



# Managing stress and anxiety

Tips for students and apprentices



## About this handout

This handout offers guidance on how to manage your time and stress levels ahead of exams or assessments, and strategies to help you keep yourself mentally well.

Inside you'll find practical tips for managing stress along with techniques to reduce anxiety.

## What is stress?

According to the Health and Safety Executive, stress is “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.”

As you probably know, if you're under a lot of stress, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. However, stress is not all bad. It's a natural response in the human body. Feeling a small amount of stress about assessments or exams will actually enable you to prepare and do your best. It's when there's too much that it can be potentially damaging.



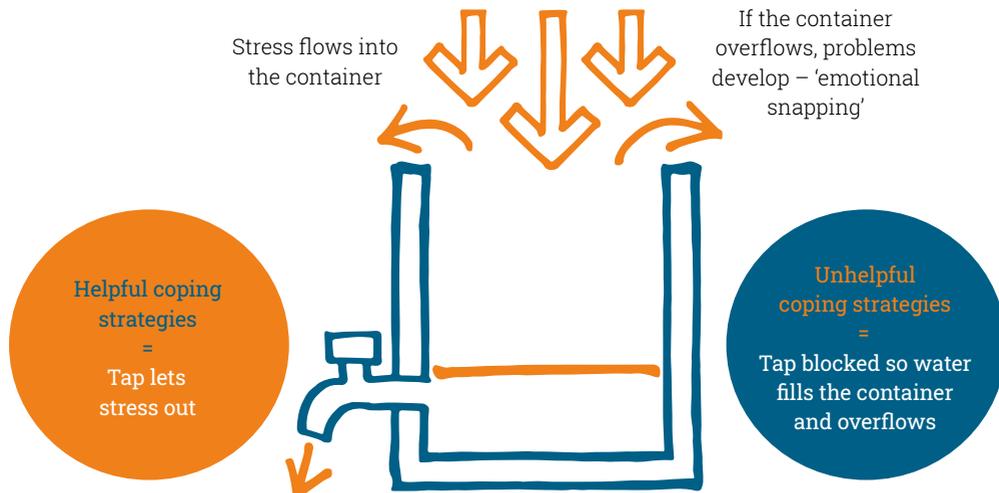
## How does stress affect our mind and body?

Stress releases adrenaline and cortisol which gives us a surge of energy. Too much adrenaline and cortisol can have a damaging effect on:

- Our immune system.
- Our sleep pattern.
- Our short and long-term memory.
- Our capacity to learn, concentrate and focus.
- Our relationships.
- Our mental and physical health.

It can be useful to think about this in terms of a 'stress container'. Imagine that your worries and stresses are filling up a container.

### THE STRESS BUCKET – MENTAL HEALTH UK



If you keep adding worries and stresses to the container it might overflow – that's when we can see outbursts of emotions such as anger, irritability and distress.



Using helpful coping strategies is like opening the tap, to stop the container overflowing.



### HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES...

might include:

- Exercise.
- Being outdoors.
- Time with friends.
- Listening to music.



### UNHELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES...

will block the tap and increase stress levels, for example:

- Misuse of alcohol/drugs.
- Isolating from friends and family.
- Not enough sleep.
- Not taking breaks.



### ARE YOU OVERLY STRESSED?

Here are some signs to look out for:

- Lack of motivation.
- Absence from work.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Feeling bad tempered.
- Having overwhelming emotions.
- Constantly feeling tired.
- Prolonged increased breathing/heart rate.

**These will be different for everyone – it's important to notice changes in yourself.**



## Top tips for managing stress and preventing burnout



### TIP 1

#### Plan your time

This is really important for your productivity and self-care. Each week allocate time to address your learning requirements because it can be a huge benefit when your deadlines, assessments or exams arrive.

### TIP 2

#### Keep track of objectives

Sometimes this can be tough. Be gentle with yourself about it – create an action plan. Making sure you are up to date with your work, for example, will help to ensure you progress on programme in the long run. Keep track of your objectives and mark these off as you go along.

### TIP 3

#### Give it your best shot!

Challenge yourself to complete the work you find most difficult first.

- If you are not sure – ASK!
- Practice where you can.
  - Review and revise.
  - Keep calm, keep talking!

### TIP 4

#### Ask for help

None of us is superhuman. We all get tired and overwhelmed. Reach out if you need to. Your tutors, teachers, trainers and support staff are all here to help you and if there's something else impacting you or your learning, let them know about it so they can help.

### TIP 5

#### Eat and sleep well

Sleep reduces stress and anxiety levels – fact!

- Implementing a routine (as boring as it sounds) will help promote good sleep ahead of any assessments.
- Avoid those stimulants we can tend to go for – coffee, energy drinks, chocolate, illegal drugs – as they won't quite be the friend you think they are.

### TIP 6

#### Learn calming strategies for self-care

Learning how to stay calm when feeling stressed will enable you to perform to the best of your ability. Experiment with the strategies on the next page and pick something that's a best fit for you.



### TRY THE STOPP TECHNIQUE:

**S**top and step back – don't act immediately.

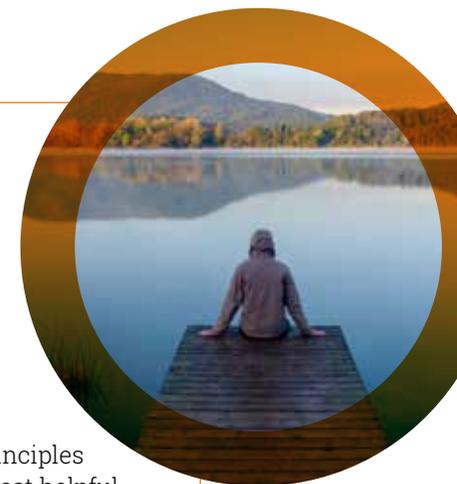
**T**ake a breath – notice your breathing.

**O**bserve – what am I thinking and feeling?

**P**ull back – see it as an external observer.

**P**ractice what works – working within your principles and values, consider what is best for you and most helpful for the situation and apply it.

[getselfhelp.co.uk/stopp.htm](https://getselfhelp.co.uk/stopp.htm)



## Breathing exercises to reduce stress and anxiety

These simple breathing exercises can really help.

### 7/11 breathing

**Step 1:** Breathe in for 7 seconds.

**Step 2:** Breathe out for 11 seconds.

**Repeat** these steps for 5 minutes.

### Box breathing

**Breathe in:** for 4 seconds.

**Hold:** for 4 seconds.

**Breathe out:** for 4 seconds.

**Hold:** for 4 seconds.

Always reach out to your mentor, assessors or trainers if you need help with stress.

Charlie Waller offers a range of resources to help you with your wellbeing.

You can also find help at:



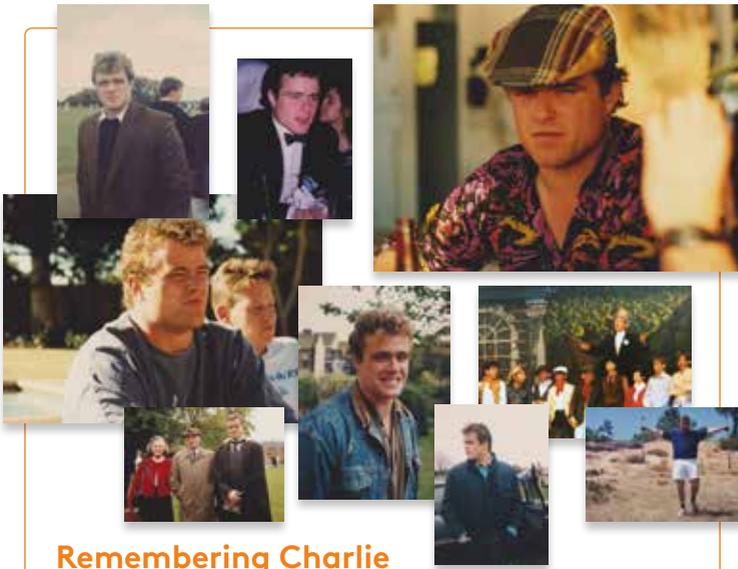
**The Samaritans**  
samaritans.org



**The Mix**  
themix.org.uk



**YoungMinds**  
youngminds.org.uk



## Remembering Charlie

Charlie Waller was a strong, funny, popular, good-looking and kind young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie took his own life. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded The Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around depression, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.

### GET IN TOUCH

hello@charliewaller.org  
01635 869754

### FIND OUT MORE

charliewaller.org

### FOLLOW US



### SUPPORTING US

If you have found this resource useful please consider donating to help us continue our work



#### Text

To donate £10 **Text 'CWT' to 70085**  
This costs £10 plus the cost of a standard rate message



#### Online

Visit [charliewaller.org/donate](https://charliewaller.org/donate)

Help our resources have a greater impact. Please consider sharing this booklet with someone who might also benefit from it instead of recycling it.

#### The Charlie Waller Trust

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