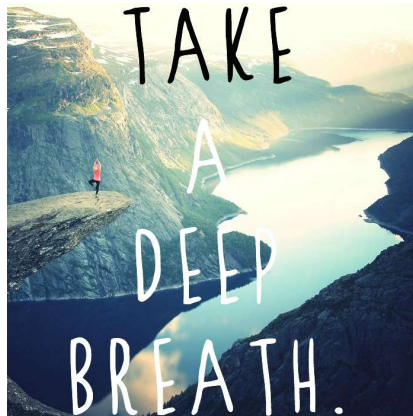


Parental Self-care



Overview

- Why we need to look after ourselves
- Recognising stress
- Physiological responses to stress
- Strategies
- Small steps can make a big difference

Why do we need to look after ourselves?

- The constant demands of life can be over whelming.
- Long-term stress can take a heavy toll on your physical health, relationships and emotional wellbeing .
- This can lead to burnout (Compassion Fatigue).
- Change requires physical and mental energy and resilience.

Recognising stress is the first step in lessening its impact

Why do we need to look after ourselves?

And if you need another reason...

“Taking good care of YOU means the people in your life will receive the best of you, rather than what’s left of you”

Recognising the signs of stress

Immediate signs

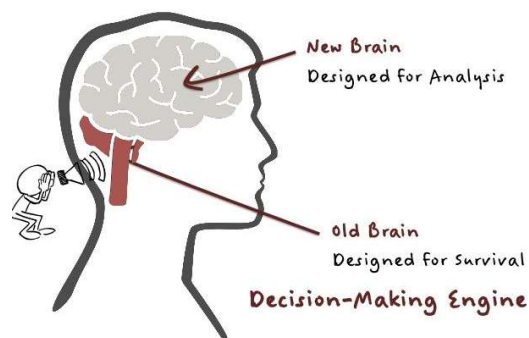
Feeling anxious
 Low mood
 Shaky/clammy hands
 Irritability
 Over reacting to small things
 Nausea
 Trouble relaxing
 Trouble concentrating
 Feeling increasingly resentful

Longer term signs

- Drinking, smoking or eating more than usual
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Loosing enjoyment in leisure activities
- Neglecting own needs
- Feeling helpless and hopeless
- “brain fog”
- Constantly feeling tired and rundown
- Sleep difficulties
- New or worsening health problems

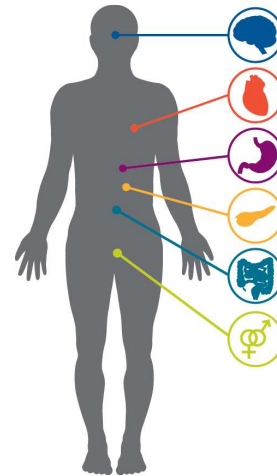
Physiological responses to stress

The old brain vs new brain – when there is perceived stress the old brain goes into “fight or flight” but in today’s modern society there are constant sources of stress that the brain responds to the same way as running away from a tiger. The body/brain responds this way whether there is an actual stress/threat or worrying about potential stress/threat.



Physiological responses to stress

- When the body is in “fight or flight” blood is drawn away from non-essential organs and to the muscles ready to fight or run away.
- It slows vital processes such as digestion.
- It can cause adrenal fatigue due to the constant release of cortisol leading to the feeling of being “tired and wired” and hormonal imbalances.
- Long-term, it increases the risk of health conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes
- It can impact sleep and memory
- Lead to mental health disorders



How do we manage stress?

- Who helps?
- What helps?
- How often do we do this?



Strategies - Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is the opposite of being on auto pilot!
- Without being mindful and present we automatically pass judgement on everything we, or anyone else does.
- We become what we believe – positive or negative
- Mindfulness isn't focused on fixing problems. It emphasises acceptance first, and change may or may not come later.
- Acceptance means acknowledge your present-moment experience. Acceptance doesn't mean resignation or giving up

Strategies - Mindfulness

How to be mindful

- Paying attention – to what ever you chose to attend to.
- Be present – being aware of the way things are
- Non-reactively – stop our automatic response i.e. “I'm so bad at this!”
- Non judgementally – not judging experiences as good or bad.
- Open heartedly – be kind to yourself and positive self talk

Strategies - Mindfulness

Mindfulness techniques

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Body Scan
- Meditation



Strategies - Grounding

Look around you and notice:



5 things you can see: Your hands, the sky, a plant.



4 things you can feel: Feet on the ground, the chair.



3 things you can hear: Birds chirping, your breath.



2 things you can smell: Coffee, your lunch, clothes.



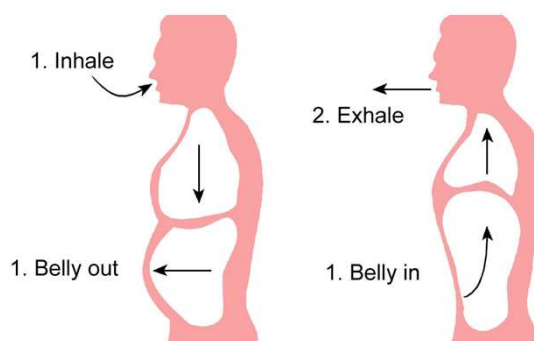
1 thing you can taste: A mint, gum, the fresh air.

Strategies – Multi-Sensory Approach

- Sight – Stick pictures up reminding you of positive things. Use apps on your phone for 2 min like the lava lamp/play a game
- Sound – music/repetitive sounds/meditations/apps on your phone/shower blue speaker/podcasts
- Smell – bath salts/creams/ hand cream/ lip balm/new perfume/ favourite smell like cinnamon/vanilla/ light a candle
- Touch – massage, give yourself a squeeze, play with blue-tac/playdough, stress ball
- Taste – mindfully enjoy food hot/cold/spicy

Strategies – Deep Belly Breathing

- Sit comfortably
- Place 1 hand on your chest and place 1 hand on your belly
- Breathe in deeply through your nose and focus on expanding your belly, whilst trying to keep your chest still. You shouldn't feel like you're forcing your lower belly out by clenching your muscles.
- Exhale slowly through pursed lips (imagine you are blowing out a candle). Let your belly relax. You should feel the hand that's over it fall toward your spine.



Strategies

- Get moving! Yoga, swimming, dance, walking or whatever you enjoy
- Be with nature – nature-based activities can contribute to a reduction in levels of anxiety, stress, and depression
- Take up a new hobby/join a group
- Mindfulness colouring



Remember – this doesn't need to be for hours, even 5 minutes a day will still have a significant impact on combatting stress

What Next?

Stress relief takes conscious practise so :

- Start small
- Recognise when you are feeling stressed, accept these feelings without judgement. Be cautious, what's made you feel this way?
- Focus on one stressor at a time
- Try a strategy and see how it makes you feel different
- Talk about it with someone or join a group, if you feel able to.

And Remember...

- It is okay to ask for help
- Give yourself permission to rest; try to find time for yourself in your daily routine
- Practise acceptance
- Take care of your health
- Think simple hobbies – it doesn't have to be complicated

And Remember...

“Count the times you avert disaster and avoid a difficulty, rather than the times you fail. Pat yourself on the back for the better days and don't be too disheartened by the ones that go wrong.”

