

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND INDICATIONS OF STRESS

Everyone experiences and perceives pressure in different ways. The way we respond to this pressure is equally as different, dependent upon our personality, coping strategies and previous experiences.

'Stress' is a descriptive label for a collection of signs or symptoms shared commonly by people that are experiencing the effects of pressure, an inability to cope or a sense of overwhelm. This is not an exhaustive list and is not a substitute for your own instinctive sense of wellbeing, which is always the most accurate. Most people intuitively know when they are at the effects of pressure. The following list is helpful in identifying some of the signs of stress in you, so that you can recognise its effects and start to take control and create new choices.

What to notice:

PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS

- Inability to concentrate or make simple decisions
- Memory lapses
- Becoming rather vague
- Easily distracted
- Less intuitive & creative
- Worrying
- Negative thinking
- Depression & anxiety

EMOTIONAL SIGNS

- Tearful
- Irritable
- Mood swings
- Extra sensitive to criticism
- Defensive
- Feeling out of control
- Lack of motivation
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of self-esteem

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Aches/pains & muscle tension/grinding teeth
- Frequent colds/infections
- Allergies/rashes/skin irritations
- Constipation/diarrhoea/ IBS
- Weight loss or gain
- Indigestion/heartburn/ulcers
- Hyperventilating/lump in the throat/pins & needles
- Dizziness/palpitations
- Panic attacks/nausea
- Physical tiredness
- Menstrual changes/loss of libido/sexual problems
- Heart problems/high blood pressure

BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

- No time for relaxation or pleasurable activities
- Prone to accidents, forgetfulness
- Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine, recreational or illegal drugs
- Becoming a workaholic
- Poor time management and/or poor standards of work
- Absenteeism
- Self neglect/change in appearance
- Social withdrawal
- Relationship problems
- Insomnia or waking tired
- Reckless
- Aggressive/anger outbursts
- Nervous
- Uncharacteristically lying

Often the behavioural symptoms are more obvious as people under stressed become skilled at not noticing signs in their body or mental state, often ironically in an attempt to keep going and cope. By the time behavioural signs become evident the effects of stress have been underlying for a significant period of time

If you instinctively know that you are feeling 'stressed', are struggling to cope with life circumstances or are feeling overwhelmed, pause, acknowledge these signs and seek immediate help to take back control of your physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.