

If you feel that stress or anxiety or depression is adversely affecting your life or a family/whanau member or friend... the best person to see is someone with medical knowledge. They may be able to treat you themselves, and, ideally, they will also refer you or yours to a counsellor or psychologist.

While not able to prescribe medication, these professionals can provide support and coping strategies such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and inter-personal skills that, together with medication, will help ease distress and promote a return to wellness. Some of the education and skills learnt can make significant improvements to coping with life's challenges now and in the future.

A couple of other very useful websites:

www.depression.org.nz – for older people
www.thelowdown.co.nz – for younger people

Some Support Services:

Your local Rural Support Trust people
Your Local Crisis Team

Police:	111
GP's / Counsellors – Refer to the Yellow Pages	
Depression Helpline	0800 111 757
Like Minds National HELPLINE (8am-midnight)	0800-102-107
Youthline	0800-376-633
Lifeline	0800-543-354
Your local Supporting Families in Mental Illness	

Abacus Group... insuring what you value

- Life Cover
- Income Protection
- Trauma Cover
- Health Cover



Over 3,500 Taranaki people trust Abacus Group for their personal risk advice. Are you covered? For a free, no-obligation consultation call the team at Abacus Group today.



Web: www.abacusgroup.co.nz
Email: enquiries@abacusgroup.co.nz
Fax: 06 759 0112

Phone: 06 759 0111

Acknowledgements:

Gordon Hudson - Like Minds Taranaki
Wayne Morris, Director, Future Edge
Beth Pottinger-Hockings, Counsellor
Rural Support Trust - Taranaki
Abacus Group Ltd – www.abacusgroup.co.nz

Surviving tougher times...



Stress!!!

Awareness of it...
How to handle it...
Looking after yourself...
Looking after others...
Information on services...

Everyone experiences tough times in their life. Most people manage to get through these. And thank goodness for that.

But sometimes these experiences don't go away and some people struggle to solve them on their own.

They impact on work, relationships with family/whanau and friends and can seriously impact on physical, emotional and mental health...

...if we let stress do that to us.



This pamphlet contains some general information about stress and its management. Medical advice should be sought from your Doctor.

Stress can be both very positive and very negative.

A simple definition of stress is...

“...the body's response to things that happen to you.”

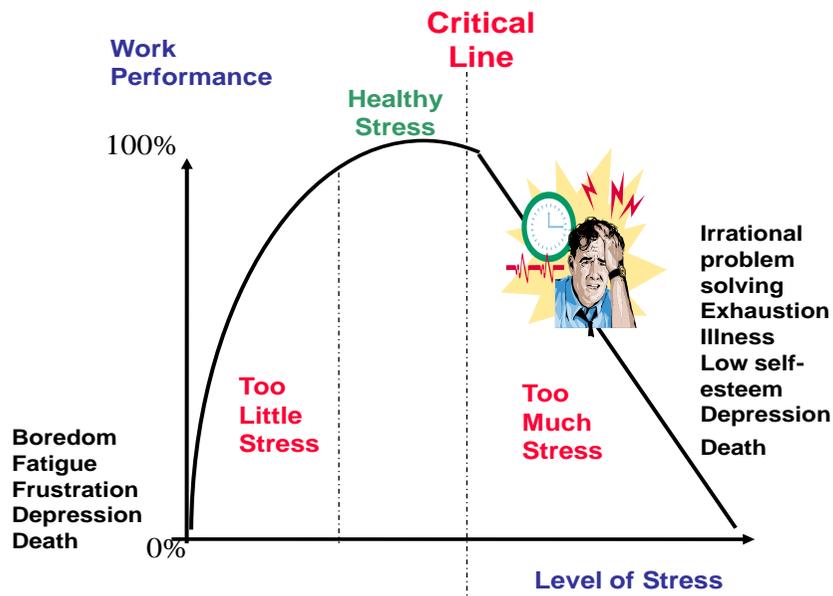
What causes stress?

Just about anything can cause stress to somebody, somewhere, some time.

- Adverse events in our lives
- Too much change/uncertainty
- Not enough stimulation
- The weather
- Condition of stock
- Financial concerns
- Mounting paper work
- Compliance costs/issues
- Too many demands in too little time
- Poor communication
- Relationships with family, friends and work colleagues
- Lack of support
- Negative media coverage
- **YOU – anything has the ability to be a stressor if we allow it.**



Stress can be both very positive and very negative...



Mental health matters of note:

Mental health can affect anyone at any time regardless of age, culture, income or gender.

For every person with a mental illness, there are many other people affected – family, friends, workmates and neighbours.

...And it is far more prevalent than many people think...

In a recent study in New Zealand:

- 46% of NZs suffered from some internationally recognized mental illness...
- 21% had experienced a mental illness in the year prior to the survey.
- 30% of people who had experienced mental illness in the past year were Maori
- 24% of these people were female and 17% male

Te Rau Hinengaora – The NZ Mental Health Survey (September, 2006)

But the worst statistic is...

Only 2 out of 3 people seek professional help for their mental health condition.

1 in 3 people continue to struggle with their depression – camouflaging it with alcohol and other substances, becoming socially isolated or coping with their struggles on their own or with the support of their families.



And one of the main reasons that people – particularly men do not seek treatment is that the stigma and discrimination of having a mental illness is worse than the symptoms of the mental illness itself.

“Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, but stigma and bias shame us all.”

Bill Clinton

This is just so unnecessary, however, for the people concerned it is so very real. As John Kirwan says, depression can be very real, very tough, but there is a way through it.

To get through it you need to understand a bit about mental health – your own, and that of your families and your friends.

Mental illness can affect anyone, anytime...

...what you do may make the difference.

Treatments are available and they do work...

In Taranaki farmers were seen as being at risk due to their isolation, long, often unsocial hours, fluctuating financial returns, debt levels and access to medical services.

It is the view of some too, that farmers tend to be seen as 'staunch' and unlikely to talk about how they feel or seek professional help.

Some signs of Suicidal thinking:

- Ongoing depression and withdrawal from people and usual activities
- Frequent negative comments about self
- Talking, writing or hinting about suicide
- Seeing no future in the future
- Giving up caring about appearances and possessions
- Organising affairs and perhaps giving away possessions
- Interest in wills, life insurance etc



And if you think someone is contemplating suicide...

- Talk with them...listen to them...
- Ask them directly if they are considering killing themselves
 - ...If yes – ask them if they have a plan
 - ...If yes, ascertain how advanced their plan is
 - ...If advanced – call your local Crisis Team.
- Stay with them until help arrives
- Remove any obvious means – e.g. medications, weapons
- Keep them, and yourself, as safe as possible
- **Call 111 if you feel there is a danger to... the person, others or yourself.**
- Consider taking them to a Hospital Emergency Department yourself
- Keep talking and reassuring them that their feelings are real but can be helped
- Keep being accepting, non-judgmental and supportive
- Encourage the person to think of some positive aspects of the future – things to look forward to, a sense of hope.

Sow the seeds of hope – hope for recovery!

If someone can see hope in the future – suicide is preventable

Suicide prevention is not just about preventing the person from dying, it is about convincing the person that there is a reason for living.

Sadly, today, talking of suicide remains one of the last taboo subjects.

Positive stress can be a very important and powerful motivator... It gets us motivated to tackle new initiatives – to do as well as possible in the circumstances – to take some pleasure in challenges.

Bad stress (distress) is when events make us feel uncomfortable and not in control. Bad stress can come from having too little stress – e.g. retirement, unemployment, long term illness, etc.

And it can come from too much stress – too much to do in too little time – leading to poor concentration, poor decision making and deteriorating relationships.

Recognising signs of stress?



Behaviour:

- Lack of energy
- Drinking more alcohol/coffee
- Violent outbursts/aggressiveness
- Withdrawal from Work
- Disturbances in eating habits

- Increase in smoking
- Sleep disturbance
- Accident proneness
- Loss of will power

Emotions Feelings:

- Irritability/moodiness
- Anxiety/fear/panic
- Emotional outbursts
- Nervous laughter
- Jumpy/feeling on edge

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Frequent welling up of tears
- Critical of self/others
- Passive/emotional withdrawal
- Feeling blue for long periods



Physical / Psychological:



- Extra aches and pains
- Racing heart
- Skin rashes
- Dizziness
- Increased sweating
- Increased blood pressure

- Dry throat/lump in throat
- Change in eating habits
- Jaw pain/ grinding
- Diarrhoea/constipation
- Frequent need to urinate

Attitude / Thinking:

- Irrational thinking
- Poor decision making
- Forgetfulness
- Losing perspective
- Negative thinking

- Procrastination
- Helplessness / hopelessness
- Poor concentration
- Self blaming, e.g. "I'm useless"
- Inability to grasp things



We all react differently to stress.

We all have our individual 'set' of stressors and responses.

What stresses one person may not stress another.

And it leaks... for every person dealing with mental illness, so too are their family/whanau, friends, neighbours and work mates.



Supporting Families in Mental Illness is an organization with branches throughout New Zealand. Do contact them if you require information and support caring for someone with a mental illness.

Some men don't like to admit that they may be feeling fragile or vulnerable but keeping these issues close to their chests could prove to be a fatal mistake.

It is a 'strength' to acknowledge and seek advice about all your health problems.

Talk to your wife, partner, GP, a Kaumatua, or someone else you can trust.

Take time to learn a little more about stress...

Like Minds Taranaki has a comprehensive range on information about stress and depression.

Like Minds Taranaki - 06-759-0966

mental.health@xtra.co.nz www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz

Understand that most treatments take time to start working.

Talk to your GP about what you can expect.

"It's not the stress that kills us; it is our reaction to it"

Hans Seyle. Pioneer Stress Researcher.

And too much stress and too much anxiety in your life can also lead to depression...and, too much depression can lead to even more chronic physical and emotional effects – and can even lead to loss of life – unintentionally ... or intentionally.

Stress and Suicide:

In New Zealand, suicide prevention is under-recognised and under-resourced. There is little evidence of a sense of urgency or of a range of practical solutions.

Suicide is a conscious attempt to end one's life.

Each year, far more New Zealanders die as a result of suicide than are killed in road accidents.

And we know that men complete suicide more often than women and that mental health disorders are a factor in up to 70% of suicides and suicide attempts.

(David Chaplow, Director of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, 2009).

Research suggests that taking individual factors (genes, personality) through to factors such as unemployment, poverty, media influence – all may play a part and may impact adversely on people's mental health and we know that mental health disorders are a factor in up to 70% of suicides and suicide attempts.

Rural communities are at particular risk

Recent research in Taranaki (2008) has revealed that the four most vulnerable groups of people to committing suicide are:

- Young males – mainly Maori
- Older Non Maori Males
- Farmers
- People with experience of mental illness

Taranaki suicide rates for the 25-44 age group were far higher in Taranaki than in New Zealand – 29 per 100,000 compared to 17.7 per 100,000 nationally.

Male suicide is higher than the national average (28.5 per 100,000 in Taranaki compared to 20.5 per 100,000 nationally).

The suicide rate for males is almost six times higher than for females (28.5 per 100,000 for males compared to 4.9 per 100,000 for females).

Mental health disorders are a factor in up to 70% of suicides and suicide attempts.

Therefore, in Taranaki, those most at risk are middle aged farmers with experience of mental illness.



Plan your recovery:

- Use the resources available – friends, partners, GP, a counsellor, a Kaumatua – someone who you feel will listen – when you most need it.
- Identify problems and areas that concern you
- Explore options to resolve these concerns
- Develop a plan of actions – with small steps – one day at a time.
- Most of all – believe in yourself and that you have choices.

Helping Others:

- Be honest about your concern for them.
- Be non-judgmental – accept their concerns and actions.
- Allow them lots of opportunities to talk
- Suggest some of the ‘helping yourself strategies’
- Stick with them
- Encourage them to get help

If you think you know someone who is stressed offer to help...
...the sooner the better...

If you think you may be stressed ask for help
...the sooner the better...

Help turn someone's ‘breakdown’ – into a ‘breakthrough!’
What you do may well make the difference!

Whakataukī:

Ahakoā te momo mate, whakanuia Tangata

This whakataukī or proverb is an expression of hope, regardless of illness or disease, people deserve dignity and respect and the opportunity to become well again.

And too much stress and anxiety can lead to depression.

What about Depression?

Depression is a common mental health disorder

Recognising depression:

Physical:

- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Changes in eating patterns
- Fatigue – loss of energy
- Headaches and stomach aches
- Unexplained other aches and pains



Behaviour / Attitude:

- Diminished interest in, and enjoyment of, previously pleasurable activities
- Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions
- Neglecting responsibilities, possessions and personal appearance

Emotional:

- Depressed mood – feeling down, apathetic, irritable, pessimistic, hopeless, guilty, anxious, empty, etc
- Feeling hopeless, helpless and worthless
- Suicidal



Dimensions of depression

Frequency:

How often do you feel down or depressed?
Every day? Twice a week? Twice a month? All the time?

Severity:

How bad is it? Do you feel suicidal? Totally stuck in a dark hole?
Or rather...kind of lousy and negative?

Duration:

How long does it last? Until you go home in the weekend? A couple of days
– or does it ‘drag on’ for weeks or even months?

We need to understand the dimensions of our stress / depression...

And, because many people live in relatively isolated communities, the help you need may not be readily available – therefore you need to know a little more about how to look after yourself, your family/whanau and friends and hope that they in turn are able to look out for you and yours...

...a sort of ‘neighbourhood stress watch’

Helping yourself:

It is not always practical to change our work place or where we live or our relationships – but we can perhaps improve those parts of our environment which are causing the most stress.

We can also learn to cope differently with stress. Here are some ways to help you reduce and prevent too much stress and tension.

Talk your worries over.

Spend time with others you trust, share your concerns. Talk with a friend, partner, parent, counsellor, Kaumatua, clergy or someone else you trust. Listen to the people whose advice you value.

Face your problems head on.

Don't hide from the facts. Find your hope – your best scenario for the future. Gather solid information. If it can work – make it happen. Develop a Plan B – so that you know you have a back-up plan.

Have a positive attitude.

You can't control some of the things that happen to you but you can control how you react to them. Worry about the things you can do something about.

Limit your expectations.

Be selective and use your energy to do the most important and possible tasks. Set goals and timetables you can reach. Do not blame yourself if you don't reach all your goals – these may be possible next time.

Organise your work habits.

Get up 5 or 10 minutes earlier so you don't have to rush. Break large projects down into small steps. Spend 5 to 10 minutes at the end of the day preparing for the next day. Start taking and feeling in control of your life.

Value your 'real' treasure.

Family/whanau, friends, health, talents, achievements – these are what count.

Eat well.

Eat a variety of fresh foods in a well balanced diet. Some foods actually cause or increase nervous tension, for example, too much coffee, tea, chocolate, alcohol and soft drinks. These are usually foods we crave when we are stressed so be aware of this and resist taking them – mostly.

Make time to exercise.

Make some time (three times a week minimum) for exercise such as walking, swimming or anything you enjoy doing.

Avoid unnecessary conflict.

Be careful with your anger. Find ways to release anger constructively.

Take time out.

Some people find it hard to take time out for a holiday or a weekend away. Give yourself a breather every now and then. Treat yourself and yours.

Solve problems.

Get help to find solutions to problems; learn to be more assertive... and learn to say NO.

Feel better about yourself.

Identify what you do well, and recognise and acknowledge your qualities and characteristics. Practice positive 'self-talk.' It does help.

Practise relaxation.

Try yoga, meditation, a massage, a long hot bath, listen to music etc. Relaxation is very important; learn what works for you and practise it regularly.

Get sufficient sleep.

To help you sleep, take a walk in the evening, meditate, or practise relaxation.

Put fun and laughter in your life.

This has proven to be good for our health and it feels good!

Laugh at the seeming absurdity, irony and unfairness of life.



And... if you are feeling stressed:

Acknowledge that you are stressed and/or depressed.

While we deny it – we cannot act on it.

Give yourself some thinking/breathing space.

Communicate. Start talking – find someone who will listen.

Ask yourself: **“What can you control in your life?”**

Remember the Serenity Prayer:

*“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and the wisdom to know the difference.”*

Try not to spend too much time worrying about what you cannot change – focus on what you can change.

Spend time on yourself and with people you care about.