



## Stress Scales



Stress is our emotional and physical response to pressure. We feel there are too **many** demands, and too few resources to cope. That pressure can arise from external factors including life events, illness (ourselves or someone close to us) living conditions, work, home and family, study, lack of some necessity, or the demands we place on ourselves. Even those events which we see as enjoyable can be stressful, such as holidays, moving home, starting a better job, pregnancy, parenthood, Christmas etc. If our demands outweigh our ability to cope, we start to become stressed. This becomes evident within our thinking, behaving, and how we feel.

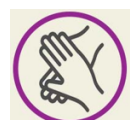
## Thoughts which are common when feeling stressed

- This is too much - I can't cope!
- It's so unfair.
- there's not enough time in the day
- I'll never get this done
- I must get this done...
- What's the point?



## Emotions

- Irritable
- Anxious
- Impatient
- Angry
- Depressed
- Hopeless



## Physical sensations

The physical response to stress is caused by the body's adrenaline response - the body's alarm signal and survival mechanism when faced with a threat.

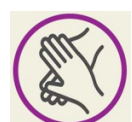
- Heart racing
- Breathing faster
- Tense muscles - e.g., neck, shoulders, abdomen
- Hot, sweaty
- Difficulty concentrating/rapid thinking
- Agitated, restless



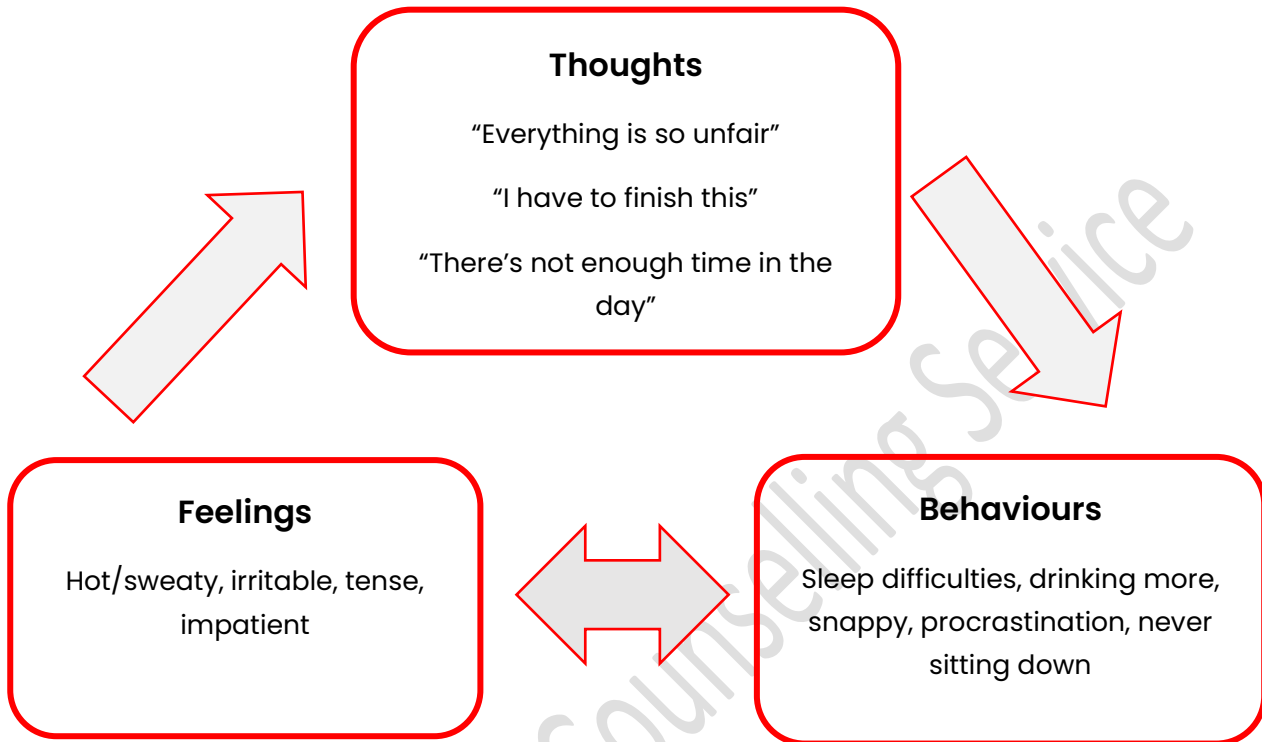
## Behaviour

Sometimes stress is recognisable by the things we do or don't do. We tend to revert to these behaviours when encounter lots of problems and feel unable to cope.

- Unable to settle, constantly busy, rushing about
- Lots of things on the go, but don't finish them
- Sleep problems
- Shouting, arguing
- Eating more (or less)
- Drinking more
- Smoking more
- Crying



## The Vicious Cycle of Stress



### Doing things differently (reducing demands and increasing coping resources)

- Ask for help
- Make the most out of your lunchbreaks, e.g., Eat something nice, go for a walk, spend time outside or in a different room
- Find a type of exercise which is enjoyable
- Focus more on the problems you can do something about, rather than worries that are out of your control
- Make time for a creative hobby or interest which you may have been neglecting
- Shake away negative energy by dancing whilst performing mundane tasks
- Make sure you are hydrated and select food which give you energy rather than heavy food that makes you feel lethargic
- Reduce your alcohol intake



- If you notice you haven't sat down for a while, try a 5-minute relaxation or mindfulness exercise
- Reduce habitual scrolling on social media and/or screen time in general
- Consider delegating some responsibilities to others and say no to demands you cannot handle right now

## Prompts for challenging stressful thinking

- Am I confusing a fact with an opinion?
- What is the evidence for the negative thought?
- What is the evidence against the negative thought?
- Are there any small things that contradict the thought?
- Perhaps things that I am discounting as unimportant?
- Are these thoughts helpful to me?
- Will thoughts like this help me to achieve my goals?
- Do thoughts like this truly have my best interests at heart
- If a good friend knew I were having this thought, what would they say to me?
- If someone I loved had this thought, what would I tell them? What would Batman say to me about this thought?
- Am I making the mistake of assuming my perspective on this issue is the only one?

