

# DEALING WITH STRESS

## WORKSHOP GUIDE



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It is estimated that one third of absence from work is stress related. Other industrial countries report similar findings. Stress represents a very large financial cost to organisations and an equally large personal cost to individuals in the form of physical and behavioural symptoms. This session is all about limiting the factors at work that can lead to damaging stress.

This guide is designed for a manager or a facilitator to deliver a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts Workplace Essentials Series. Each video comes with a series of activities around the following structure:

**LOOK** - watch the video and reflect on the content and message.

**THINK** - activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace.

**REMEMBER** - a summary of the key learning points.

Each section relating to the video will last around 15 minutes.

**ACTION PLAN** - At the end of the series of videos and activities delegates should be encouraged to share the most important actions they will take and record actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

## FEATURED VIDEOS

- Stress & exercise
- Stress & prioritisation
- Stress & delegation

## VIDEO 1 – STRESS & EXERCISE

LOOK (play the video, 3 minutes)

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Pressure is a part of simply being alive; it's positive and drives us towards our goals. However, when the amount of pressure we are experiencing rises above what we believe we can cope with, it can easily turn to stress and that can be a very bad thing.

There is no "answer to a pressure or stress-free life". When pressure spills into stress its effects can be debilitating and potentially life threatening. There are no quick fixes and no pills to take; it's down to you. Look at yourself and how you live your life. Eating a healthy diet, taking regular exercise, and taking time out for yourself can help you battle stress.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Ask the group to discuss how they deal with stress? Suggest the following points to the group;

- Identify the sources of stress in your life. True sources of stress aren't always obvious, and it's all too easy to overlook stress-inducing thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- There is no one size fits all solution to stress, but a good start is to focus on what makes you feel calm. This might be a session in the gym for some, a long walk for others or knitting...we're all different. Find something that helps calm your mind. Do something you enjoy every day and make the time to do it.

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health:

### **Exercise regularly**

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week.

### **Eat a healthy diet**

Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.

### **Reduce caffeine and sugar**

Reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate and sugary snacks in your diet will help you feel more relaxed and sleep better.

### **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs**

Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.

### **Get enough sleep**

Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

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- Exercise regularly.

## VIDEO 2 – STRESS & PRIORITISATION

### LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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When your priorities aren't right, you can cause stress in the workplace. You can reduce your own stress by managing your time and prioritising your workload.

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Ask the group to think about what you can do to reduce stress in yourself and those around you?

Suggest the following method to the group, in order to learn to prioritise your time. Decide on which tasks are important, urgent, non-important and non-urgent. Use the scaling and important versus urgent models to help:

#### **Scaling from “1-10”**

- Prioritizing tasks via a scale from 1 - very important to 10 - unimportant can help you to create a simple to-do-list with the most important tasks at the top of it.
- The advantage is that such a scaled list can be created in short amounts of time, but it also lacks precision.

#### **Important versus urgent**

- Important items are activities that help you and your team achieve goals. These will include projects and tasks that contribute to you and your team's success.
- Urgent activities demand immediate attention.

### REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

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- Scale from 1-10.
- Categorise as urgent versus important.

## VIDEO 3 – STRESS & DELEGATION

### LOOK (play, video 3 minutes)

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Believing that you can do your workload better and faster with fewer mistakes without help from anyone else is not only arrogant, but leads to a vicious cycle of too little time and too much to do. Giving your team tasks to help you with your workload will reduce your stress and show that you trust your employees.

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Do you often find yourself overwhelmed at work? What's the best way to delegate some of your work to trusted people in your team?

Suggest to the group that they can decide what to delegate and when. Know when you should ask your team to perform certain tasks and make decisions. Once you know which tasks are appropriate to delegate, it's much easier to decide to whom – and how – to delegate.

Base your decisions on:

- **Time** – Give yourself enough time to delegate (through instruction and support). And enough time to make corrections if needed.
- **Availability** – Find people with the necessary skills and expertise to complete the job successfully.
- **Criticality** – Is the work critical to the success of the project or the organisation? High profile tasks that have a low tolerance for mistakes are often better done yourself.

### REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

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- Communicate, don't isolate yourself.
- Delegate.

## DEALING WITH STRESS – ACTION PLAN

Remind the group of the key learning points from this session.

Divide the group into pairs. Ask each member of the group to identify one specific action they will take to apply what they have learned when they return to work.

Ask for two or three examples. Bring the session to a close.