



# Managing stress and building resilience in the workplace

Mental  
Health  
UK

Working together



hafal *Mind*  
wise



Everyone experiences stress in their lives. Sometimes the pressure of being busy at work can help us get things done, but sometimes if things build up too much, you may feel like you can't do anything at all.

This short guide shares practical tips on coping with stress which you can use for yourself as well as to help others you are responsible for as a manager. You can also use these ideas to help a colleague who you think might be struggling. Mentally healthy workplaces are everyone's business. Look after your colleagues, look after yourself.

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## 1 STARTING A NEW JOB

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### Tips for employees

When you're in a new role, try to use the fresh start as an opportunity to think about how you respond physically or emotionally to stress. What makes you realise you're feeling stressed? Understanding your response to stress helps you reduce its impact early on. If you can, suggest a discussion with your manager about how you can both watch out for potential triggers. One way to make a change in a new role is to avoid getting into bad habits by working late to make a good impression.

### Tips for managers

During your induction meetings with new staff, highlight the support for physical and mental wellbeing which your organisation offers. If you have one, share details of your Employee Assistance Programme.

Use this checklist at an early 1:1 so that you can support your team members' wellbeing. It contains six other discussion points which will help you both plan ahead for if they're under pressure later on. [mentalhealth-uk.org/checklist](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org/checklist)

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## 2 INCREASING YOUR RESILIENCE

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### Tips for employees

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from setbacks. What's your tipping point? When stress builds up, make sure that the things you do to look after yourself don't go by the wayside. Practice the 4 D's as a way of coping when you have a lot on – Ditch, Defer, Delegate, and Do. Try this exercise with a colleague or your manager if you're overwhelmed.

### Tips for managers

Encourage your teams to make sure they think about their own wellbeing. Introduce the "Stress Bucket"\*. Use it to help each of your colleagues think about their personal stress threshold, and how they avoid stress building up.

Thinking about the "Stress Bucket" will help to prompt your teams to take action to build their resilience.

[mentalhealth-uk.org/stressbucket](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org/stressbucket)

\*developed from an idea by Brabban and Turkington (2002)

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### 3 CREATING A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

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#### Tips for employees

Get yourself and your colleagues outside. Encourage each other to go out for lunchbreaks, take a walk or hold some meetings outside the office setting. This will help you approach tasks or discussions in a different way and make you feel healthier.

#### Tips for managers

Look out for each other. We all have a responsibility to maintain team wellbeing in its broadest sense. Leadership can make a real difference here. Encourage your senior managers and board to be prepared to speak up about the importance of mental health. Take a look at the stories gathered by Rethink Mental Illness and Mind at [time-to-change.org.uk/personal-stories](https://time-to-change.org.uk/personal-stories)

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### 4 SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

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#### Tips for employees

Insist on regular 1:1 meetings and think ahead about anything you are struggling with and what support you need. Be proactive in suggesting solutions for any difficulties you face. If you're worried about how to start a discussion about your mental health, look at our ideas for conversation starters, and try and find a quiet space and enough time to talk about what you want.

[mentalhealth-uk.org/workplacestarters](https://mentalhealth-uk.org/workplacestarters)

#### Tips for managers

Mental health problems are the biggest single cause of lost days at work in the UK. Start every 1:1 by asking how someone is today. Make time to pay attention to what they say in response. If someone speaks to you about their wellbeing, you don't have to act as a sponge soaking up their concerns. Don't feel you have to be an expert either. The most important thing is to listen without judgement and then to help someone access additional support if they need it. See [mentalhealth-uk.org/get-help](https://mentalhealth-uk.org/get-help) for places to start.

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### 5 SICKNESS AND RETURNING TO WORK

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#### Tips for employees

Remember that physical and mental health are governed by the same workplace legislation. If you aren't well, don't feel you should go back to work before you're ready. When you come back, think if it's appropriate to ask for a change in how you work which could help your wellbeing. Be confident in raising this with your employer – things like increased homeworking, flexible hours, finding a quieter space to work in, or a phased return after a longer period away can make it easier to come back to work.

#### Tips for managers

If someone from your team has been off work because of stress or another mental health problem, be proactive in thinking of ways you can help them and offering different ways of working which will allow them to continue to do their job well.

Don't wait to be asked. Use [rethink.org/whatsreasonable](https://rethink.org/whatsreasonable) for guidance on this issue.

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### 6 TRAINING

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#### Tips for employees

Champion mental health in your workplace. Think about setting up a network which can put on discussions or speaker events and signpost to external support.

#### Tips for managers

Ask for support as a manager from your employer on how to look after your team's mental health. We want all managers to be able to access mental health training. See [mentalhealth-uk.org/training](https://mentalhealth-uk.org/training) for information on courses and materials you can access

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### 7 MAINTAIN YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE

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#### Tips for employees

This one's on all of us. Sleep, healthy diet and exercise are important.

Use our wellbeing tips [mentalhealth-uk.org/wellbeingtips](https://mentalhealth-uk.org/wellbeingtips) if you need extra ideas. Make sure you take holiday when you are entitled to it, and don't miss out because you feel obliged to work.

#### Tips for managers

Recognise all those extra hours your team put in by offering time in lieu and encourage them to book their holidays ahead of time. And remember to look after your own wellbeing. If you're a manager, you need to look after yourself too.

Mental Health UK runs services and support groups to improve the lives of people with mental illness, and to support their carers, family members and colleagues.

**[mentalhealth-uk.org](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org)**



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