

How important is your mental health?

Are you having problems with stress, layoffs, paying your bills, relationships or feeling down? Over 450 million people in the world have mental health issues so you're not alone. Now, a lot of people are having mental health problems like depression and anxiety. Imagine if things were better. Anxiety or depression can get better. There are good ways to cope in bad times. **Managing stress and life triggers are extremely important for mental wellness.**



Stress: Manage it to the Max

Stress can cause many psychological, emotional and/or physical symptoms. Ever heard anyone say, “Try not to get stressed out” or “Don’t worry about it.”? So easy to say and so hard to do! Life is full of small and big obstacles whether it’s dealing with work, family/friends or just things that have just happened out of the ordinary. Even the good times can cause stress.

There are basically two types of stressors: uncontrollable and controllable. Stress that is result of something out of our control is called **uncontrollable triggers**. There is stress that is caused from our own decisions and/or actions called **controllable triggers**. With triggers and mental health issues, a **Stress Action Plan** is necessary.

A **Stress Action Plan** gives guidelines of what to do when there is more stress in life than usual. Stressful event(s) can make mental illness get out of control fast as you probably know. There are *many versions of a Stress Action Plan*. The following is just an example.

Stress Action Plan

- **Try not to do too much.** This could be more work, school or helping out other people
- **Find out WHY you're stressed.** Family/friend issues? Need for more rest? Lack of good diet? More sleep? Not eating well? Mental health issues? Or, combination of factors?
- **Define what real stress would be.** Basically, ask if the current problem is very stressful compared to other things that could happen in life (i.e., loss of a job) so put it in perspective
- **Make and follow a plan** of what to do when feeling stressed
- **Don't do anything in the spare of the moment.** Wait to make decisions. Think then act! **Always remember**, there are consequences of any action

Stress Busters

- **Think about the positive ways stress was handled before and repeat those steps.** WRITE this down so you/loved one don't need to think about it. This will become *second nature after it's written down and reviewed from time to time*
- **There may be several things you need to do when dealing with more stress** which could be 2, 4 or 6 things depending on the cause of the stress
- **Talk to someone about your problem(s)** so you can get ideas of how to deal with certain people, event or situation
- **Keep doing things to lower stress every day** to get good results and **ask for help.** This could be meditation, exercise, rest and eating better or other things you like

My Stress Action Plan

Problem:

Solutions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Problem:

Solutions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Problem:

Solutions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Life Triggers: How to Get Control

A **trigger** is a person, thing or event that can cause symptoms to act up. It would be hard to know all triggers unless those triggers have been experienced before. It might be a good idea to write down some major triggers and think about what was done before to help with symptoms then repeat what helped. Triggers could be things such as stress, family conflicts, work issues or other life problems. **It's best to know what to do before triggers cause symptoms or make them worse.**

Now, life has its ups and downs. Everything can be going great but then **something will happen that can cause symptoms to act up. Sometimes it's the disease process that causes symptoms without any life events. At times, it can be a combination of both of these factors.** Some triggers could include one or more of the following but this can vary from person to person.

Lack of sleep

Increased work hours/working different shifts at work

Loss of job

Feeling down about other parts of life

Loss of someone (family, friends and/or pet)

Divorce/ relationship break-up

Dealing with family, friends and/or co-workers

Daily life stress

Trauma such as an accident

Medication changes

Change in routine

Not working out

Finances

Example: Trigger List

Trigger: Feeling down because of not getting along with family or friends

Solutions:

1. Instead of talking face to face, call/ text or message them to discuss feelings
2. Go out and do something fun
3. Go online for advice or support forum
4. Talk with someone else especially when feeling down. Call provider/therapist if symptoms are getting worse (if you have one)

Trigger: Feeling really anxious because of life, people or other issues

Solutions:

1. Try to relax. *You shouldn't be driving when this happens.*
2. Start deep breathing several times throughout the day
3. Take time off work or school, if possible
4. Take anxiety medication if one is prescribed

Trigger: Feeling overwhelmed with getting things done

Solutions:

1. Prioritize what is most to least important. Focus on the most important tasks first
2. Break down goals into days, weeks or months. Make a checklist and follow it
3. **Ask for help.** This can really help to get things done. We all need help sometime!
4. Talk with someone when feeling swamped to get advice

Trigger List

Trigger:

Solutions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Trigger:

Solutions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Trigger:

Solutions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

We would love to hear from you if you have any questions or feedback about what's important to you.

Shell-It: Better Mental Health

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