



Mindfulness & Stress





- 01 Understanding stress
- 02 How to relax
- 03 Diet and stress
- 04 Your own personal "Relaxation Plan"

You will need: Pen, Paper



Understanding stress





## Under- standing stress

### Definitions

**Stress** is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something. This worry in your mind can have physical effects too.

**Tension** is similar to stress; it is a state of worry or nervousness.

**Mindfulness** is taking notice of how your body feels and what your mind is doing.

We all feel stressed at times. Stress is not necessarily a bad thing; it gives us energy and mobilises us to do things. However, too much stress can lead to a range of health problems, including upset stomach, headaches and even heart disease.



Under-  
standing  
stress

## Knowing ourselves

Since mindfulness is taking notice of how your body feels and what your mind is doing, it is often very useful to reflect on experiences that have made us stressful in the past.

Task:

Make a list of things / situations that cause you stress and / or tension, together with how this makes you feel e.g. sick / worried.

With a partner, compare your lists and identify any that you might have in common. Why might this be?





How to relax



## How to relax

### Reflecting on your own way

Learning how to relax properly is key to coping well with stress and tension.

However, everyone has slightly different strategies for doing this.

Task:

How do you best relax?

How have you seen others relax?

List as many different activities that people do to combat stress and tension.



## How to relax

### Learning a new technique

**Breathing exercises** are an important part of practising mindfulness.

One technique is called **deep breathing**. We will show you how to do this on the next slide.

It will be tricky to do it properly in a classroom, but try not to be too distracted by what's around you, and instead focus only on your breathing.





# How to Relax



- Inhale slowly and deeply, filling your chest with air.  
Count five seconds to yourself  
"one and two and three and four and five"  
Imagine your chest slowly filling with air.  
Your stomach should expand.
- When you have inhaled fully, hold your breath for another five seconds, again counting to yourself  
"one and two and three and four and five"  
This should be just a comfortable pause.
- Let the air out through your mouth slowly for a final five seconds  
"one and two and three and four and five"  
Let as much air as you can out of your lungs.  
Feel yourself relaxing as you do.  
Feel your shoulders, chest and diaphragm letting go and imagine releasing all the tension.

How to  
Relax

2008





Diet and stress

NGS

## Diet and stress

# Eating your way to relaxation

Stress triggers a set of biological responses including:

- The release of **stress hormones** from your adrenal glands - adrenaline and cortisol.
- An increase in **blood sugar**.
- Rising **blood pressure**.
- Rapid **heart beat**.

So how can our diet help?

Eating a balanced and healthy diet is key to helping our bodies manage the physiological changes caused by stress.

Since the hormonal response is significantly influenced by blood sugar levels, we can change our diet to help stabilise the levels of sugar in our blood.





## Diet and stress



### Top tips:

- Ensure a minimum of **five portions of vegetables per day**
- Start the day with a balanced **breakfast**. Avoid sugary cereals, pastries and too much caffeine.
- **Protein** helps to slow the release of sugar into the bloodstream, so eat lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, nuts or seeds in each meal.
- **Don't skip meals**. Small, regular meals will help to maintain energy levels and mood, while decreasing tiredness and irritability.
- Avoid highly refined foods such as white bread, pasta, chocolate, biscuits, sweets or foods with **added sugars**.
- Watch the **caffeine**, and aim to drink at least 1-1.5 litres of water throughout the day.
- Try not to reach for food when you are in a **stressed state**. Stress diverts blood flow away from your digestive system, so you may experience bloating, gas and discomfort.

## Eating your way to relaxation

Task:

How many of the top tips apply to you?

- Five portions of fruit/vegetables per day
- Balanced breakfast
- Protein in each meal
- Don't skip meals
- Avoid added sugars
- Watch the caffeine
- Drink 1-1.5 litres of water throughout the day
- Avoid reaching for food in a stressed state

How could you change one thing for the better?





Your own personal "Relaxation Plan"



Your own  
personal  
"Relaxation  
Plan"

## Your Personal Relaxation Plan

Based on all the above information, you can now create a **Personal Relaxation Plan** that you can follow easily, and that will help you deal with stress and tension without it taking you over.

Task: Create your own guide to dealing with stress (make it personal to you).

You should include the following:

- Identifying your own stress 'triggers' and their effects
- Diet
- Exercise
- Sleep time
- Relaxation techniques
- Writing a journal - keep an eye on how these changes are helping.





[wearencs.com](http://wearencs.com)