

National Men's Health Week

13 – 19 June
2016

Together we can beat stress



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Your Validium service is available 24/7 and provides counselling support which can be helpful when managing common mental health issues like stress and anxiety or when dealing with difficult situations.

Stress can affect us in different ways and for different reasons.

This short booklet recognises the rising numbers of men who are affected by stress, feelings of isolation, low mood and/or relationship difficulties and takes advantage of Men's Health Week to highlight these issues. The booklet includes information about dealing with stress, building resilience and setting up practical self-care and healthy coping strategies.

Other resources about mental health can be found on vClub where you can also access a suite of audio podcasts online that support mental wellbeing with guided relaxation exercises, deep breathing and mindfulness.



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National Men's Health Week

While last year's National Men's Health Week focused on work, stress and unemployment, this year the theme is 'together we can beat stress'. There have been many changes to our working lives over recent years causing businesses to streamline their workforce, change priorities and patterns of working, diversify work and increase workloads – all potentially adding to stressors for employees.

However, stress can arise from many events in our lives. It might be a change in financial circumstances, starting a new job, feeling socially isolated, family or relationship problems or bereavement. At work, sources of stress could include working to tight deadlines, change within your job role, or extra demands being placed on you. Some stress has been proven to have a positive effect on mental wellbeing, but too much stress, if not managed properly, can cause fatigue and burnout.

It is important to remind ourselves about making the effort to keep healthy – both physically and mentally. A good work/life balance and looking after our bodies and minds helps to keep us functioning well at work and in our personal lives. When we are not looking after ourselves, our work and personal life can suffer. While we have recognised that some stress can be positive, if things are beginning to feel overwhelming, with feelings of being a burden or feelings of failure, take some proactive steps to get back on track and feel more in control.

- Remember that stress can be as a result of many different life events
- Divide work or personal projects into smaller tasks – don't get overwhelmed by the big picture
- Manage your time more effectively, doing important tasks first
- Recognise that different things stress different people
- Think about ways to have a better work/life balance - Talk to your manager, HR or a colleague about how best to achieve this
- Contact Validium service about stress management and building resilience

Remember – it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to talk to someone when we need support.



Men look after your Health

There are lots of really good reasons for doing something positive to maintain good mental and physical health. The following are just some of these:

- Stress can arise from many life events
- Depression occurs as often in men as women, but women are twice as likely to be diagnosed and treated
- 75% of suicides are by men – especially young men
- 37% of men are feeling worried or low
- Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 50
- Men aged 45-59 is the age group with the highest suicide rate

It is a sign of strength, not weakness, to talk to someone when we are feeling down. So talk to any or all of the following, if you can, as appropriate:

Your family
Your doctor
Your partner
Your colleagues
Your friends
Your manager
Your Validium service
Specialist organisations

“You only live once so look after yourself and talk to someone”



Men look after your Health

There are some practical things that you can do to help to maintain your mental health and strengthen your resilience:

- Exercise regularly – This makes us fitter and helps us to feel better too.
- Get enough sleep – It is much harder to have a positive mental attitude if we are tired.
- Take breaks – How ever busy we are, we are more effective if we take breaks. Doing activities in a sprint/rest pattern is usually much better than grimly plodding on. Manage your time more effectively.
- Learn to relax – Find something that works for you to reduce stress levels and do it regularly.
- Socialise – Meeting up with friends is a great way of energising, relaxing and sharing.
- Eat well – A balanced diet and avoiding over-eating promote both physical and mental health.
- Drink responsibly – Alcohol is a depressant so is likely to lower our mood once the immediate effect wears off.
- Seek help – Don't try to go it alone if you are feeling down. Sharing problems nearly always makes them easier to deal with.
- Don't smoke.
- Turn up for your NHS Health Check.

“Make today the start of more positive approach to your physical, mental health and wellbeing”



10 Ways to Build Resilience

1

Make connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you, strengthens resilience.

2

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better.

3

Accept that change is a part of living. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on the circumstances that can.

4

Move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What is one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

5

Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would go away.

6

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. People often learn something about themselves and find they have grown in some respect as a result of a struggle.

7

Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps to build resilience.

8

Keep things in perspective. Avoid blowing a stressful event out of proportion. Look at it in a broader context.

9

Maintain a hopeful outlook. Being optimistic enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualising what you want and not worrying about what you fear.

10

Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. That will help keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

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