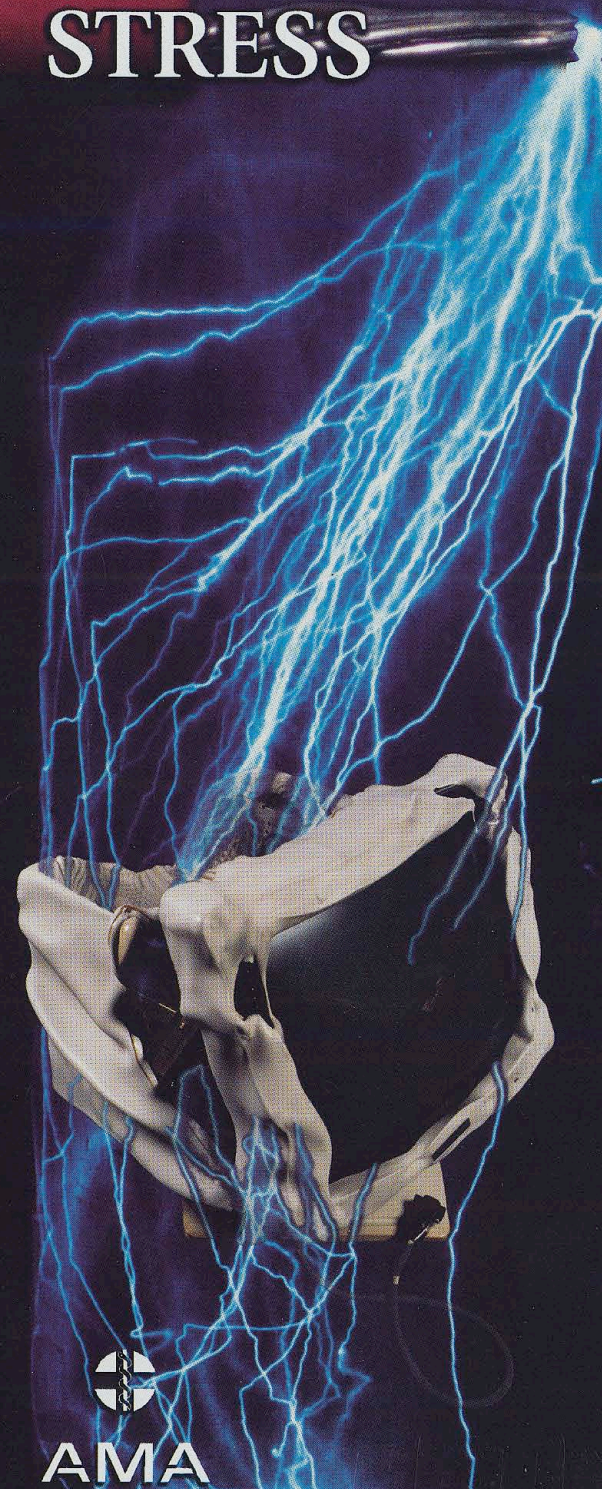
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STRESS

Make Informed Choices



What is stress?

Stress is a normal part of everyday life. It is the way our bodies respond to events which are stressful and could be a threat. Crossing the road can become stressful if a car speeds towards us. Once we sense the danger of the oncoming car, the body releases adrenaline, which speeds everything up. Our heart beats faster, we breathe more quickly, we may sweat more or get 'butterflies' in our stomach. The brain sends a signal to the body to do something. In this case it would be to run and get out of the way.

What causes stress?

Everybody is different and some people will become highly stressed about things that don't worry other people. Situations where stress may be experienced include:

- Exams
- Relationships and arguments
- Being harassed or bullied
- Starting at a new school, uni or job
- Working too hard
- Being stuck in traffic
- A job interview
- Going to the dentist
- Moving out of home
- Death of someone close
- Being assaulted
- Being involved in a natural disaster like a bushfire, cyclone or flood.

Coping with stress

Most people learn skills to cope with a certain amount of stress. However if the stress levels are too high or the stress goes on for too long, the body begins to wear out. Stress can contribute to skin rashes, headaches, hair loss, high blood pressure and heart attacks.

Signs of stress

Everybody reacts differently to stress. It is important to identify how you feel when you are stressed so you can recognise it early and deal with it before the stress itself causes more problems. Signs of stress include:

- Headaches
- Feeling sick or tired
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Problems sleeping
- Lack of concentration and loss of interest in things usually enjoyed
- Feeling overwhelmed and helpless
- Feeling nervous, anxious, worried or 'butterflies' in the stomach
- Becoming easily upset or angry
- Feeling tense, sore neck or back muscles
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs

It is important to talk to your doctor about these symptoms as some of these could be a sign of other health problems including depression.

What to do about stress

We usually learn how to deal with stress by watching our family and friends. As we grow up we may need to learn new ways to deal with new sources of stress - exams, tertiary study, relationships, job hunting, working and making ends meet. Methods to help cope with stress include:

Positive self talk

Use the power of your mind to help yourself relax. When you notice signs of stress you can use positive statements like 'just relax' or 'I'm not going to let it bother me'. Talking positively to yourself helps you focus on your strengths.

Friends

Friends can listen and help keep things in perspective. They can allow you to see problems from a different point of view, and find solutions.

Relaxation

Take slow deep breaths. Do things that you find relaxing. Dance, fish, walk the dog, read a book, listen to music or meditate.

Physical activity

Exercise can not only help get rid of stress but can also help prevent stress. Go for a walk, go to the gym or play sport. Keep active and have fun.