

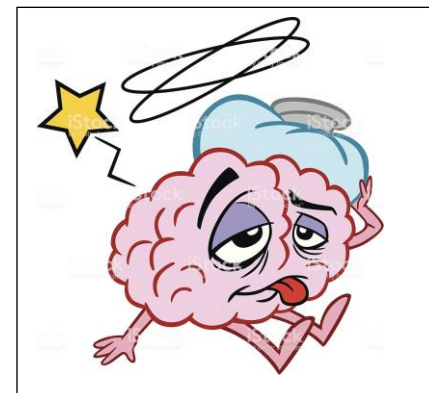
Managing stress

Our brains are like a magnet for negative thoughts/experiences. Our minds will often wander to the past or future, but positive thoughts don't stick so easily. How can we calm our thoughts and reduce anxiety?



Our ability to think...how does stress affect this?

- Confusions - Poor concentration, less reliable memory, difficulty organizing and prioritizing
- Negative thoughts and distorted perceptions - Hypervigilance for threats, preoccupation with worst case scenarios, under-estimating our ability to cope, playing down neutral or positive experiences, and disqualifying solutions as "Yes...but..."
- Low self-esteem - Loss of confidence, feeling worthless, feeling a lack of control
- Incorrect assumptions - "Always" or "Never" thinking, over-generalising from isolated incidents, jumping to negative conclusions



Calming our thoughts

Challenge and reframe our thoughts

- Be realistic: Pause and ask “How likely is this?” and “What was it really like when it happened in the past?”
- Look for evidence against: “I coped last time”; “It wasn’t so bad”; “I got through it in the end”.
- Keep things in perspective: “Now I know how to handle this”; “This has been a bad day, but I still have...”

Anchor yourself in the present

- Pay more attention to the here and now
- Grounding: 5 things you can see; 4 things you can touch; 3 things you can hear; 2 things you can smell; 1 thing you can taste.
- 50/50 Attention: While listening to someone, anchor yourself to your surroundings – for example, notice the sensation of your feet on the floor or your legs on the chair.
- Mindful breathing: Focus on how the breath comes in through your nose, the rise and fall of your abdomen and how air rushes out of your mouth
- EHW team mindfulness intervention resource will help with other ideas of mindfulness activities.

Positive self-talk

- Moderate your language: “This is unbearable” vs “This is so annoying”.
- Allow for solutions: “I can’t do this” vs “How do I do this?”
- Mantras: “This will pass”; “I can handle this”
- Gratitude’s - 3 Good Things: Three positive experiences from the day, big or small. Keep a gratitude journal or a box with photos, post-it notes & keepsakes

