

STRESS – top tips

On-going, repeated stress can lead to mental and physical ill-health including:

- exhaustion, depression, chronic anxiety
- weight gain, digestive, skin & hair problems
- mood swings, poor sleep, poor attention and memory
- wear & tear on body organs
- increased sensitivity to stressors - the stress hormones can stay in the body for 12 hours
- intolerance and personal conflict



However, you can **do something about it**, as it happens:

1. recognise your own signs of stress, in particular noticing where in the body tension or contraction is experienced
2. when you notice the signs arising, do something about it immediately
3. for example, take a few mindful breaths, letting go of tension on the out breath
4. if you've been introduced to it, do the 10 second reboot

The key strategy is to **stop stress building** in the first place:

1. take regular pauses, at least once an hour
2. find your own triggers and reminders, such as every time you drink anything, or just between tasks such as a new email or phone call
3. if it works for you, set an alarm to ping every hour
4. get up from your desk, walk, stretch or go outside



Don't worry about being stressed, or keep it hidden:

1. be honest with yourself about where you're at
2. talk to someone you trust about what's going on
3. invest the time needed to keep yourself healthy (and productive)
4. get help from someone who understands and can advise what to do next
5. take a 6 or 8 week mindfulness course (sustained practice rather than dipping in and out is what makes the changes to our stress reactions)

How **mindfulness helps**:

- interrupts the stress cycle and resets mental equilibrium
- changes gut reactions about what constitutes a threat
- creates a moment of choice, rather than responding automatically
- engages curiosity and open-mindedness
- helps us step back from our 'monkey-mind' and get perspective
- generates a feeling of safety & reduces stress hormone production
- changes our behaviour, speech and body language with others
- if we're calm, those with us feel safe and cared for
- improves the capacity to concentrate

