

# Managing workplace stress

According to the Labour Force Survey, **nearly 18 million working days were lost in Britain during 2019/20 due to stress, depression and anxiety.** In addition to the cost to businesses, there is a significant human cost for those people experiencing stress in their lives and those who work and live with them.

We all have different tolerances to stress and reactions will vary. We can manage a bit of stress – in fact, it helps us stay alert and react at speed when necessary. But when stress levels rise too far, it can make life miserable and cause significant harm.

Here are **10 things to help you manage stress in your daily life...**

## 1. Be prepared

Stress levels can rise when the unexpected happens – as much as possible manage your daily work schedule to minimize the surprises that can throw you off course. Think about contingency planning, because the unexpected will happen at some point.

## 2. Take a breath

When stressful moments occur, increasing your oxygen levels can help. Take a few moments to recognize what is happening, remind yourself you can cope and re-energise your system with some deep breaths. Don't make any rash or big decisions at moments of high stress.

## 3. Know your limits

Know when stress becomes a problem for you – and monitor your safety valve. A bit of stress is ok, but continual stress is likely to affect your health and wellbeing – recognize when occasional stress becomes problem stress and take action.

## 4. Learn to say no

It's good to help out our colleagues, but recognize when you are asked to take on things that aren't your responsibility and politely decline. It's hard enough dealing with our own pressures and if we make ourselves ill, we are less help to everyone.

## 5. Look out for others

There may be times where you'll sense that colleagues are having a tough time. We all have a duty to look out for the people we work with, even if it's just encouraging them to talk or letting them know they can if they need to.

## 6. Go 'third person'

It is often easier to rationalize someone else's concerns over your own. Mentally stepping to one side when we are stressed and viewing our worries in the third person can change how we see things and put things in a new perspective.

## 7. Reframe

Our bodies are designed to treat stress as a threat and that's why we can experience physical symptoms when faced with difficult situations. If we can reframe the threat as a challenge, it can help us re-interpret the situation to something that we can deal with.

## 8. Talk (and listen)

Having someone you can turn to and talk with at times of stress is important. They will help you view your worries from a different perspective. It's true that a 'problem shared, is a problem halved'. Be a good listener too, so you can help others.

## 9. Recharge

There will be times when you need to step back and take a break to avoid burnout. It might be a holiday, walking, reading, fishing...know what it is that will recharge your battery and make time for it.

## 10. Set the culture

Farming has had a 'tough as old boots' culture – and this has helped our industry to weather challenging times before. But this culture can also lead to stigma and people feeling they can't speak out. Asking for help needs to be seen as a strength, not a weakness.

### Useful resources:

- [farmwell.org.uk](http://farmwell.org.uk)
- [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/)
- [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk) - 'What is Stress?'

### Further reading:

- *The Resilient Farmer* by Doug Avery
- *Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It* by Ethan Cross

**Can we help you or  
someone you know?**

**Call 03000 111 999**

**Email [help@fcn.org.uk](mailto:help@fcn.org.uk)**

**(FCN Helpline open 7am-11pm, 365 days of the year)**