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COUNSELLING
CENTRE

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Your Mental Health Matters

Support, Understanding
and Positive Change



Compassionate care.
Professional support.
Stronger together.

How to Manage Stress When You Feel Overwhelmed

Practical strategies for managing pressure and restoring balance



Individual
Support



Relationship
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Mental Wellness
& Growth

SAFE SPACE. REAL CONVERSATIONS. LASTING CHANGE.

How to Manage Stress When You Feel Overwhelmed

Stress is a normal part of life. Deadlines, family responsibilities, financial pressures, work demands and unexpected life events can all contribute to feeling stressed. In small amounts, stress can motivate us to take action. However, ongoing stress can affect our physical health, emotional wellbeing and ability to cope with everyday life.

What Is Stress?

Stress is your body's natural response to challenges or demands. While the fight, flight or freeze response can be helpful in emergencies, prolonged stress can leave you feeling mentally and physically exhausted.

Common Signs of Stress

Physical	Headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, upset stomach, increased heart rate and changes in appetite.
Emotional	Feeling overwhelmed, irritability, anxiety, mood swings, feeling tearful and low motivation.
Thinking	Racing thoughts, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, constant worrying and indecision.

Identify Your Stress Triggers

Common triggers include work or study, finances, relationships, parenting, health concerns, major life changes and trying to do too much. Keeping a journal can help identify patterns.

Focus on One Thing at a Time

Break large tasks into smaller steps, prioritise what is most important and complete one task before moving to the next.

Learn to Say No

Set healthy boundaries, decline extra responsibilities when needed, ask for help and protect your time and energy.

Make Time to Recharge

Include activities such as walking, reading, exercise, hobbies, spending time in nature or connecting with supportive people.

Practical Ways to Reduce Everyday Stress

Managing stress is often most effective when you combine practical problem-solving with habits that support your body, thoughts and relationships.

Calm Your Body

Practise slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, gentle stretching, mindfulness or meditation.

Challenge Unhelpful Thinking

Ask yourself what you can control, what evidence supports your thoughts and what the most realistic outcome might be.

Look After Your Physical Health

Aim for regular sleep, nutritious meals, hydration, exercise and limit alcohol and excessive caffeine.

Stay Connected

Talk to trusted family or friends, share how you're feeling and accept support when it is offered.

When to Seek Professional Support

Consider counselling if stress feels constant or overwhelming, affects your sleep, work, relationships or everyday functioning.

When You Feel Overwhelmed: Try This

1. Pause	Take a moment to notice what you are feeling without trying to solve everything at once.
2. Prioritise	Identify the single most important or manageable task in front of you.
3. Act	Take one small, realistic step, then reassess what needs your attention next.

Key Takeaways

Stress may be unavoidable at times, but the way you respond to pressure can make a meaningful difference to your wellbeing.

- Recognise your stress triggers.
- Focus on one step at a time.
- Set healthy boundaries.
- Prioritise self-care.
- Challenge unhelpful thoughts.
- Stay connected.
- Seek professional support when needed.

Professional online counselling for individuals and couples across Australia.

"Managing stress isn't about eliminating every challenge—it's about developing the skills and confidence to respond to life's pressures in healthier, more balanced ways."

Melbourne Counselling Centre