

Managing Workload Pressures



When we feel as though there is more work to be done than we have time for, we can quickly begin to feel overwhelmed. This can ultimately cause unhealthy reactions such as stress, medical and mental health issues. There are some simple strategies that can assist you through times of intense workload.

Dealing effectively with stress

Managing your stress levels is essential when you feel your workload is overwhelming. Stress is natural and, at certain levels helpful when you are under a lot of pressure. However, when we experience high levels of stress over longer periods (chronic stress) of time or the stress reaction is very intense, our energy and health can be affected. It is at these times that we may need to actively manage our stress and if needed gain advice or support from professional services. If left unchecked, chronic stress can limit our personal and working life and contribute to health concerns.

Signs of stress

A central part of managing stress is knowing the warning signs, and using some simple tools to decrease your stress levels. There are four categories of stress: thinking, emotive, behavioural and physical. Signs of each category include:

- **Thinking:** Increased negative thinking about self, others or your situation, difficulty with concentration and difficulty making decisions or solving problems
- **Emotive:** Nervousness, worry, fear, agitation, feeling teary or easily upset, feeling low or down, anger or irritability
- **Behavioural:** increased intake of alcohol, hyperactivity or under-activity, withdrawal from usual activities, oversleeping or under-sleeping
- **Physical:** changes including heart palpitations, higher blood pressure, muscle tension or headaches or aches, a change in sleep pattern or nightmares, fatigue/exhaustion

Self-care tools for reducing stress

Self-care refers to healthy behaviours and attitudes we employ to look after our own wellbeing such as a good balanced lifestyle and good stress management strategies. They help us to recharge and energise, and assist us to prevent burnout by creating resilience to the pressures and demands of the world around us. If you create a personal and achievable daily routine that includes elements of thinking, feeling and acting and healthily, then you will be more likely to maintain health and wellbeing and better able to manage a high workload.

Thinking

- Self-reflection for self-awareness (monitor your needs, reactions, feelings)
- Positive attitude and positive thinking
- Focusing and switching off skills
- Goal setting and problem solving

Feeling

- Relaxation exercises
- Breathing exercises
- Rest and recreation activities
- Try a massage, pamper yourself, or treat yourself to something



Acting

- Balanced diet
- Exercise (even 20 minutes of walking a day)
- Getting good sleep
- Work life balance strategies
- Enjoyable activities like social events and hobbies - weekly
- Social support and time with friends and family - regularly
- Visit your doctor regularly for a check-up
- Actively manage your own time - organise your time with a to do list
- Taking holidays when they are due

Tips for Dealing with a high workload

- Accept what you have no control over and take positive steps to change what you can
- Learn to say no to things that are not 'essential' for you and prioritise your time to not overload yourself
- If you are always accepting work even though you have too much, try to recognise what drives this. If for example if you are a 'people pleaser,' learn to tolerate situations where people may not be happy about you looking after yourself more. You may also have patterns that go back to childhood which taught that your needs aren't important. Think about each area of your life where you might be subjugating and incrementally start considering your needs and teach those around you to consider your needs as well as theirs
- Learn to manage up more assertively. If you find that your workload is too much, make sure you raise this with your manager. Sometimes people have fears that their boss will see them in a negative light, however it is often the opposite, you end up looking proactive.
- Are you able to delegate but haven't felt comfortable doing so? If this is the case, challenge yourself to practice in little ways and build up
- First thing each day, plan and prioritise the most important tasks in particular the ones that you find difficult or challenging. Your brain will be more helpful at this point of the day. Focus on one thing at a time and minimise distractions such as pop up email alerts

Want to know more?

Assure Programs Organisational Development Team also provide workshops on how to effectively manage workload pressures. Please contact us on 1800 808 374 for further information.