Stress less for your mental wellbeing

Stress is an inevitable part of our daily lives. But that doesn’t mean we have to let it hang around. If you feel like stress can get the best of you every now and then, commit to actively using these simple tips for a fortnight (or a bit longer if possible) and see if there’s a difference in your stress levels.

Empty your “stress bucket”
Have you ever heard a psychologist speak of the “stress bucket”? It’s not a physical bucket, it’s an analogy. Imagine that all of the stressful events and occurrences throughout your day, even the minor ones, are like drops of water, slowly filling a bucket. If you don’t find ways to empty the bucket (relax and de-stress) on a regular basis, it will eventually overflow. So keep a mental note of how full your stress bucket is and try to de-stress accordingly.

Focus on eating well and getting some good quality rest
We all know deep down that eating a balanced diet and getting adequate rest are good for you. But did you know they can help your body and mind adapt and constructively respond to the events in your life? We tend to make bad choices when we’re stressed — especially when it comes to food and drink. This in turn can affect our sleep, which makes us more stressed which can make us eat badly and it goes on and on.

Actively relax
Sinking into the couch every chance you get isn’t relaxing; it’s potatoino. Find an activity that helps you unwind like jogging, yoga, gardening or even meditation. Learning to relax by allocating time to do the things you enjoy can help reduce stress.

It’s OK to say NO
A first step to creating more balance between work and the activities you enjoy doing can be as simple as learning to say “no” — you can’t do everything for everyone, and nor should you feel you have to.

Avoid major change when stressed
Making major life changes can be incredibly stressful at the best of times. If you’re already feeling stressed, it may be wise to avoid the big changes like moving house or changing jobs until you’re feeling more on top of things.

Express yourself
Bottling up your feelings isn’t the way forward. Find a confidante or even a psychologist or counsellor, if necessary, to help you put feelings into words. You may be better equipped to tackle personal problems if you articulate your feelings and learn to share them with your loved ones in a constructive way.

Just breathe
Short-term coping strategies such as meditative breathing and relaxation strategies are a great way to help you de-stress every day.

Know when to get help
For some people, the accumulation of everyday stressors, if left to fester, can trigger symptoms severe enough to warrant seeking medical attention. If you feel like your stress levels are starting to impact on your mental health, there are many health professionals and services available to help with information, treatment and support. Your GP is a good starting point for seeking professional help. Starting point for seeking professional help.