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Why it's so important to have your own stress management plan

Stress is something we all feel. We explain it away or outright ignore it. But having a plan in place can completely change how you experience stress going forward.

Why stress needs to be managed

Given the incredibly hectic lives we lead today, it's no surprise that stress levels are hitting record highs both in and out of the workplace. So what better time than now to start to understand what stress is and how we can manage it moving forward.

Stress occurs when pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope. It goes beyond your limits of challenge and leaves you feeling overwhelmed and out of control.

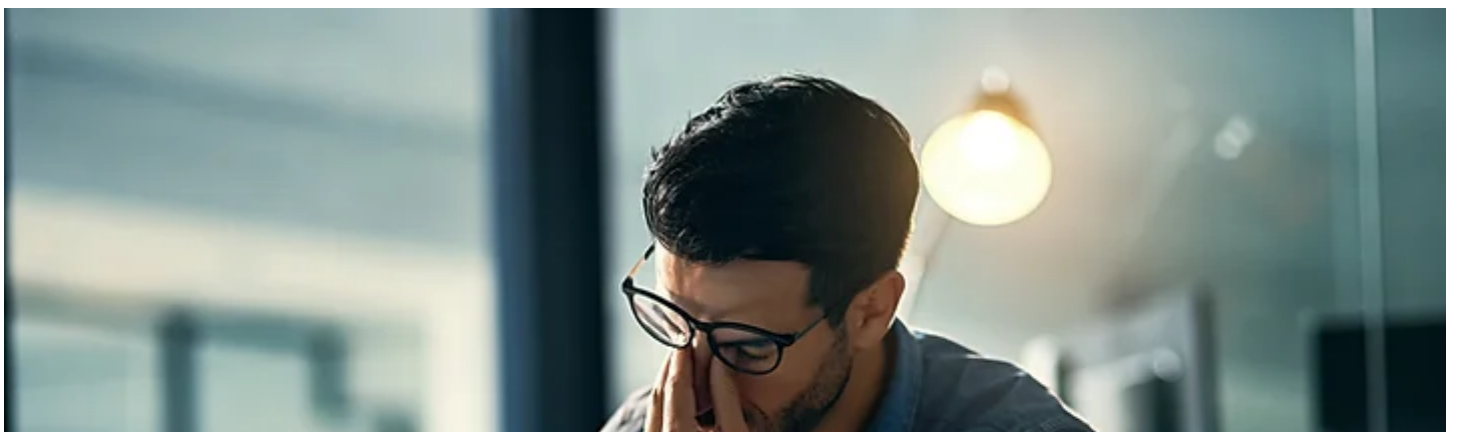
Stress manifests in different ways and is unique to each individual. It's important to start to identify your own stress response so that you can recognise the moments when a plan and appropriate interventions can be put in place. Symptoms vary from physical aches and pains and frequent illness to cognitive symptoms that may include forgetfulness, pessimism, inability to focus etc.

In our busy lives, it's easy to ignore these symptoms. But if we really stop and think about it, we know stress is bad for us. One of the reasons that we don't take it as seriously as we should is that we have got very good at explaining away or outright ignoring our stress. For example, are you guilty of using any of the following phrases?

- "It's just a busy project. I'll be fine once it's over."
- "I just need a holiday to sort myself out."
- "It will all be worth it when I get promoted."

In the short term, symptoms can appear in our lives; if managed correctly, they can be fleeting stressful episodes that are dealt with and resolved. It's the unmanaged long-term stress that can be catastrophic to our bodies and detrimental to our overall health and well-being.

More often than not, we ignore our stress until we have a wake-up call like a health scare that screams at us to start taking our stress a lot more seriously than we have done in the past. So let's not wait until the breakdown; let's do something about it now.



Your very own stress management plan

The 1-1-1 Plan is a simple-to-use stress management tool that gets you to plan and effectively use the time you have following a stressful incident. The Plan asks you to outline what you would do if you had 1 minute, 1 hour and 1 day to manage and recover from stress.

The 1-minute plan

This Plan can be crucial in a scenario where you have a stressful meeting and you have one minute to feel better before your next call. Consider examples that will quickly appeal to your senses and that will instantly make you feel better.

Examples:

- Save your favourite song and play the chorus
- Have a photo on your desk that instantly makes you smile
- Save your favourite uplifting quote as a note on your phone

The 1-hour plan

In one hour, you need to create physical changes to signal to your body that you are no longer stressed. During this time, we need to activate our parasympathetic nervous system, we use this part of our nervous system to promote relaxation and recovery. It does this by slowing our heart and breathing rates and reducing our blood pressure. You may find during your lunch break; you can use this time to relax and recharge before taking on the next part of your work day.

Examples:

- Get into the fresh air and go for a walk
- Carry out a breathing exercise
- Take a bath or shower

The 1-day Plan

In this time period, think of activities that support the core elements of stress. These are factors that if managed correctly, can support and raise our long-term resilience when it comes to managing stress. The four core elements include sleep, nutrition, physical activity and environment. For instance, Sundays can be a great day to implement some of these examples before the start of the next work week.

Examples:

- Commit to having 7-9hrs of sleep
- Eat healthy and nutritious food that is going to make you feel good
- Do a workout that you enjoy and that gives you energy
- Clean and clear your work-from-home office space

Make sure you take note of your own examples for your personalised 1-1-1 Plan. By applying your unique examples, you will learn how to effectively plan and manage stress in a way that works for you.

Need help with your team or workplace stress management and burnout solutions? Click the button to find out more about the bespoke coaching services that are available through KP coaching.

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