FREE GUIDE AND PRACTICAL WORKSHEET

When Pressure Builds

Stephen Therapy
CLINICAL HYPNOTHERAPY & RTT

A straightforward guide to understanding stress, noticing what it is doing and deciding what may help.

Stress is a response to pressure

Stress can appear when demands feel greater than the time, energy, control or support available. It may come from one major event or from many smaller pressures building up. Even welcome changes can be stressful.

Stress

Often has an identifiable pressure or demand behind it. It can make you feel overloaded, irritable, tense or unable to switch off. It may ease when the pressure changes or you have more support.

Anxiety

Can be connected to stress, but may continue when there is no immediate demand to deal with. It often centres on possible danger, uncertainty or what might happen next.

How much pressure am I carrying right now?

Circle the number that feels closest. This is a snapshot, not a test.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 - steady

10 - completely overloaded

What is happening in my life at the moment?

Include work, relationships, health, money, caring, change, loss, uncertainty or anything else taking up space.

What tells me this is becoming too much?

Think about changes in your body, sleep, concentration, patience, habits or relationships.

STRESS CAN SHOW UP IN MORE THAN ONE PLACE

How is stress affecting me?

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You may notice stress in your body first, or you may notice changes in your thinking, feelings or behaviour. There is no single correct pattern.

In my body

Tight shoulders or jaw
Headaches or aches
Stomach upset
A racing or noticeable heartbeat
Feeling restless or exhausted
Changes in sleep

In my thoughts

Difficulty concentrating
Forgetfulness
Going over the same problem
Expecting the worst
Feeling there is too much to do
Struggling to make decisions

In my feelings

Irritability or impatience
Feeling overwhelmed
Anger or frustration
Feeling tearful
Low confidence
Difficulty enjoying things

In what I do

Withdrawing from people
Working longer without recovering
Eating more or less
Drinking, smoking or scrolling more
Avoiding decisions
Snapping at people close to me

What changed first?

Sometimes the earliest sign is the most useful one to recognise next time.

What has become harder while I have been under pressure?

For example: sleeping, concentrating, switching off, being patient, making decisions or asking for help.

Where is the pressure coming from?

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Stress is not always caused by one dramatic event. A number of ordinary pressures can quietly accumulate until your capacity is stretched.

What is contributing?

Tick anything that feels relevant at the moment.

- ☐ Workload, targets or responsibility
- ☐ Money, bills or housing
- ☐ Relationships or family tension
- ☐ Health concerns or poor sleep
- ☐ Caring for somebody else
- ☐ Change, uncertainty or loss
- ☐ Feeling unsupported or undervalued
- ☐ Too little time or recovery
- ☐ High expectations of myself
- ☐ Several smaller things at once

What happened just before I began to notice the stress?

Look for a change, conversation, decision, deadline, worry or gradual build-up.

The pressure that feels loudest

Which part takes most of your attention or energy?

The pressure I may be overlooking

What have you dismissed because it seems small or ordinary?

A useful question

If one pressure disappeared tomorrow, which one would create the greatest sense of relief? Your answer may show where support, a boundary or a practical change could make the biggest difference.

Pressure and capacity

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The same demand can feel manageable one week and overwhelming the next. What matters is the pressure you face alongside the time, energy, control and support available.

What is being asked of me?

- ☐ Tasks and deadlines
- ☐ Responsibility for others
- ☐ Emotional demands
- ☐ Uncertainty and decisions
- ☐ My own expectations
- ☐ Problems outside my control

What helps me carry it?

- ☐ Time and realistic priorities
- ☐ Rest and physical recovery
- ☐ Choice or control
- ☐ Clear information
- ☐ Practical or emotional support
- ☐ Permission to do less

Sort the pressure

Not every problem needs the same response.

I can change

An action I can take directly.

I can influence

A conversation, request or boundary.

I need support with

Something too large to carry alone.

What am I expecting myself to carry alone?

Who could share the responsibility, offer information, listen, help practically or support a change?

Needing more capacity is not failure

Sometimes the answer is not to cope harder. It is to reduce a demand, increase support or allow proper recovery.

CHOOSE A MANAGEABLE RESPONSE

My practical stress plan

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You do not have to solve everything today. Choose the smallest useful changes that could reduce pressure or increase support.

One demand I can reduce

Delay, decline, delegate, simplify or renegotiate.

One support I can ask for

A person, service, conversation or practical resource.

One way to help my body settle

Movement, rest, food, water, breathing, quiet or connection.

One thing I can allow to wait

Not everything urgent in your mind is urgent in reality.

A two-minute return to steadiness

- ☐ Feel the chair or floor supporting your weight.
- ☐ Let your out-breath become a little longer than your in-breath.
- ☐ Unclench your jaw and lower your shoulders.
- ☐ Look around and name three neutral things you can see.
- ☐ Ask: What is the next sensible thing, not every possible thing?

My next step in the next 24 hours

Make it specific, realistic and small enough to begin.

A note about support

This guide is for personal reflection and general information. It is not a diagnosis or substitute for medical advice. If stress is affecting your health or daily life, contact your GP. If you need urgent mental health support but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E.