UNDERSTANDING STRESS

# Stress & Overload

A practical guide to recognising pressure and restoring capacity

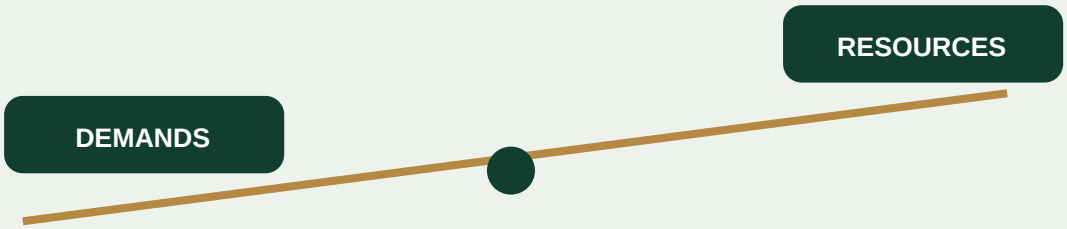
## What happens when demands exceed capacity?

Stress is a response to demands that feel greater than the resources available to meet them. Overload may build gradually or arrive suddenly. It can affect concentration, emotions, physical wellbeing and everyday decisions.

### Common signs

Racing thoughts, forgetfulness, irritability, headaches, muscle tension, sleep changes, withdrawal, sensory sensitivity or feeling unable to start.

## The stress and capacity balance




The aim is not zero stress: it is a more workable balance.

## Three ways to reduce overload

- **Reduce demands**
  Pause, postpone, simplify or share one non-urgent task.
- **Increase support**
  Ask for clarity, practical help, adjustments or a quieter environment.
- **Restore capacity**
  Allow recovery time, regular breaks, nourishment and manageable pacing.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Stress & Overload

Worksheet 1 | Notice your early warning signs

## My personal overload signals

Notice what changes before you reach your limit. There are no right or wrong answers.

**In my body, I notice...**

**In my thoughts, I notice...**

**In my emotions, I notice...**

**In my behaviour, other people might notice...**

One early sign I want to pay attention to this week:

PRACTICAL WORKSHEET

# Stress & Overload

Worksheet 2 | Sort what is weighing on you

## The overload map

Write down the demands you are carrying, then decide what can change. Small changes count.

### I need to do

What genuinely needs my attention soon?

### I can delay

What can wait without serious consequences?

### I can share or ask for help with

Where would support or an adjustment help?

### I can let go of

Which expectation is not essential right now?

RECOVERY PLAN

# Stress & Overload

Worksheet 3 | Build a realistic next-step plan

## My personal reset plan

Choose actions that are realistic for your circumstances and energy today.

**One thing I can pause, reduce or change:**

**One person or service I could ask for support:**

**One boundary or adjustment that would help:**

**One gentle recovery activity I can make room for:**

### My smallest next step

Within the next 24 hours, I will:

FURTHER SUPPORT

# Stress & Overload

A compassionate reminder

## When stress feels unmanageable

Overload is not a personal failure. Sometimes the demands really are too high, or the available support is too low. A sustainable plan may involve changing circumstances rather than trying harder.

### Consider extra support

Speak with a trusted person, your GP, a therapist, occupational health or a workplace support contact if stress is persistent or affecting your wellbeing.

## A simple grounding pause

1. Place both feet on the floor, if comfortable.
2. Look around and name three things you can see.
3. Release your shoulders or jaw if that feels helpful.
4. Choose just one next manageable action.

## Reflection

**What would a kinder, more manageable week look like?**

*This educational resource is not a substitute for individual medical care.*