

The off switch for work stress

Most of us naturally take on and respond to the increasing priorities from life, whether it is from family, children, social, or personal needs. Combine this with the demands in the workplace such as deadlines, high workloads, long hours, and high expectations from managers and clients. We may not notice the impact that these stressors are having on our health and well-being until they really take their toll.

Work stress and burnout may look different for everyone. Here are a few of the signs:

- Rumination- repetitive, intrusive, involuntary thoughts about work.
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Insomnia or sleep difficulties
- Low moods
- Feeling anxious or nervous
- Frustration or irritability
- Difficulties concentrating or focussing at work
- Withdrawal from usual activities
- Withdrawal from friends and loved ones
- Becoming sick with common viruses more often
- Physical signs such as chest pain, headaches/migraines, heart palpitations, dizziness (it is a good idea to check with your GP if you are experiencing these symptoms)

Take a step back and put yourself first

Studies show that what we do in our spare time away from work, can play a large role in buffering stressors and creating a positive mood state so that we are ready to face the next day.

- Try to incorporate a regular recreational activity after work that will allow you to 'reset'. This could be something small such as making the most of your drive home- think about playing some music or a podcast that will take your mind off work and relax you for the rest of the evening. You might want to take a slight detour on the 'scenic route' on the way home. Other ideas could be exercise, yoga/meditation, reading on the bus ride home, having a shower or hot bath, walking the dog, or catching up with friends for a quick drink.
- Try not to hold onto negative thoughts, or become caught up in the 'what if' pattern of thinking. Dwelling on things that are outside of your control take up a lot of time and energy. Constructively express and discuss your thoughts with someone you trust. Your EAP provider can also be a great place to start.
- Take up a hobby that you have always thought about but never got around to. Learn a new language. Taking up a new activity can be a great form of stress relief and a confidence builder.
- Spend time with family or friends and share positive experiences of the day. More often than not, we tend to hold on to the negative experiences of our day and forget about what went well. Try to recount what was positive in your day and share those stories with your loved ones.
- Make time for yourself. While spending time with others can be a great stress reliever, make sure you balance the time out with some quiet time to yourself.
- Schedule leave. If your annual leave has been adding up, maybe it's time to book some leave and organise a holiday.
- Try to leave your work at work. Turn off your work phone. Don't check your work emails. If you do need to do work at home, schedule time aside for work and for relaxation and stick firmly to the limits set.

If you have been feeling stressed for more than two weeks, or you have felt sad or down, or lost interest in activities that you used to enjoy, contact Human Psychology on 1300 277 924 for a confidential appointment.

