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# Relaxation & Switching Off

Factsheet

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## *How does stress affect us?*

We all experience stress in different ways, so it can manifest itself differently from one person to the next.

## *Address your stress*

Everyone has 'bad days', but if you're experiencing negative changes in your health and wellbeing for five days or more, it's important to seek medical advice from your doctor.

**Changes can be emotional, physical or behavioural, or a combination of all three. And if prolonged, can contribute to:**



Heart disease



Diabetes



High blood pressure



Muscle and joint pain



Weakened immune system



Miscarriage



Strokes



Allergies



Irritable Bowel Syndrome



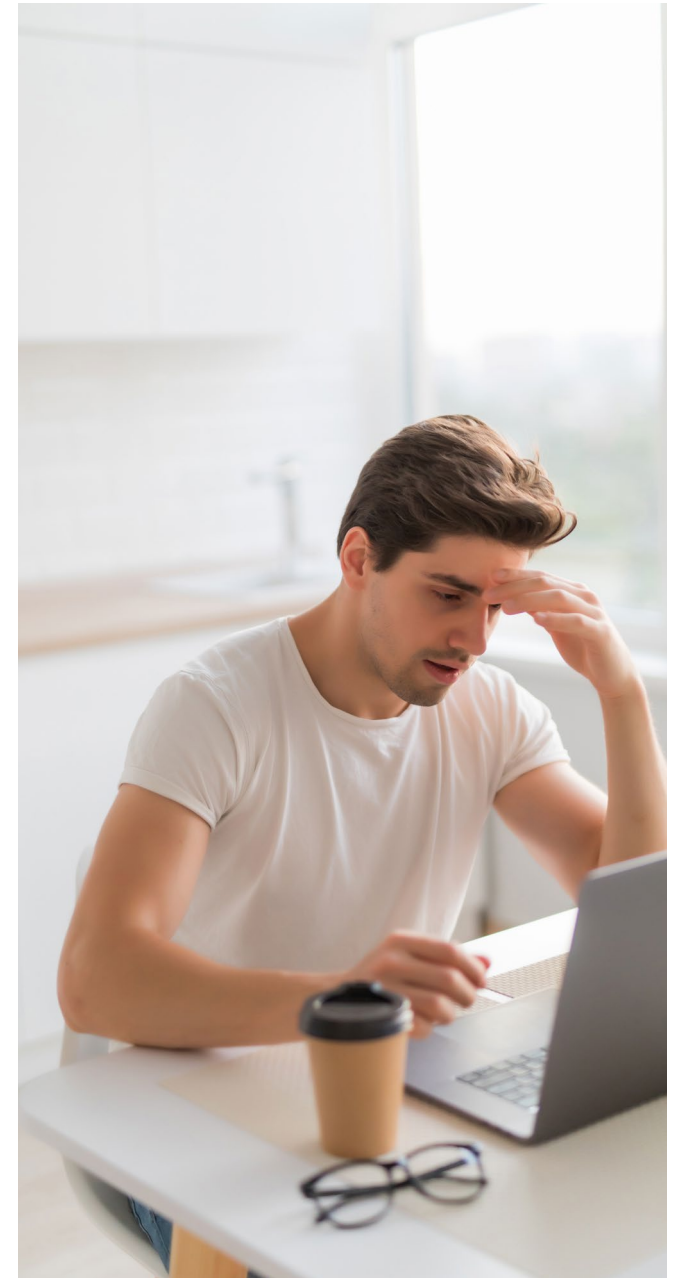
Alopecia



Ulcers



Premature tooth loss



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## *How stressed are you?*

Find out if stress is affecting you with this short quiz. Simply answer yes or no to the following questions.

1. Do you feel that your life is out of control and you have too many things on your plate?
2. Do you often feel confused, anxious, irritable, fatigued, or physically drained?
3. Are you having increased interpersonal conflicts (for example, with your spouse, children, other family members and friends)
4. Do you feel that negative thoughts and feelings are affecting how you function?
5. Is your work or home life no longer giving you pleasure?
6. Do you feel overwhelmed by the demands of emails, messaging, and social media?
7. Do you feel that your life has become a never-ending treadmill?
8. Are you prone to pangs of guilt every time you try to relax?
9. Have you recently experienced a life-altering event?
10. When you're stressed, do you feel that you have nobody to talk to?

**!** If you answered yes to six or more, it's time to take action.



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## *Top stress-busters*

Positive ways to feel more in control and help you relax.



### **Break it down**

Make large tasks more manageable and split them up into smaller ones. you relax.



### **Reflect**

Take time out each day to think about what went well. Write it down.



### **Challenge your thoughts**

Notice when you're thinking negatively. You have the power to turn those thoughts to positive ones. Catch it, check it, change it.



### **Get moving**

Being active will help to burn off nervous energy, and make stress seem less intense.



### **Plan ahead**

Keep a note of stressful events coming up and what you need to do to prepare for them.



### **Speak to someone**

It's good to talk. If you're struggling, chat to a friend, colleague, family member, or helpline.



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## *Why is it important to relax?*

- It encourages a healthy body and healthy mind
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Increases blood flow to your muscles
- Improves your memory
- Time to reflect
- Time to rejuvenate yourself
- Improves your skin

People who relax during the weekend or whenever they get the opportunity are **happier** and are able to **achieve more** than those who do not relax when it's absolutely required.

## *Everyone has their own way of relaxing...*

Here are some ideas:



Meditation



Watching some favourite TV



Deep breathing



Reading books



Going for a walk



Doing exercise



Staying connected to friends using modern technology



In the current climate, can you please ensure you are doing this with social distancing in mind

**When we don't take time to shut off and relax, we are putting our physical health, our mental health and our waistlines at risk. Walking around feeling stressed, can sabotage our chances of leading a healthy life and will also have a negative influence on the lives of those around you.**

*“Never get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life”*

One of the main drivers for mental health issues, is the inability to relax and this can be the cause of anxiety, depression and even panic attacks. A great starting point, is talking about how you're feeling and admitting that you feel stressed about something. Once you recognise this, you can start to take action to change this.

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## *Preparation for quiet relaxation*

- 1 Find a quiet and calm room
- 2 Sit down or lie down, making sure your legs aren't crossed
- 3 Make sure you're wearing comfortable clothing
- 4 Close your eyes or focus on a specific spot
- 5 Concentrate on your breathing
- 6 Try to let any thoughts go straight through you so you don't focus on them



## 1, 2, 3...

### Relaxation Breathing

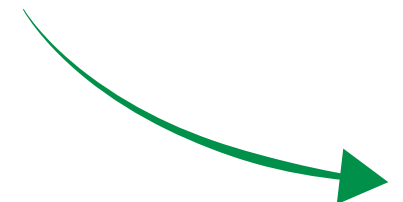
When you have a minute sit comfortably and place your hands on your stomach, slowly breathe in and out noticing the rise and fall of your abdomen, now when you breathe in hold for the count of 3 and then breathe out.

### Visualisation

Imagine one of the most relaxing scenes you can think of, close your eyes and imagine you are there. Try to engage as many senses as you can - sound, touch, taste and smell.

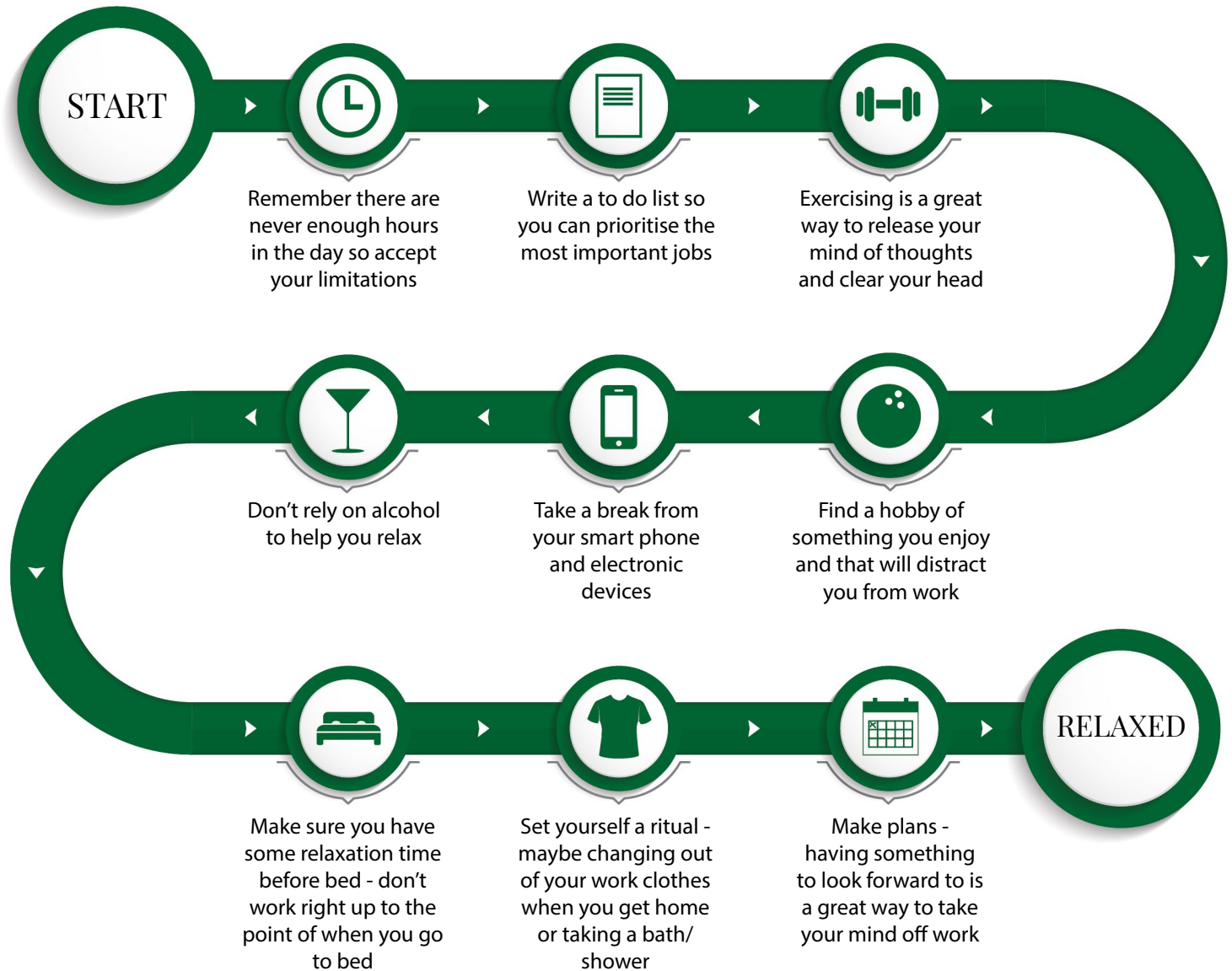
### Quick Muscle Relaxation

When you have a few minutes, try and take the time to allow for each individual muscle to relax. Start with your head and jaw, work down to your neck and shoulders and arms and then to your hips and waist, down to your legs and finally to your hands and feet. Make sure you focus individually on each area.



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## Top tips for switching off



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## *Need help?*

If you're finding it hard to cope with stress. Support is available.



### **The Stress Management Society**

[www.stress.org.uk](http://www.stress.org.uk)

### **Mind**

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### **Combat Stress** - for veterans' mental health

[www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

### **Calm**

[www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)

### **The Samaritans**

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### **Headspace**

[www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)

### **GroceryAid**

[www.groceryaid.org.uk](http://www.groceryaid.org.uk)





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