

How can you recognise when situations are starting to get stressful?

When the pressure builds and starts to get too much we often exhibit a wide variety of symptoms – mental, physical and behavioural. This list is by no means comprehensive, but it should enable you to map out your own stress response and help you to understand that of others.

You might find it helpful to use it as a checklist.

Read through the following and tick off those you recognise in yourself when you're stressed:

Physical symptoms include:

- Altered sleep patterns
- Tiredness & lethargy
- Breathlessness
- Dizziness & light-headedness
- Indigestion / heartburn
- Nausea
- Bowel disturbances (diarrhoea, constipation)
- Headaches
- Muscle tension & pain
- Nervous tics

Mental symptoms include:

- Anxiety & apprehension
- Preoccupation with trivial issues
- Inability to prioritise
- Coping difficulties
- Mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of failure
- Lack of self-worth
- Feelings of isolation

Altered appearance

- Neglecting your appearance
- Looking miserable
- Looking tired
- Looking nervous
- Hunched shoulders
- Tired walk
- Less smiling, joking & laughing
- Looking agitated

Altered habits

- Disturbed eating
- More:
 - Alcohol
 - Caffeine
 - Smoking
 - Absenteeism
 - Tardiness
 - Accidents
 - Taking work home
- Less:
 - Holidays
 - Quality home time
 - Exercise

Altered behaviour

- Irritable and argumentative
- Less sociable
- Less friendly
- Memory problems
- Poor decision making
- Hypercritical and/or inflexible
- Tendency to over-react
- Loss of interest
- Poor performance
- Excessive multi-tasking
- Starting new tasks; never finish old tasks
- A who cares attitude



