



Understanding stress



versus burnout.

Stress is an inevitable aspect of life, affecting individuals differently depending on their circumstances, environments, and coping mechanisms. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that stress is a leading cause of illness and disability worldwide, with significant implications for physical and mental health. “Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being”.

In Ireland, a survey conducted by the Health Service Executive (HSE) revealed that stress is one of the most common mental health issues, affecting a large portion of the population regularly. The HSE emphasises the importance of addressing stress through proactive measures, stating that “Breathing exercises can help reduce stress, manage strong emotions, and enhance overall mental well-being.”,

About St John of God Hospital

Founded on a commitment to compassionate care and excellence in mental health services, St John of God Hospital has been a cornerstone of mental health support in Ireland for over 140 years. Located in Stillorgan, County Dublin, the hospital is part of the St John of God Group, a leading healthcare provider that operates across several continents.

St John of God Hospital is dedicated to offering a holistic approach to mental health, addressing not only the medical and psychological needs of patients but also providing comprehensive support through various therapeutic and community-based programs. The hospital’s services are underpinned by a philosophy of respect, dignity, and compassion,

ensuring that each patient receives individualised care tailored to their unique needs.

The hospital’s multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, and nursing staff work collaboratively to deliver exceptional patient care. St John of God Hospital is also actively involved in ongoing research and education, contributing to advancements in mental health treatment and the development of innovative care practices.

As a leader in mental health services, St John of God Hospital has forged strong partnerships with organisations such as Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Ireland, extending its reach and impact beyond the hospital setting and into the wider community.

Understanding Stress

Stress is a complex psychological and physiological response that occurs when an individual perceives a threat or challenge. It triggers a cascade of biological processes designed to prepare the body for action, often referred to as the “fight or flight” response. While this response can be beneficial in short-term, high-pressure situations, chronic stress can have detrimental effects on health.

There are three main types of stress:

- **Acute Stress:** This is the most common form of stress, characterised by a short-term response to an immediate threat or challenge. Examples include narrowly avoiding a car accident or meeting a tight deadline at work. Acute stress is typically manageable and may even be motivating.
- **Episodic Acute Stress:** Individuals who frequently experience acute stress may

develop episodic acute stress. This type is common among those with demanding jobs or chaotic lives, leading to frequent episodes of stress that can affect both physical and mental health.

- **Chronic Stress:** Chronic stress occurs when an individual faces ongoing stressor that do not seem to have an end in sight. This type of stress is particularly harmful as it can lead to long-term health problems, including cardiovascular disease, anxiety disorders, and depression.

Recognising the signs of stress is crucial for effective management. The HSE outlines several key indicators of stress, including persistent feelings of being overwhelmed, anxiety, irritability, and an inability to enjoy life. Understanding these symptoms can help individuals take proactive steps to manage stress before it escalates into a more severe health issue.²

The Role of Cortisol in Stress

Cortisol, often referred to as the “stress hormone,” plays a significant role in the body’s response to stress. It is produced by the adrenal glands and is released into the bloodstream in response to stress or fear, as part of the body’s fight or flight response.³

- **Importance of Cortisol:** Cortisol helps regulate various bodily functions, including metabolism, immune response, and blood pressure. It also aids in controlling the sleep-wake cycle and provides the body with the energy needed to handle stressful situations by increasing glucose levels in the bloodstream.
- **Negative Effects of Excess Cortisol:** While cortisol is essential for survival, chronic stress can lead to prolonged

high levels of cortisol, which can have several negative health effects. Excessive cortisol can suppress the immune system, increase blood pressure, lead to weight gain (particularly around the abdomen), and contribute to the development of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. Moreover, high cortisol levels have been linked to impairments in cognitive function, particularly in memory and thinking abilities.⁴

Managing cortisol levels through stress-reduction techniques is crucial for maintaining both physical and mental health. Incorporating mindfulness, physical activity, and adequate sleep into daily routines can help keep cortisol levels in check, promoting overall well-being.



Scientific Studies on Stress Management

The management of stress has been the subject of extensive research, with numerous studies highlighting effective strategies for reducing stress and its impact on health.

- **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR):** One of the most well-researched

methods for managing stress is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Sinn. A study published in the Journal of Behavioural Medicine found that participants who engaged in an MBSR program experienced significant reductions in stress, anxiety,

and depression, along with improvements in overall well-being.⁵

- **Physical Activity:** Regular physical exercise is another cornerstone of stress management. A study conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) demonstrated that individuals who engage in regular physical activity, particularly aerobic exercises such as running, cycling, and swimming, experience lower levels of stress and anxiety. The study also found that exercise helps mitigate the physical effects of stress by reducing the production of stress hormones like cortisol and increasing the release of endorphins, which are natural mood elevators.⁶

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** Cognitive

Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a widely used psychological approach for managing stress and anxiety. Research published in the Journal of Anxiety Disorders indicates that CBT is highly effective in helping individuals identify and challenge negative thought patterns that contribute to stress. By replacing these patterns with more positive and realistic thoughts, individuals can reduce their stress levels and improve their overall mental health.⁷

These studies highlight the importance of incorporating a range of strategies into a comprehensive stress management plan. By combining mindfulness, physical activity, and cognitive approaches, individuals can develop a robust toolkit for managing stress in various aspects of their lives.

Stress vs. Burnout

Understanding the difference between stress and burnout is essential for managing both effectively.

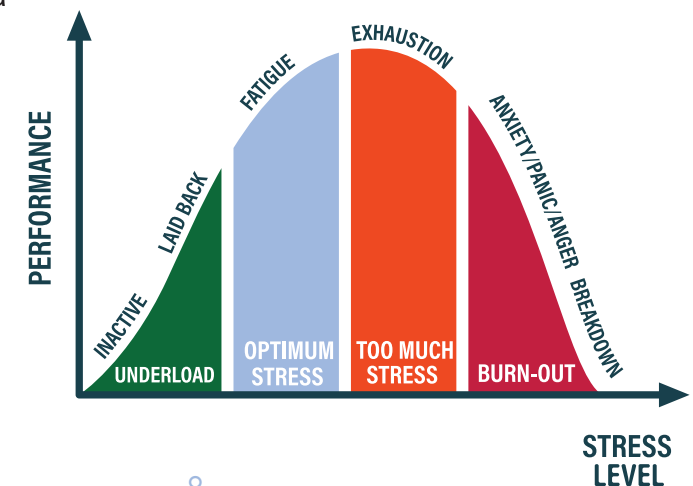
- **Stress:** Stress is a physical, mental, or emotional response to external pressures, demands, or challenges. It can sometimes be motivating, helping individuals meet deadlines or achieve goals. However, chronic stress without adequate relief can lead to significant health issues, including anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular diseases.
- **Burnout:** Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress. It is characterised by feelings of helplessness, cynicism, and detachment from work and life. Unlike stress, which may involve feeling overwhelmed, burnout often results in a sense of emptiness and lack of motivation, making it difficult to function effectively in daily life.

Key Differences:

- **Energy Levels:** While stress often leads to hyperactivity and a sense of urgency, burnout is associated with a deep sense of fatigue and a lack of energy.
- **Emotional State:** Stress can cause heightened emotions such as anxiety or irritability. Burnout, on the other hand, often leads to feelings of detachment, hopelessness, and apathy.
- **Performance:** Stress may initially improve performance due to increased focus and energy. In contrast, burnout tends to lead to reduced productivity, difficulty concentrating, and a decline in job performance.

Managing Stress and Preventing Burnout:

- **Recognise the signs early** and take proactive steps to manage stress.
- **Set realistic goals** and prioritise tasks to avoid overwhelm.
- **Ensure regular breaks, exercise, and relaxation techniques to recharge.**
- **Seek support** from colleagues, supervisors, or mental health professionals if you feel signs of burnout.



Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

Understanding the distinction between mental health and mental illness is crucial for addressing mental well-being effectively.

- **Mental Health:** Mental health refers to our cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. It influences how we think, feel, and act. Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorders but involves having a positive sense of well-being, the ability to handle stress, work productively, and make meaningful contributions to our community.⁸ Good mental health supports the ability to cope with life's challenges, maintain relationships, and recover from setbacks.

- **Mental Illness:** Mental illness, on the other hand, refers to a wide range of mental health conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behaviour. Examples include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and addictive behaviours. Mental illness can be episodic or chronic, significantly impacting a person's ability to function in daily life.⁹

Both mental health and mental illness are influenced by various factors, including genetics, life experiences, and family history. It's important to recognise that individuals can experience mental health challenges without having a diagnosable mental illness. Similarly, those with mental illness can achieve positive mental health with appropriate support and treatment.

Building Resilience

Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or significant sources of stress. It doesn't mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress; rather, it involves how they respond to and recover from those challenges.

Key Strategies for Building Resilience:

- **Develop Strong Connections:** Building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends can provide social support and strengthen resilience.
- **Embrace Change:** Accept that change is a part of life. By focusing on what you can control and accepting what you cannot, you can develop a more resilient mindset.

- **Set Realistic Goals:** Setting small, achievable goals can help create a sense of accomplishment and forward momentum.

- **Take Care of Yourself:** Engaging in regular physical activity, eating a healthy diet, and ensuring adequate sleep are crucial for building physical and mental resilience.

- **Maintain a Positive Outlook:** Focusing on positive outcomes and maintaining a hopeful outlook can help you overcome challenges more effectively.

According to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), resilience can be developed by adopting these practices and seeking opportunities for personal growth during challenging times.¹⁰

Managing Stress in the Workplace

Workplace stress is a significant concern, particularly in high-pressure environments. A survey conducted by Robert Walters revealed that three in five professionals in Ireland suffer from workplace stress, a trend that has intensified in recent years.¹¹ Managing stress in the workplace is not only essential for individual well-being but also for maintaining productivity and job satisfaction.

Identifying Workplace

Stressors: Common stressors include heavy workloads, tight deadlines, and poor relationships with colleagues. Recognising these early allows for effective coping strategies.

Time Management and

Prioritisation: Prioritising tasks, setting realistic goals, and breaking down large projects into manageable steps can help prevent the feeling of being overwhelmed. The HSE

recommends focusing on one task at a time, breaking down large tasks into smaller, more manageable parts, and using tools such as to-do lists to keep track of progress. By organising your workload, you can create a sense of control and reduce stress levels.

Building a Supportive Work

Environment: Encouraging open communication and fostering a culture of collaboration can significantly reduce stress levels. Employers should also be mindful of work-life balance, encouraging regular breaks and time off to recharge.

Stress-Reduction Techniques:

Incorporating relaxation techniques into your daily routine can help manage stress effectively. The HSE suggests simple practices like deep breathing exercises, stretching during breaks, or brief mindfulness sessions.

These techniques can help clear the mind, reduce tension, and improve focus.

Physical Activity and Diet:

Engaging in regular physical activity and maintaining a balanced diet are essential for managing stress. Exercise helps

release endorphins, the body's natural stress relievers, and a nutritious diet can keep energy levels stable throughout the day. The HSE emphasises the importance of staying hydrated and avoiding excessive caffeine and sugar, which can contribute to stress.



Diet and Mental Health

Does Food Affect Mood?

Foods can affect how we feel in various ways, and our mood can influence the foods we choose. While some effects are due to nutrient content, many are related to the associations we have with

certain foods, such as pleasure and reward (e.g., chocolate) or diet and deprivation (e.g., plain foods). Additionally, foods can have religious, economic, and cultural significance, influencing our emotional responses when eating them.



Vitamins, Minerals, and Their Effect on Mood¹²

Missing Vitamin/ Mineral	Effect on Mood	Foods That Can Help
Iron	Low levels of oxygen-carrying haemoglobin in the blood lead to anaemia, causing fatigue and lethargy.	Red meat, poultry, fish, beans, pulses, fortified cereals. Avoid drinking tea with meals.
Thiamine (B1), Niacin (B3), or Cobalamin (B12)	Deficiency can lead to tiredness, feelings of depression, or irritability.	Fortified foods, wholegrain cereals, animal protein sources such as meat, fish, eggs, and dairy.
Folate / Folic Acid	Increased chance of feeling depressed, particularly in older adults.	Liver, green vegetables, oranges, other citrus fruits, beans, fortified foods such as yeast extract (e.g., Marmite), and fortified breakfast cereals.
Selenium	May increase the incidence of feeling depressed and other negative mood states.	Brazil nuts, meat, fish, seeds, and wholemeal bread.

Additional Factors Influencing Mood

- **The Gut-Brain Axis:** There is growing interest in the links between mood and the gut microbiome (the trillions of bacteria in the human colon). However, consistent research outcomes are needed before any definitive claims can be made.
- **Omega-3 Fats:** Long-chain omega-3 fats found in fatty fish support foetal brain development during pregnancy. Some research suggests that diets rich in omega-3 fats may help reduce low mood states in adults.

Caffeine and Stress Management

Caffeine is a stimulant commonly found in coffee, tea, energy drinks, and some medications. While moderate caffeine intake can enhance focus and energy levels, excessive consumption can lead to increased anxiety, restlessness, and disrupted sleep, all of which can exacerbate stress.

Recommended Daily Caffeine Limits:

- **General Population:** The recommended daily limit for caffeine intake is 400mg for most adults. This is equivalent to approximately:
 - o 4 cups of brewed coffee
 - o 5 shots of espresso
 - o 8 cups of black tea
 - o 2.5 standard 8-ounce cans of energy drinks
 - o 10 cans of cola
- **Pregnant Individuals:** If you are pregnant, the recommended daily limit is 200mg. This is equivalent to approximately:
 - o 2 cups of brewed coffee
 - o 3 shots of espresso
 - o 4 cups of black tea
 - o 1 standard 8-ounce can of energy drinks
 - o 5 cans of cola

Exceeding these limits can contribute to increased heart rate, high blood pressure, and feelings of anxiety, which can hinder effective stress management. It's important to monitor your caffeine intake, particularly if you are prone to stress or anxiety.¹³



Seeking Support

If workplace stress becomes overwhelming, it's important to seek support. The HSE recommends talking to a trusted colleague, supervisor, or HR representative about the challenges you're facing. Additionally, accessing professional help, such as speaking to a counsellor or participating in stress management programs, can

provide valuable strategies for coping with stress.

Remote Work and Stress Management:

The rise of remote work introduces new challenges. Establishing a routine, creating a dedicated workspace, and maintaining regular communication with colleagues are essential to managing stress in a remote environment.

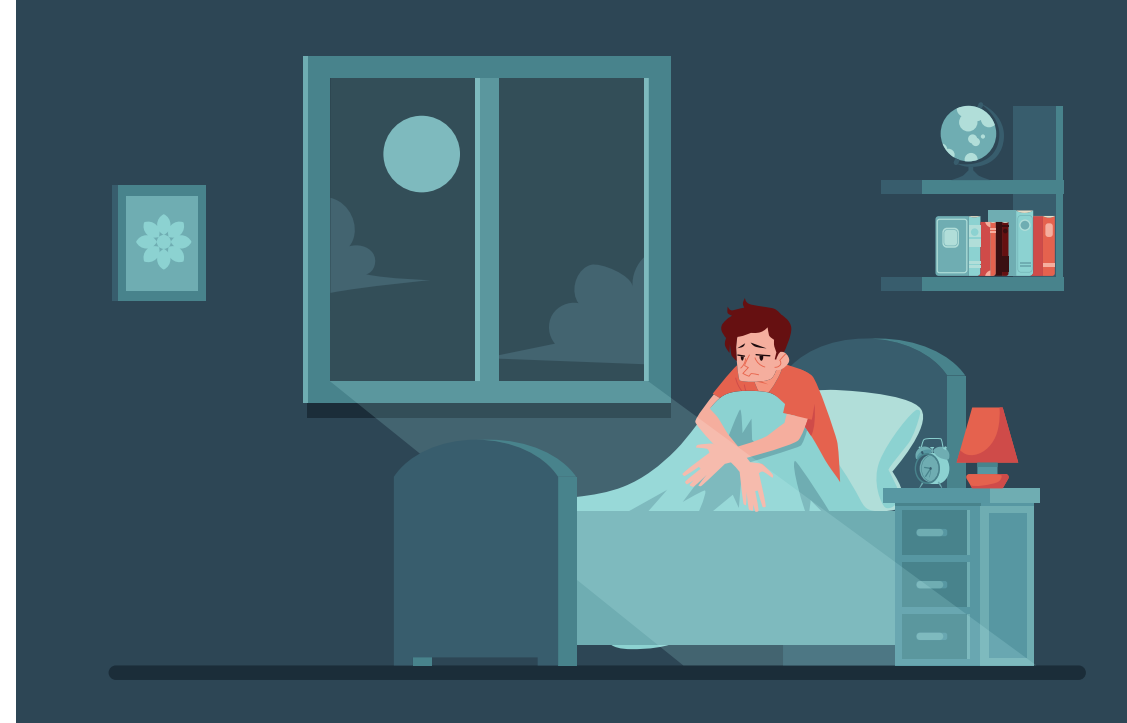
Interpersonal Communication: Starting a Conversation About Mental Health

Starting a conversation about mental health, whether you're seeking support or offering it to someone else, can be challenging but is essential for fostering understanding and connection.

Steps to Start a Conversation About Mental Health:

- **Choose the Right Time and Place:** Find a quiet, private setting where you both feel comfortable and have time to talk without interruptions.
 - **Be Honest and Direct:** Use clear, straightforward language. You can start by saying something like, "I've been going through a tough time lately and could use someone to talk to."
 - **Use "I" Statements:** Focus on how you feel rather than making assumptions about the other person. For example, "I've noticed that I've been feeling really overwhelmed lately and
- **Listen Actively:** If you're the one offering support, listen without judgment. Sometimes just being there and showing that you care can make a huge difference.
 - **Offer Support:** If the conversation is about someone else's mental health, ask how you can support them. You might say, "I'm here for you. What can I do to help?"
 - **Encourage Professional Help:** If needed, encourage seeking help from a mental health professional. You could say, "Have you thought about talking to someone who's trained to help with this?"
 - **Follow Up:** Mental health conversations don't end after the first talk. Check in regularly to show that you care and are there for continued support.¹⁴

I think it's affecting how I'm coping."



How to Do a Mental Health Checklist

A mental health checklist is a useful tool for self-assessment and for identifying areas where you might need to seek additional support or make changes to improve your mental well-being. Here's how you can perform a mental health check-in:

- **Assess Your Mood:** Reflect on your overall mood over the past week. Have you felt more anxious, depressed, or irritable than usual?

- **Evaluate Your Sleep Patterns:** Consider how well you've been sleeping. Are you getting enough rest? Have you noticed changes in your sleep patterns, such as trouble falling asleep or staying asleep?
- **Examine Your Energy Levels:** Have you felt more fatigued or run down than usual? Low energy can be a sign of stress or mental health issues.

- **Check Your Eating Habits:** Reflect on whether you've been eating regular, balanced meals or if stress has caused changes in your appetite.
- **Consider Your Social Connections:** Think about your interactions with others. Have you been avoiding social situations, or have you felt isolated?
- **Review Your Ability to Focus:** Have you had difficulty concentrating on tasks at work or at home? Trouble focusing can be a sign of stress or mental strain.

- **Monitor Physical Symptoms:** Take note of any physical symptoms that could be related to stress, such as headaches, muscle tension, or digestive issues.
- **Reflect on Your Coping Strategies:** Are the strategies you're using to manage stress effective, or are they contributing to more stress?

Regularly checking in on these aspects of your mental health can help you identify patterns and seek help when needed.¹⁵



Evidence-Based Activities to Support Mental Health

1. Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises are a foundational tool for managing stress and anxiety. They help calm the nervous system and can be practiced anywhere. Two highly effective techniques are diaphragmatic breathing and box breathing.

o Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing):

Find a comfortable position: Sit or lie down in a quiet place.

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen: This will help you feel the movement of your diaphragm as you breathe.

Inhale deeply through your nose: Breathe in slowly, allowing your abdomen to rise as you fill your lungs with air. The hand on your chest should remain relatively still.

Exhale slowly through your mouth: Breathe out slowly, allowing your abdomen to fall. The hand on your chest should still remain relatively still.

Repeat for several minutes:

Continue this pattern for 5-10 minutes, focusing on the movement of your abdomen.

This technique has been shown to reduce stress and improve relaxation by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to calm the body.¹⁶

o 4-7-8 Breathing Technique:

Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4.

Hold your breath for a count of 7.

Exhale completely through your mouth for a count of 8.

Repeat the cycle for 4 breaths initially, gradually increasing as you become more comfortable.

The 4-7-8 technique has been associated with reduced anxiety and improved sleep, making it an effective method for stress management.¹⁷



o Box Breathing:

Inhale through your nose for a count of 4.

Hold your breath for a count of 4.

Exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.

Hold your breath for another count of 4.

Repeat the cycle for several minutes.

Box breathing, also known as square breathing, is a powerful stress management technique used by athletes, military personnel, and others in high-stress professions. Research shows that it can lower cortisol levels, reduce anxiety, and improve focus.¹⁸

2. Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness involves focusing on the present moment and accepting it without judgment. It can be practiced formally through meditation or informally throughout the day.

o Basic Mindfulness Meditation:

Find a quiet place to sit or lie down.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to relax.

Focus on your breathing: Notice the sensation of the breath entering and leaving your body.

Observe your thoughts without judgment: If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Continue for 5-10 minutes: Gradually increase the time as you become more comfortable. Research has shown that regular mindfulness practice can reduce stress, improve emotional

regulation, and enhance overall well-being.¹⁹

o 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique:

The 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique is a grounding exercise designed to help manage anxiety and stress by focusing on the present moment.

How to Practice the 5-4-3-2-1 Technique:

Acknowledge 5 things you can see: Look around and notice five things that you can see. Focus on the details.

Acknowledge 4 things you can touch: Notice the texture of objects around you. Feel the ground under your feet or the fabric of your clothes.

Acknowledge 3 things you can hear: Listen carefully to the sounds around you, whether they're nearby or in the distance.

Acknowledge 2 things you can smell: Take note of the scents around you, whether it's the

aroma of food, fresh air, or something familiar.

Acknowledge 1 thing you can taste: If possible, savour the taste in your mouth, or imagine the taste of something you enjoy. This technique helps interrupt the cycle of anxiety by bringing your attention back to the present.²⁰

3. Physical Exercise

Physical activity is a natural stress reliever. Regular aerobic exercise like running, swimming, or brisk walking helps lower stress hormones like cortisol and releases endorphins, which naturally elevate mood.²¹

Incorporate Exercise into Your Routine:

- o **Set achievable goals:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- o **Choose activities you enjoy:** Whether it's a walk in the park, a swim, or a dance class, find what makes you happy.
- o **Combine with social interaction:** Exercising with a friend can enhance the stress-relieving benefits.



4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a technique that involves tensing and then relaxing each muscle group in the body. This practice helps reduce physical tension associated with stress.²²

How to Practice PMR:

- o **Find a comfortable position:** Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
- o **Start with your feet:** Tense the muscles in your feet for 5 seconds, then relax them.
- o **Move up your body:** Continue the process with your calves, thighs, abdomen, chest, arms, hands, neck, and face.
- o **Focus on the difference between the tension and relaxation in each muscle group.**
- o **Repeat as needed:** This exercise can be done once or repeated for deeper relaxation.

5. Journaling

Writing down your thoughts and emotions can be an effective way to process and manage stress. Journaling helps you organise your thoughts, identify stressors, and explore solutions.²³

How to Start Journaling:

- o **Set aside time each day:** Find a quiet moment, perhaps in the morning or before bed, to reflect on your day.
- o **Write freely:** Don't worry about grammar or spelling; just let your thoughts flow.
- o **Focus on your feelings:** Write about what's on your mind, what's bothering you, or what you're grateful for.
- o **Review your entries:** Over time, look back at your journal to identify patterns in your stressors and your responses.



Explore Additional Resources

To further support your mental health journey, St John of God Hospital offers a range of additional resources. Visit our SoundCloud for guided body scans, breathing techniques, and other relaxation exercises developed by our Occupational Therapy Department. These resources are designed to help you practice stress management techniques effectively.

Stay connected with us on social media for more tips, resources, and updates:

- Instagram: @sjogmentalhealth
- Website: <https://stjohnofgodhospital.ie/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sjogmentalhealth/>
- Twitter: @SJOGHospital
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/saint-john-of-god-hospital/>

Our Partners: Mental Health First Aid Ireland (MHFAI)

St John of God Hospital is proud to be associated with MHFAI, the only licensed provider of Mental Health First Aid training in the country. MHFAI courses are internationally acclaimed, evidence-based training programs that empower individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to support those experiencing mental health problems or crises, such as being suicidal or having a panic attack.

- **Global Impact:** MHFAI is part of a global community with over 7 million trained individuals worldwide, including 21,000 in Ireland alone.
- **Evidence-Based:** MHFAI training improves attitudes toward people with mental health difficulties, reduces stigma, and increases confidence in providing help and guiding individuals toward appropriate treatments.

- **Lived Experience and Awards:** The MHFAI curriculum is informed by people with lived experience of mental health problems, clinical experts, and has won numerous international awards, including the Irish Healthcare Award and the IBEC Keep Well Award.

For more information on MHFAI courses and to access additional mental health resources, please visit www.mhfaireland.ie.



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Conclusion

Managing stress is essential for maintaining both physical and mental health. By integrating evidence-based practices such as mindfulness, physical exercise, and effective time management strategies into daily routines, individuals can build resilience against stress and enhance their overall well-being.

This pocketbook provides a practical guide to understanding stress and implementing strategies to manage it effectively. Whether dealing with the pressures of work, personal life, or the challenges of remote work, the tools and techniques outlined in this resource offer a roadmap to better mental health.

Glossary

- **4-7-8 Breathing:** A relaxation technique that involves inhaling for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling for 8 seconds. This method can help reduce anxiety and improve sleep.
- **Box Breathing:** Also known as square breathing, this technique involves inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling, and holding the breath again, each for a count of four. It is used to reduce stress and improve focus.
- **Burnout:** A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress. It often leads to feelings of helplessness, cynicism, and detachment from work and life.
- **Cortisol:** A hormone produced by the adrenal glands, often referred to as the “stress hormone.” It is released in response to stress and helps regulate various functions in the body, including metabolism, immune response, and blood

pressure. While essential for survival, prolonged elevated levels of cortisol due to chronic stress can lead to negative health effects such as suppressed immune function, increased blood pressure, weight gain, and cognitive impairments.

- **Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing):** A deep breathing technique that engages the diaphragm, allowing more air into the lungs and helping to calm the nervous system.
- **Journaling:** The practice of writing down thoughts, feelings, and experiences as a way to process emotions and manage stress.
- **Mindfulness:** The practice of focusing on the present moment and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness can help reduce stress and improve emotional regulation.
- **Mental Health:** The state of our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act and

contributes to how we handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions.

- **Mental Illness:** A wide range of mental health conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behaviour. Examples include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and eating disorders.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** A relaxation technique that involves tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups in the body to reduce physical tension and stress.
- **Resilience:** The ability to recover quickly from difficulties or adapt well to change. Resilience helps individuals manage stress and overcome adversity.
- **Stress:** A physical, mental, or emotional response to external pressures, demands, or challenges. While it can sometimes be motivating, prolonged stress without adequate relief can lead to health issues.

Footnotes

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