



“Let’s Talk Health”

Stress & Fatigue

DISCUSSION AID 

INTRODUCTION

This talk has been developed to assist the person facilitating the “Let’s talk health” week topic on stress and fatigue.

It provides pointers to get the conversation started and is not a full explanation of all health and safety requirements, related to this subject, and should not be relied upon as such.

So, who can tell me what is Stress?

Stress develops when a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Being under pressure is a normal part of life. It can help you take action, feel more energised and get results. But if you often become overwhelmed by stress, these feelings could start to be a problem for you. Stress, including work related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. Stress can hit anyone at any level of any business.

What do you think generally causes stress in people?

The main factors which may lead to stress are:

- Being under lots of pressure or facing big changes.
- Worrying about something and going through times of uncertainty.
- Not having much or any control over the outcome of a situation.
- Having responsibilities that you’re finding overwhelming.
- Not having enough work, activities or stimulation in your life.



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Does anyone have any ideas on how stress could affect you or someone you know?

Stress can leave you feeling:

- Irritable, aggressive, impatient or wound up.
- Over-burdened, anxious, nervous or afraid.
- Like your thoughts are racing and you can’t switch off.
- Unable to enjoy yourself.
- Depressed and uninterested in life and often neglected or lonely.
- Like you’ve lost your sense of humour.
- A sense of dread or worried about your health.

Who can offer some examples of the best ways to relieve stress?

Be active - Exercise will reduce some of the emotional intensity that you’re feeling, clearing our thoughts and letting you deal with your problems more calmly.

Take control - The act of taking control is in itself empowering, and it’s a crucial part of finding a solution that satisfies you and not someone else.

Connect with people - A good support network of colleagues, friends and family can ease your work troubles and help you see things in a different way.



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How you can help and support someone who is stressed?

Help them to recognise there’s a problem - It’s easier to spot signs of stress in other people than it is to see them in ourselves. And often people don’t want to admit, even to themselves, that they’re starting to struggle. So, help them to recognise there’s a problem.

Listen - Talking things through openly with someone we trust can help us see things differently and find new solutions. Even just knowing that somebody is there to listen can make a huge difference. Giving someone who is feeling stressed your time and undivided attention is one of the best things you can do to support them.

Offer reassurance - When feeling overwhelmed, it can be difficult to see a way out of a problem. Reminding and reassuring someone that it won’t last forever and that the situation can improve, may help them keep things in perspective.

Who can describe what fatigue is?

Fatigue occurs when a person develops an overall feeling of tiredness or lack of energy. It isn’t the same as simply feeling drowsy or sleepy. When fatigued you have no motivation or energy. Being sleepy may be a symptom of fatigue, but it’s not the same thing.



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Does anyone know what are the main causes of fatigue are?

Common work issues that can cause fatigue can include:

- **Shift work** – the human body is designed to sleep during the night. This pattern is set by a small part of the brain known as the circadian clock. Shift work confuses the circadian clock by being continuously active when the body is programmed to be asleep.
- **Poor work practices** – can add to a person’s level of fatigue. These may include long work hours, hard physical labour, irregular working hours (such as rotating shifts), a stressful work environment and working alone with little or no interaction with others.
- **Workplace stress** – can be caused by a wide range of factors including job dissatisfaction, heavy workload, conflicting or changing priorities, clashes with bosses or colleagues, bullying, constant change, or threats to job security.

Who can tell us what the main symptoms of fatigue are?

Fatigue can cause a wide range of physical, mental and emotional symptoms including:

- Slow reflexes and responses
- Chronic tiredness or sleepiness and low motivation
- Headaches, dizziness & blurry vision
- Weak, sore or aching muscles
- Impaired decision-making and judgement
- Reduced immune system function and short-term memory issues.



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Who can offer ideas on what changes can be made to help reduce fatigue?

A number of measures can help lessen fatigue caused by daily activities. To help boost your energy levels and overall health:

- Practice healthy eating habits and drink enough fluids to stay hydrated.
- Exercise on a regular basis and also take part in relaxing activities, such as breathing exercise.
- Avoid known stressors and get enough sleep.
- Avoid a work or social schedule that’s overly demanding.
- Reduce or abstain from alcohol, smoking, and other illicit drugs.

Does anyone have any suggestions on treating fatigue?

Fatigue is a symptom – It’s something you can feel and describe, it’s not a condition or disease. To reduce fatigue, you first need to understand what the underlying reasons are, is it ongoing stress, long hours, lack of sleep, etc? If fatigue is having a negative effect on the quality of life, or causing distress, then consider speaking with a health professional. By asking questions, they will work out why an individual is experiencing fatigue and offer some suggestions on how to find relief.