



Worksheet

Tank on empty?

- This worksheet will help you identify what stress looks like for you and the warning signs to look out for
- Stress can come in small or large doses and can resolve quickly or build up over time. Understanding how much impact stress is having on you is important so you can get the right supports to minimise any harmful effects on the health of your mind, body, relationships and wairua
- We all have different reactions to situations, and what it looks like when we are experiencing stress can range widely
- Understanding your reactions to stress helps you know what the right response will be

Our reactions to stress can be obvious – a pounding heart, sweating, racing thoughts.

However, sometimes when the things that cause us stress are compounded over time, or are lots of small things, we may miss these warning signs. Sometimes, we have been experiencing the signs of stress for so long we see them as normal.

Recognising stress early ^{1,2,3,4,5}

Recognising how you experience stress early helps you take steps to reduce the negative effects of the stress response. Identifying what is causing you to feel stressed helps you work out what you need to do to take the most effective steps in those situations.

What are some of the warning signs of stress?

Worries, overthinking issues,
being stuck on issues

Losing your zest for life; losing
interest in family, friends or work

Changes in your sleeping patterns

Nervous 'twitches' or muscle spasms

Indigestion, stomach upsets

Pains in lower back, chest, shoulders,
joints or other parts of the body

Skin itches or rashes for
no apparent reason



Frequent colds or flu

Shortness of breath or
shallow breathing

Memory or concentration problems

Feeling anxious and tense
for no obvious reason

Finding it hard to make decisions

Tearfulness for no apparent reason

Feeling impatient or irritable

Losing confidence

Running on empty?

The cause of the stress is already draining your tank and often the symptoms take more fuel to manage. Getting support to help you refuel, resolve issues and have time to recover (by turning on your relaxation response) will help reduce the signs of stress and minimise the harm.

Any persistent symptoms should be checked by a health professional.

Chronic, extreme or traumatic stress may result in severe impacts such as:

- Burnout or fatigue
- Insomnia – not being able to sleep
- Hypertension – high blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Anxiety, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Self-harm or harmful behaviour
- Lashing out at others in emotionally or physically violent outbursts
- Feeling powerless and/or lack of meaning in life and pursuits
- Taking illegal or unsafe drugs

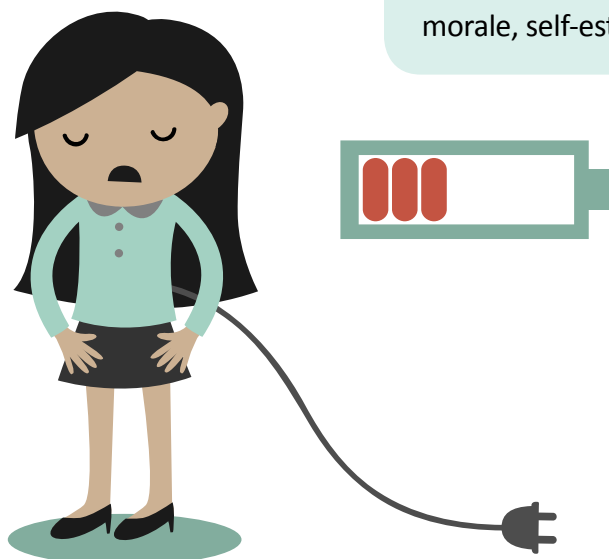
These are signs your tank is running very low. It is very important that you get appropriate support and advice with any of the issues above. Support can help you minimise the negative impacts and support recovery to happen faster than doing it on your own. [Getting help and advice fact sheet](#)

Chronic job stress / 'burnout' ^{6,7,8,9}

Chronic job stress over time can lead to physical, mental and emotional fatigue and eventually 'burnout' due to the effort of coping with and managing increasing demands. It can negatively affect people's feelings, attitudes, motivations and expectations. Fatigue and burnout impact people's physical and mental health and are linked to increased absences, injury and lower productivity.

Fatigue = a state of physical and/or mental exhaustion that temporarily causes inability or decreased ability to respond to a situation from being over extended, either mentally, emotionally or physically.

Burnout = Exhaustion (emotional and physical fatigue) + cynicism (loss of feeling or concern for others or increased irritability) + reduced sense of accomplishment (low morale, self-esteem, lower coping ability).



Activity

What does stress look like for me? How do my thoughts, moods or behaviours change when I'm stressed or not coping?

1. Think about when you notice stress in yourself, whether it's a little thing or a big thing. What are some of the different things you notice about the way you feel (emotions), think, how your body reacts (physical) and the things you do (behaviours). Note these down.

Changes in emotions/Taha wairua

(E.g. Getting startled, being afraid or anxious, anger and irritability, sadness, feeling inadequate)

Changes in thinking/Taha hinengaro

(E.g. Difficulty concentrating, remembering and following complex instructions, finding it harder to communicate, having intrusive thoughts)

Physical reactions/Taha tinana

(E.g. Tension, headaches, stomach upsets, sleeping badly, or sleeping too much, rapid heartbeat, shakiness, aches and pains)

Changes in behaviour/Taha whānau

(E.g. Withdrawing from others, using drugs or alcohol to cope, taking risks, stopping your favourite activities)

2. Now look over your lists and highlight the ones you see as warning signs that tell you that you should take action?