



St John's C of E Academy



Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Staff

Spring Theme – Stress

What is stress?

Stress is our body's response to pressure. Many different situations or life events can cause stress. It is often triggered when we experience something new, unexpected or that threatens our sense of self, or when we feel we have little control over a situation.

We all deal with stress differently. Our ability to cope can depend on our genetics, early life events, personality and social and economic circumstances.

When we encounter stress, our body produces stress hormones that trigger a fight or flight response and activate our immune system. This helps us respond quickly to dangerous situations.

Sometimes, this stress response can be useful: it can help us push through fear or pain so we can run a marathon or deliver a speech, for example. Our stress hormones will usually go back to normal quickly once the stressful event is over, and there won't be any lasting effects.

However, too much stress can cause negative effects. It can leave us in a permanent stage of fight or flight, leaving us overwhelmed or unable to cope. Long term, this can affect our physical and mental health.

What makes us stressed?

Many things that can lead to stress: bereavement, divorce or separation, losing a job or unexpected money problems. Work-related stress can also have a negative impact on your mental health. People affected by work-related stress lose an average of 24 days of work due to ill health.

Even positive life changes, such as moving to a bigger house, gaining a job promotion or going on holiday can be sources of stress. If you feel stressed in these situations you may struggle to understand why or be unwilling to share your feelings with others.

What are the signs of stress?

How you might feel

You may feel:

- anxious
- afraid
- angry or aggressive
- sad
- irritable
- frustrated
- depressed.

These feelings can sometimes produce physical symptoms, making you feel even worse.

How your body might react

If you're stressed, you may experience:

- headaches
- nausea
- indigestion
- digestive problems such as constipation, bloating or diarrhoea
- shallow breathing or hyperventilating
- sweating
- heart palpitations
- aches and pains.

How you might behave

You may behave differently if you're stressed. You may:

- withdraw from other people or snap at them
- be indecisive or inflexible
- be tearful
- have problems getting to sleep or staying asleep
- experience sexual problems
- smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs more than usual.

If the stress is long-lasting, you may notice your sleep and memory are affected, your eating habits change, or you feel less inclined to exercise.