

RECOGNISING STRESS

Behaviour

- Lack of energy/lethargy
- Drinking more alcohol
- Increase in smoking/coffee consumption
- Violent outbursts or aggressive actions
- Sleep disturbance
- Sexual problems/lowered sex drive
- Withdrawal from work
- Accident proneness
- Loss of will power
- Disturbance in eating habits

Emotions/Feelings

- Irritability/moodiness
- Anxiety/fear/panic
- Frequent crying/welling up of tears
- Emotional outbursts
- Nervous laughter
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Critical of self or others
- Passive/emotional withdrawal
- Depression/feeling blue for quite long periods
- Jumpy/feeling on edge

Physical/Physiological

- Aches and pains (head, neck, chest, back etc.)
- Racing heart
- Skin rashes
- Diarrhoea/constipation/irritable bowel
- Increased blood pressure
- Jaw pain/grinding teeth
- Dry throat/lump in throat
- Dizziness in head
- Frequent need to urinate
- Change in eating habits – more or less
- Sweating increase

Attitude/thinking

- Irrational thinking
- Procrastination/poor decision making
- Forgetfulness/poor memory
- Poor concentration

- Losing perspective
- Negative thinking - "What's the use?"
- Suicidal thoughts
- Helplessness/hopelessness thoughts
- Self blaming – "I'm useless"
- Confused/fuzzy thinking
- Sense of failure
- Inability to grasp things normally grasped

Recognising depression

- Diminished interest in and enjoyment of previously pleasurable activities – sex, sports, hobbies, going out with friends
- Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions
- Neglecting responsibilities and personal experience

Emotional

- Depressed mood – can mean feeling down, apathetic, irritable, pessimistic, hopeless, negative, guilty, anxious, empty, etc.
- Suicidal thoughts
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Feelings of worthlessness

Dimensions of depression

- Frequency: How often do you feel down or depressed? Every day? Three times a week? Once a month? All the time?
- Severity: How bad is it? Do you feel suicidal? Totally helpless and stuck in a dark hole? Or just kind of lousy and negative?
- Duration: How long does it last? Until you see your partner? Until you go home for the weekend? Just a couple of hours? Does it drag on for days, weeks, or even months? Have you felt somewhat depressed your whole life?

Helping yourself

- Acknowledge that you are stressed or depressed – while we deny it we cannot act
- Start talking – find someone who will listen
- Give yourself some thinking/breathing space
- Ask yourself what you can control in your life.

You then have three choices:

1. Change what you can change
 2. Find more about what you're unsure of
 3. Accept what you can't change
- Look at the balance of the important things in your life. Use the same three steps.
 - Spend time on you
 - Plan your recovery

- Use the resources available
- Involve your partner/spouse
- Identify problems and areas of concern
- Explore all options
- Learn to relax
- Believe in yourself
- Believe you have choices

Signs of suicidal thinking

- Ongoing depression and withdrawal from people and activities
- Expressing a desire to end it all – seeing no future in the future
- Giving up about caring about appearance or possessions
- Organizing their affairs and perhaps giving away possessions

...and if you think someone is contemplating suicide

- Talk to them
- Listen to them
- Ask them if they are contemplating killing themselves
- If yes – ask if they have a plan in place
- If yes, ascertain how advanced their plan is
- If yes – call the TDHB Crisis Team 06 753 6139
- Stay with them until help arrives
- Remove any obvious means e.g. medication, weapons
- Keep them and yourself as safe as possible
- If you feel there is a danger to the person or yourself call 111
- Consider taking them to TDHB A&E Dept yourself where professional help is available
- 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 etc.