

# Stress Management

Stress is a feeling of anxiety or worry caused by a difficult situation. Not all stress is bad. It can help motivate us to take action and stay mentally alert.

**Prolonged stress** is when you feel like you are under pressure and overwhelmed for a long time. If our bodies are stuck in a stress response, it can have negative health impacts like fatigue, high blood pressure, decreased immune health, stomach aches and ulcers, muscle aches and pains, and more.

*Life is full of stress, so what can we do to manage it? First, we need to acknowledge our negative thought patterns. Think about which of these resonate with you.*

Identifying negative thinking:

- 1) **Filtering** – You magnify the negative parts of a situation and ignore the positive parts of a situation.
- 2) **Personalizing** – You blame yourself when bad things happen.
- 3) **Catastrophizing** – You assume the worst will happen.
- 4) **Magnifying** – You make a big deal of more minor problems.
- 5) **Perfectionism** – You have impossible standards and feel down when you do not live up to unrealistic expectations.
- 6) **Polarizing** – You view things as only good or bad.

Now that we have identified the non-constructive ways we deal with stress, let's replace it with constructive coping methods:

- 1) **Re-frame negative thoughts** – Perceiving a situation negatively can greatly influence your emotions and behaviour. If you cannot control the situation, re-direct your energy to control how you handle the stress.
- 2) **Surround yourself with positive people** – Being around people who tackle stress with positivity can help influence your ability to manage stress in healthy ways.
- 3) **Practice positive self-talk** – Be gentle and encouraging to yourself.
- 4) **Find humour** – Practice finding humour in everyday life. Laughing and smiling will reduce your stress.
- 5) **The stress is not your identity** – Acknowledge your feelings around conflict as “I feel stressed” instead of “I am stressed.” This small change prevents you from feeling like stress is part of your identity when it is just a response to a difficult situation.

These small changes will take practice, but when your state of mind is more optimistic you are more likely to handle stress in a more constructive way!

