

## Learn to relax

- Close your eyes and breath slowly and deeply.
- Locate any areas of tension and try to relax those muscles; imagine the tension disappearing.
- Relax each part of the body, in turn, from your feet to the top of your head.
- As you focus on each part of your body, think of warmth, heaviness and relaxation.
- After 20 minutes, take some deep breaths and stretch your body.

## How to find out more

**British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**  
tel. 0870 443 5252, web: [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

**British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies**  
tel. 01254 875 277, web: [www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com)

## First Steps to Freedom

helpline: 0845 120 2916, web: [www.first-steps.org](http://www.first-steps.org)

## Further reading available from Mind Mail Order

To order the books listed here, or a complete catalogue of publications, send an SAE to Mind Mail Order at the address below.

*Conquering fear* D. Rowe (Mind 2003) £1

*How to assert yourself* (Mind 2003) £1

*How to cope with exam stress* (Mind 2004) £1

*How to cope with sleep problems* (Mind 2003) £1

*How to cope with the stress of student life* (Mind 2003) £1

*How to improve your mental wellbeing* (Mind 2004) £1

*How to stop worrying* (Mind 2004) £1

*The Mind guide to managing stress* (Mind 2003) £1

*The Mind guide to relaxation* (Mind 2004) £1

*Mind troubleshooters: panic attacks* (Mind 2004) 50p



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mental health

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# Mind Troubleshooters: stress



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## A fold out factfile

Life is stressful. What matters is that you recognise when you are under so much stress that it may be harmful.

- Half a million people in the UK experience work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill.
- Twelve million adults see their GPs with mental health problems each year, much of it stress related.

## Are you under too much stress?

### How your body may react

breathlessness

headaches

fainting spells

chest pains

tendency to sweat

nervous twitches

cramps or muscle spasms

pins and needles

high blood pressure

feeling sick or dizzy

constant tiredness

restlessness

sleeping problems

constipation or diarrhoea

craving for food

indigestion or heartburn

lack of appetite

sexual difficulties

### How you may feel

aggressive

irritable

fearing you are ill

dreading failure

believing you are bad or ugly

losing your sense of humour

depressed

neglected

dreading the future

taking no interest in life

lacking interest in others

having no-one to confide in

### How you may behave

difficulty making decisions

problems concentrating

denying there's a problem

inability to show true feelings

avoiding difficult situations

frequently crying

# Ten tips to tackle stress

- **Make the connection.** Could the fact that you're feeling under-the-weather be a response to too much pressure?
- **Take a regular break.** Give yourself a brief break whenever you feel things are getting on top of you – get a soft drink or take a brief stroll.
- **Learn to relax.** Follow a simple routine to relax your muscles and slow your breathing (see back page).
- **Get better organised.** Make a list of jobs; tackle one task at a time; alternate dull tasks with interesting ones.
- **Sort out your worries.** Divide them into those that you can do something about (either now or soon) and those that you can't. There's no point in worrying about things that you can't change.
- **Change what you can.** Look at the problems that can be resolved, and get whatever help is necessary to sort them out. Learn to say 'no'.
- **Look at your long-term priorities.** Step back and examine what it is about your life that's giving you too much stress. What can you off-load, or change? How can you introduce a better balance between work, social life and home life? Is it time to reassess your priorities?
- **Improve your lifestyle.** Find time to eat properly, get plenty of exercise and enough sleep. Avoid drinking and smoking too much. However much you believe they can help you to relax, they'll have the opposite effect.
- **Confide in someone.** Don't keep emotions bottled up.
- **Focus on the positive aspects of your life.**



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