



# COPING UNDER QUARANTINE; **STRESS**





## INTRODUCTION TO STRESS

i'm at the end of my tether  
it's hard to relax  
constant headache  
i'm tired & irritable  
**don't finish tasks**  
no time for myself  
one crisis after the next  
stomach problems  
can't stop worrying

Recognise those statements? You might be stressed.

A completely natural response, stress is essentially a build up of pressure. It's our bodies response to feeling under threat, it's not dangerous, and in fact, some stress is good for us and motivating.

However, when this stress is sustained over a long period, we can experience a more severe reaction, and this is very bad for our health.



# CAUSES & SIGNS OF STRESS

Stress can be a very subjective topic, it can vary from person to person. Stress can be the culmination of one or two significant life events or a series of smaller changes that build up over time. Usually, it's both.

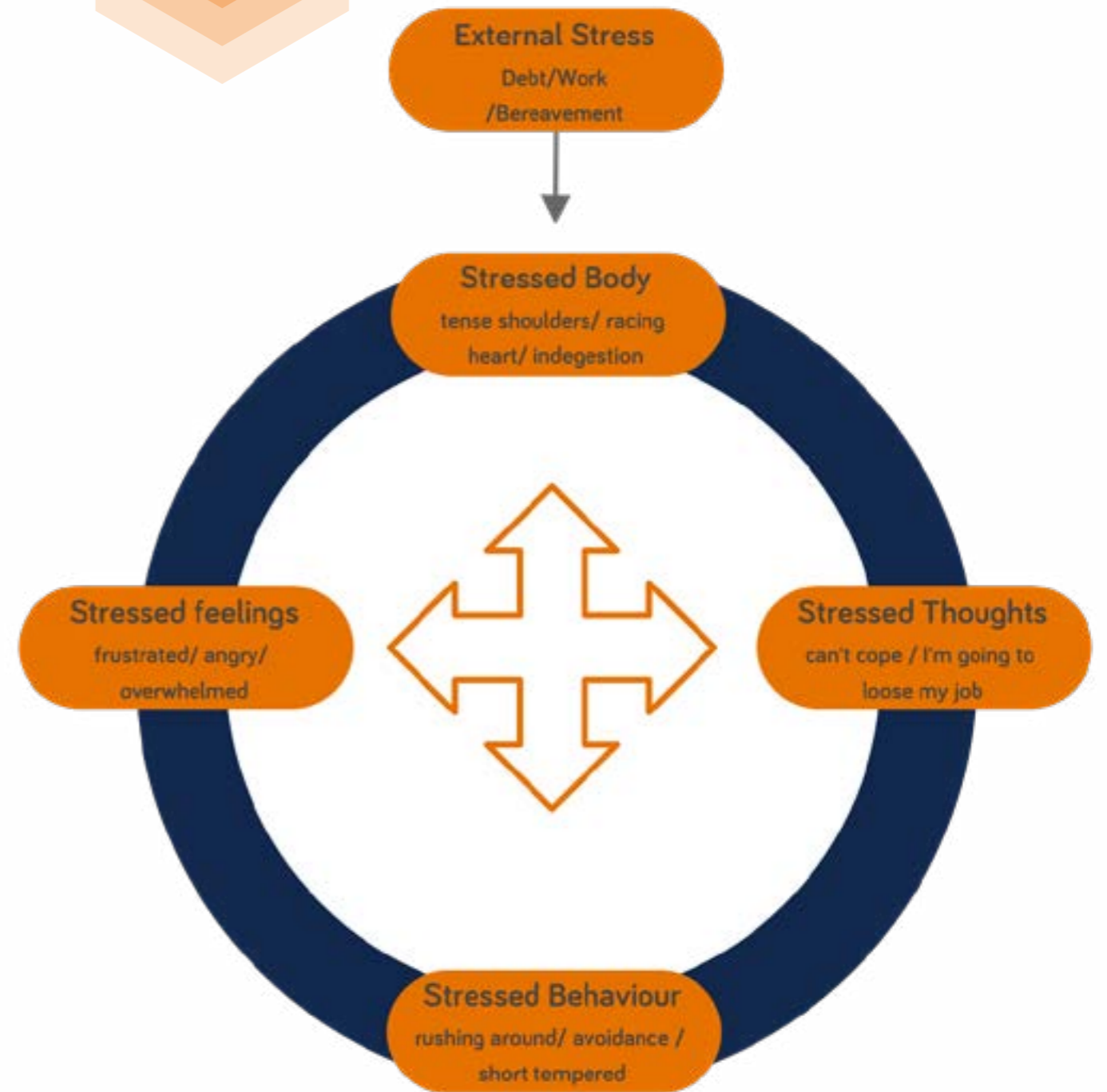
There are two types of stress

## 1. External Stress

These are events and situations that happen to you. Some examples of external stressors include: Major life changes. These changes can be positive, such as a new marriage, a planned pregnancy, a promotion or a new house. Or they can be negative, such as the death of a loved one or a divorce.

## 2. Internal Stress

The sources of stress that are inside us and are often the most common source. They are the thoughts and feelings that pop into your head and cause you to feel unease, these can include unrealistic expectations, uncertainties, low self esteem and apprehensions.





## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF STRESS

As we have mentioned, stress varies from person to person. The physical symptoms we experience are likely due to our ancient survival strategy, the 'Fight or Flight' response. This response sees a release of cortisol and adrenaline into our bodies.

The pressures we experience nowadays are actually made worse by this response. You cannot fight or flee debt, deadlines or stressful life events.

But we can escape the Coronavirus by staying in doors and severely limiting our social interactions. Do your part!

Unfortunately due to this response, a lot of people can interpret it as a severe physical or mental condition. This response is not dangerous, and is very common.

Stress can affect us both physically and emotionally. Do you recognise any of these?

When stressed, people commonly have these physical symptoms

- Frequent headaches
- Muscle tension
- Churning stomach
- Sweating
- Blurred vision or tired eyes
- Feeling sick
- Dry mouth

When stressed, people commonly have these emotional symptoms

- Angry, irritable and wound up
- Anxious and full of dread
- Unhappy, upset and tearful
- Lacking in interest
- Overwhelmed and frustrated
- Guilty and worthless

If you recognise some of these, you may be stressed.



## MANAGING STRESS

One of the first things to be affected by stress is our body, so it makes sense we look at physical management strategies first.

Controlled breathing, deep muscle relaxation, mindful breathing and relaxation are all great methods of reducing the physical symptoms of stress.

### 1) Controlled Breathing

- Choose a time of day when you feel most relaxed
- with your eyes closed, concentrate on your breath for a few minutes.
- Now, pretend you're filling up a bottle from top to bottom. Feel your stomach rise first, then your chest (In - Two, Three | Out - Two Three)

Controlled breathing can be used any time, anywhere to switch off the body's stress response.

### 2) Deep Muscle Relaxation

The following method is a great way to relax your muscles and reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety.

1. First, find a warm, quiet place to lay down and start to focus on your breathing, inhale for two-three seconds, hold for two seconds and exhale in two-three seconds.
2. The next phase of this technique takes you through relaxing different parts of the body. Teaching you to first tense the muscle studying its effect and how it affects other parts of the body. Then you relax the muscle and notice the tension slowly releasing. Remember that feeling.
3. You must stick to the same order as you work through the muscle groups.

**Hands** - Clench fist, then relax.

**Arms** - Bend elbows and tense arms, hold for a few seconds then relax.

**Neck** - Press your head back, roll it from side to side slowly, then return to a normal position.

**Face** - The face has lots of muscles, but focus on the forehead and jaw. First, lower your eyebrows in a frown, then relax. Do the same but raising the eyebrows. Now, clench your jaw.

**Chest** - Take in a deep breathe, hold for a few seconds, notice the tension, now relax, letting your breathing return to normal and repeat.

**Stomach** - Tense your stomach muscles as tight as you can, hold and relax.

**Buttocks** - Squeeze your buttocks together, and relax.

**Legs** - Straighten your legs and bend your feet towards your face, wriggle your toes, then relax.

**Make sure you practice as much as you can!**



## MANAGING STRESS

### 3) Mindful Breathing

A form of meditation, mindfulness helps you be present in the moment. It's about observing what is happening with calm, non-judging awareness. It can be a very useful tool for not getting carried away with your thoughts. There are lots of studies that show mindfulness can help reduce worry and anxiety.



The following mindful breathing exercise can be helpful:

- Find a quiet place, sit up straight and close your eyes focus on the rhythm of your breathing, the gentle, natural pace of your breath going in and out.
- You will find thoughts popping into your head, and that's fine, that's natural. Let the thoughts come in, notice them and then bring your attention back to your breathing.
- You may notice sounds, physical feelings and even emotions, but just bring your attention back to your breathing.
- It's important not to follow your thoughts down a rabbit hole, don't judge yourself for having them or read into them too much. Just acknowledge the thoughts and let them drift off, focusing back on your breathing.

The more you practice these exercises, the more it will help you to manage your anxiety. If you are really struggling, We recommend 15-20 minutes a day.



## MANAGING STRESS

### 3) Exercise

Regular exercise benefits both your physical and psychological health and it's great for relaxation, stress relief and physical tension.

Hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, released during stressful events, are reduced through exercise. However, when we exercise, chemicals like serotonin and endorphins are released, which are the bodies natural feel-good hormones.

It's recommended that you are active atleast 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You don't have to join a gym to get more active, a simple brisk walk or cycle can just as good.

The main thing is you find something you enjoy doing and develop a routine. Check out our **Let's Get Physical Resource** for free home workouts and tips on exercise.





## BEATING STRESS

Health and self care are very important

Organise yourself as best you can, it helps with stress levels

Work may be the problem, ask for help

Try not to take on too much

Own up to yourself that you are feeling stressed

Be in the moment where possible, don't dwell on the past or future

Eat a balanced diet

Alcohol does not help!

Time for things you value is so important, make time for them.

Solve your problems, don't bury your head

Talk things over with friends, partners, family.

Relaxation

Exercising regularly is a great stress buster

Say no and don't feel guilty

Seek professional help if all else fails

We hope this resource has helped you, if you need any further resources around mental and physical wellbeing, please visit our

**[Business continuity and keeping your employees engaged through Covid-19](#)**

page on our website, you will find everything we offer our clients employee's there, for free during this time. We hope you get some comfort and value from these.

Stay safe, stay healthy, stay at home.

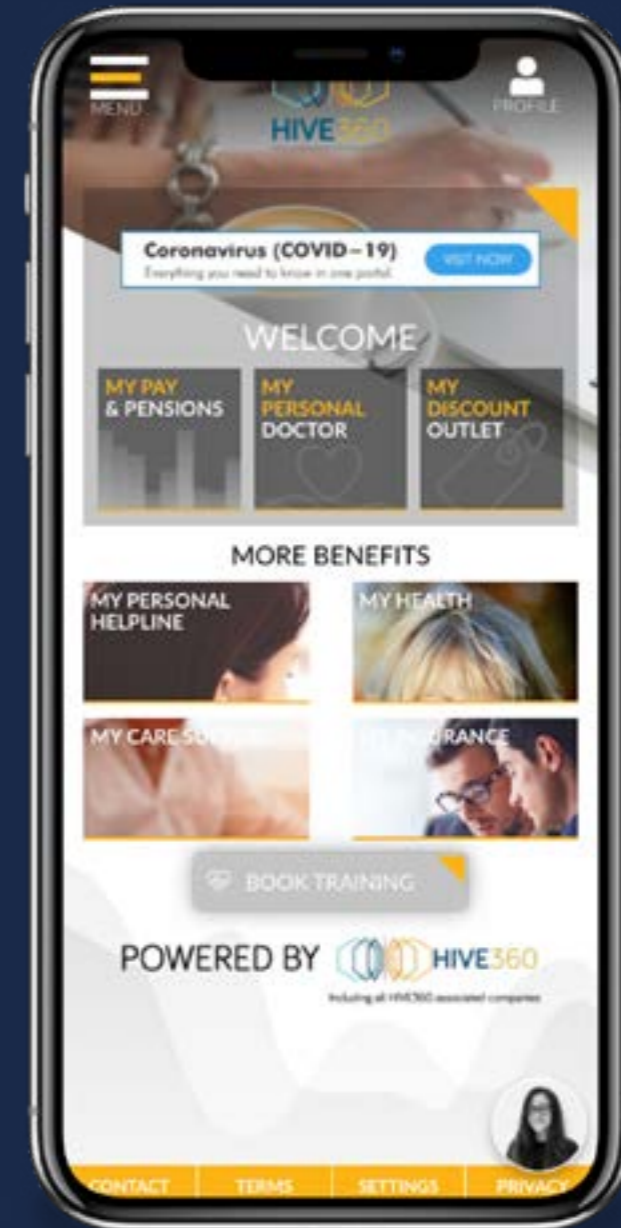


## WHO ARE HIVE360?

Hive360 empowers businesses of all sizes to achieve better engagement with their people.

We believe that everyone deserves the best work-life experience and that great communication, wellbeing support and financial benefits are the cornerstones of this.

Our game-changing engagement platform delivers better communication, vital healthcare support and attractive lifestyle benefits in the palm of your hand.





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