



Stress Buster for Medical Staff

Being a doctor can be stressful. Hardwork, long hours, shifts and dealing with stressed patients and relatives as well as the emotional turmoil of life and death and illness can take its toll. Below are some suggestions for ways to tackle this.

Recognition:

First step to solving the problem is to recognise it. Stress may come across as being irritable or grumpy, tearful, tired, anxious, overly cautious about work or losing the will to do the job properly. You may recognise these signs in friends or colleagues too and it may help you both to support them to recognise and deal with their own stress. There is no shame in being stressed: everyone has periods in their life of stress: the important thing is to recognise it and tackle it.

Beware countertransference! In psychiatric terms this is when the patient feels angry and creates feeling of anger in the clinician dealing with them. Being aware of your feelings when dealing with patients and recognising that you are mirroring their feelings can help you deal with this.

Self Help:

Avoid resorting to alcohol as it is a depressive drug and will only make matters worse. Drugs also to be avoided for obvious reasons! Not least that being in trouble with the GMC will only add to your problems! Also it's easy to get into arguments even with those you love when you're feeling low: try to avoid making things worse for yourself by self-destructive behaviour which will only lead to a downward spiral.

Look after yourself: eating well, sleeping and exercise are important. Talk to friends or family, keep a diary, do things you find enjoyable and relaxing.

Online CBT programs such as "the mood gym" or "living life to the full" can be helpful.

Relaxation methods such as yoga, meditation can help e.g. mindfulness or relaxation courses or CDs.

If problems related to work try talking to colleagues or seniors for advice: sometimes we worry needlessly about minor mistakes or can find ways to make the job less stressful when discussed with others. Speak to your clinical or educational supervisor if struggling. Or come and speak to the Foundation team (Kim, Wendy, Melanie and Linda Whitfield or any of the FPDs (Dr Belderbos, Miss

Gawne or Dr Singh). Avoiding work or doing it badly is likely to have repercussions for your career and add thus to your stress in the long-term so talk to seniors before letting it get to this stage.

Time management: getting organised with your time can help you feel less stressed. Book a time management course or read an article on this.

Conflict resolution and anger management: courses are organised on this through the trust (see trust website). Helpful for dealing with tricky patients or colleagues and also skills useful for your personal life too! We all encounter conflicts both professionally and personally and you can learn skills to manage this for the best outcome.

Further help

For some self-help may not be enough and it is important you go to see professionals for help and advice if you are struggling.

Occupational Health (available in every hospital) offer support for stress. Tel 82990/82295 or 01253732990

Also visit your GP for further advice and treatment if things are not settling. They may consider referral on to counselling or psychiatry services if needed.

Resources:

<http://www.eastlancshealthyminds.nhs.uk> : lots of information on local and national services helplines and self help

Mental health helpline 0500639000

Samaritans 0845 7909090

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk> : information on mindfulness

<http://www.bemindfulonline.com> : online mindfulness course

Mindfulness for Beginners Audio CD – Audiobook, by Jon Kabat-Zinn (Author): various CDs and books by this author

Books: How to Stop worrying and start living by Dale Carnegie

Online Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT):

Moodgym: Online free CBT course <https://moodgym.anu.edu.au>

Free CBT online: living life to the full: <http://www.lltff.com>

Via GP registration: <http://www.beatingtheblues.co.uk>

Alcoholics anonymous: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk> 0845 769 7555 help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk