

Your Employee & Family Assistance Program

Make Stress Management a Priority

Stress is a normal part of everyday life. While a certain amount of stress can be motivating and kick us into high gear, too much stress can impact our ability to cope both emotionally and physically. When stress levels stay too high for too long, the risk of burnout goes up. Burnout can lead to feeling numb, emotionally exhausted, and unable to focus or cope with the demands of life and work.

Because stress is a part of everyday life, especially in high-stress, high-risk jobs—it's easy to not recognize when it's creeping up and becoming destructive and overwhelming our ability to stay grounded, focused, and healthy.

It is important to recognize when things are becoming unmanageable and prioritize actions you can take to manage and reduce the negative impact of life and job-related stress.

Common signs and symptoms of stress overload

Cognitive

Uncertainty
Lack of focus
Indecisiveness
Poor memory
Poor concentration
Confusion
Poor problem solving
Blaming others
Racing thoughts

Physical

Fatigue
Aches and pains
Dizziness
Rapid heart rate
Chest Pains
Chills
Muscle fatigue
Weakness
Nausea/loss of appetite

Emotional

Excessive worry
Anxiety
Agitation
Irritability/anger
Low mood/Depression
Grief
Denial
Apprehension
Overwhelm

Behavioural

Withdrawal
Sleeping too much or too little
Procrastinating
Change in hygiene or self-care
Change in social patterns or communication style
Increased conflicts
Alcohol or drug use

Pay attention. Know your personal signs of stress and be aware of when things are starting to become distressing or unmanageable. Include coworkers or others in your stress management plan, so others can help you recognize when you may be struggling to cope.

Create a team culture. Utilize a buddy system to check in with one another and ensure everyone has social support available to them. Supporting others during a difficult time can have a positive impact on your mood and level of stress.

Take time to yourself. When needed, create space to mentally disconnect as much as possible during downtime. Set appropriate boundaries and communicate with others to allow yourself some space to destress.

Create balance. Participate in activities that provide a sense of pleasure, a sense of achievement, and a sense of closeness—they are vital to feeling a sense of happiness and reducing your level of stress.

Embrace stress-relieving activities. Select and practice constructive ways to release stress, including safe physical activity, reading, listening to music, practice mindfulness, and connecting with others, as examples. Take some time to reflect on ways that you have successfully managed stress in the past.

Get your sleep. Practice healthy sleep behaviours, including building a sleep routine, avoiding caffeine before bed, and practicing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing. Regular sleep increases calm, mood, and plays a crucial role in memory and learning.

Get support. Connecting and talking with supportive people in your life is key to stress management. If connecting with family, friends or co-workers isn't enough, seeking assistance from a professional can help. [Your employee and family assistance program is available 24/7 to provide professional support.](#)