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StressOut First Aid Kit

Practical Advice and Immediate Support
for Severe Cases of Stress





StressOut

MODERN TOOLS FOR WORK-RELATED
STRESS MANAGEMENT



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Always consult a qualified healthcare professional for any medical concerns, emergencies or decisions.



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Introduction

Welcome to the StressOut First Aid Kit - a comprehensive resource designed to support individuals in managing work-related stress and preventing burnout. Developed as part of the **StressOut** initiative, this kit provides immediate, **practical guidance for navigating high-stress situations**. It offers easy-to-follow instructions for addressing acute stress symptoms, along with preventative techniques to build resilience and promote long-term mental well-being.

The First Aid Kit is meant to be accessible anytime, providing support when you need it most. Whether you are facing overwhelming stress, navigating a crisis, or struggling with severe symptoms of burnout, this resource equips you with essential tools to regain control and manage immediate challenges effectively.


~ The StressOut Team

STRESS vs BURNOUT

Stress is the **body's natural response** to demands or challenges, whether from work, personal life, or unexpected situations. It triggers physiological changes, like increased heart rate and heightened alertness, that prepare you to respond to threats or pressures. Short-term stress can be helpful, motivating you to meet deadlines or handle immediate tasks. However, when stress becomes prolonged or overwhelming, it begins to impact your physical and mental well-being, causing symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety, irritability, and difficulty concentrating.

Burnout, on the other hand, is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion **caused by prolonged exposure to excessive stress**, particularly in work settings.





Unlike stress, which is often temporary and tied to specific situations, burnout develops gradually and results from ongoing pressures that leave you feeling helpless, drained, and detached.

While stress may feel like you are juggling too many tasks, **burnout feels more like** hitting a wall, where motivation and enthusiasm for work diminish entirely. Recognizing the difference is essential, as managing stress often involves short-term adjustments, while recovering from burnout may require more intensive strategies and support.

Recognizing the difference between stress and burnout is essential for managing each effectively. The next section provides an in-depth look at various physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms associated with both conditions, along with practical steps to take in severe stress situations. From grounding techniques and breathing exercises to identifying when professional help is needed, these scenarios and response strategies are designed to help you regain control in moments of overwhelming stress and prevent escalation toward burnout.

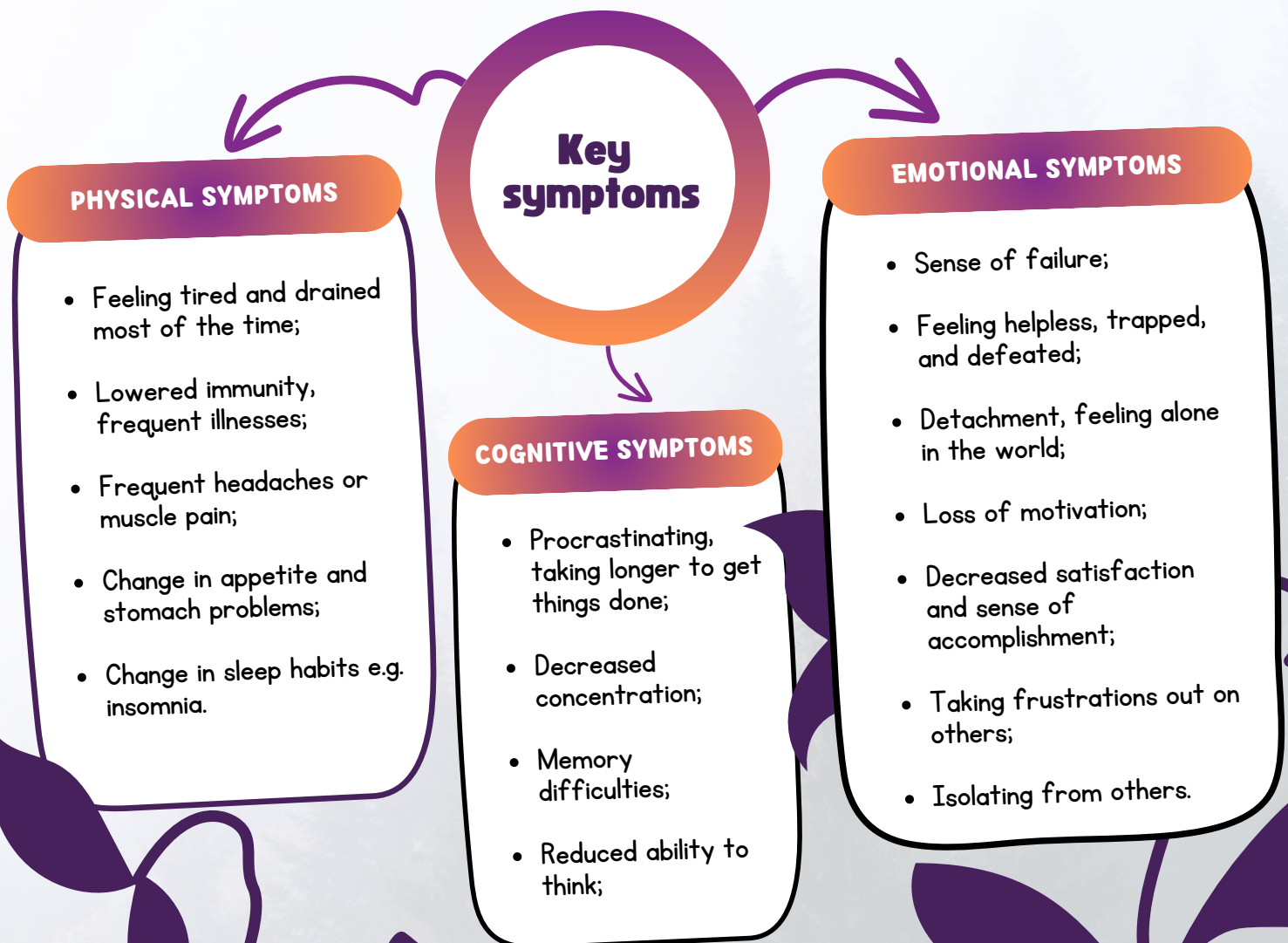


STRESS VS BURNOUT: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

Acute, short-term	Accumulate, chronic
Over-engagement	Dis-engagement
Reactive or Over-reactive emotions	Blunted or distant emotions
Low and diminishing energy	No energy, no motivation
Feeling of urgency and hyperactivity	Feeling of helplessness
Physically tolling	Emotionally tolling
Can lead to anxiety	Can lead to depression

RECONGIZING THE SYMPTOMS

Stress and burnout can significantly impact workplace functioning, affecting productivity, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. That is why it is so important to be able to recognise their early signs and symptoms.



FIRST AID STRESS RELIEF TECHNIQUES

First aid stress relief techniques are simple, immediate actions you can take to calm your mind and body during moments of heightened anxiety or tension. These methods, ranging from controlled breathing to grounding exercises, help restore balance and promote resilience in highly stressful situations, especially the ones we are going to look at next.



1

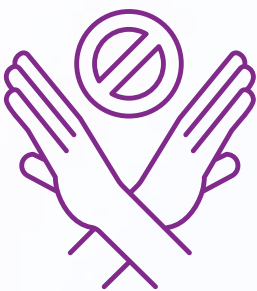
AVOID ISOLATION AND CONNECT WITH A TRUSTED PERSON

Sometimes just talking about what you're going through can help alleviate stress. Share your feelings with a co-worker, friend, family member, or counsellor. If you're alone in situation of severe stress, call someone you trust. Stay on the call. Knowing you're not alone will provide you comfort and perspective during stressful times.



2

STAY SAFE AND CALM. USE SOME GROUNDING TECHNIQUES



Try limiting stimulants and stressors. Reduce noise, bright lights, or other sensory inputs that might be overwhelming. Take a break from news or social media, especially if it's contributing to your stress.

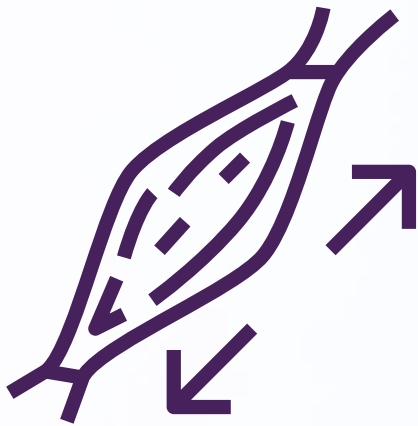
Try the deep (box) breathing technique:

Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of 4, hold for 4, and exhale slowly through your mouth for 4. Repeat this several times. Deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms the body and mind.



Try the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique:

Focus on **5** things you can see, **4** you can touch, **3** you can hear, **2** you can smell, and **1** you can taste. This helps anchor you in the present moment. Practice physical grounding – press your feet firmly into the ground or hold a cool object to help centre your thoughts.




Try the progressive muscle relaxation technique: Starting from your toes, tense each muscle group for 5 seconds, then slowly release. Move up your body, ending with your facial muscles. This technique helps release physical tension, which can reduce emotional stress.

PRACTICAL SELF-HELP

3

Become more aware of negative thoughts. You can start by identifying the distorted thoughts that are impacting your self-worth – such as assuming you're a failure after a single mistake or believing others think poorly of you without evidence. For example, if you catch yourself thinking, “*I never do anything right*” try countering it with something more realistic like, “*I’ve made mistakes, but I’ve also succeeded at many things*”. Another helpful strategy is to recite positive affirmations to yourself, such as “I deserve kindness”.



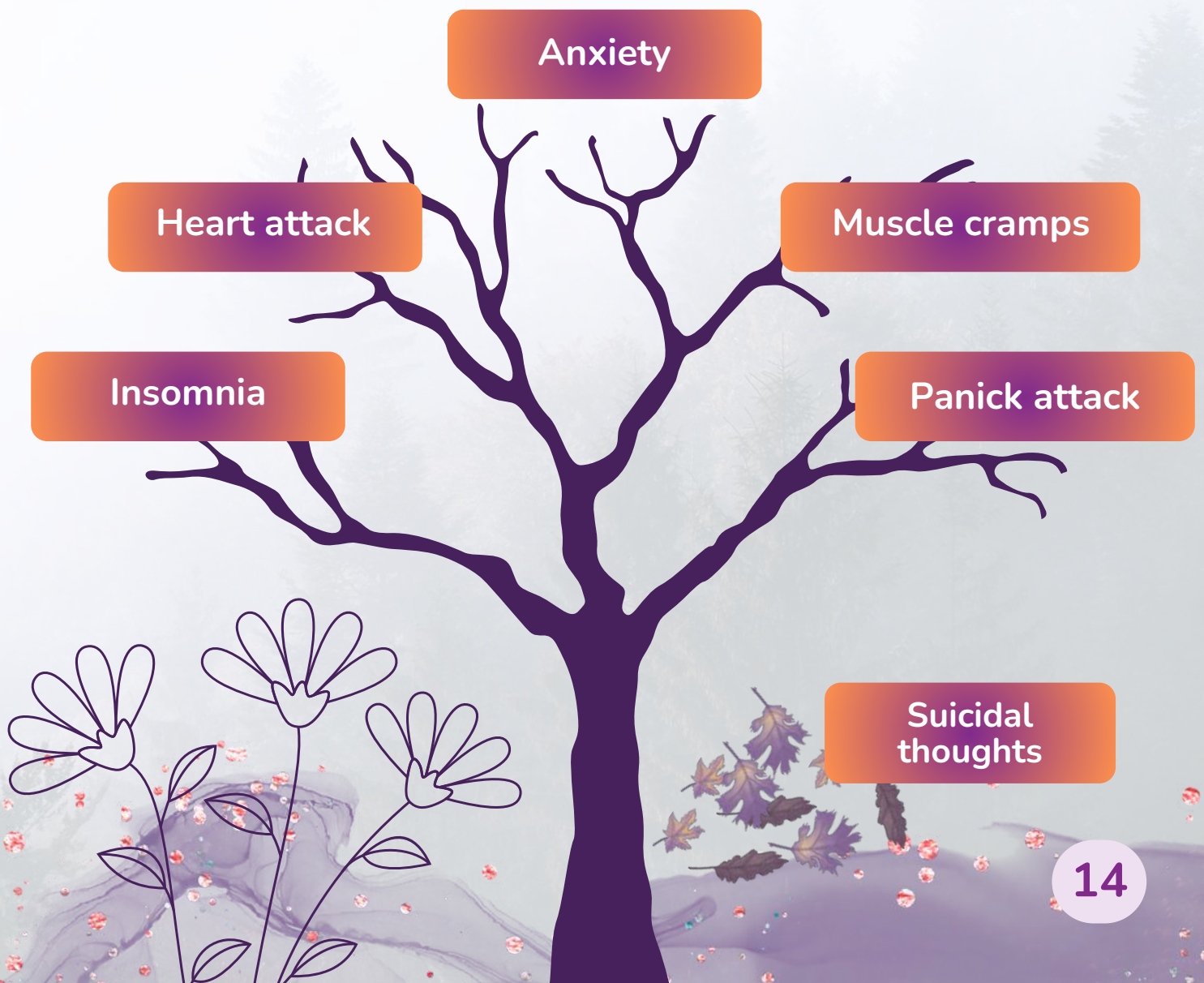
So, next time you feel under stress and you find yourself battling negative thoughts, try placing your hand on your heart and affirm: *"I honor my effort. I trust myself to navigate this moment"*. You can tailor affirmations to whatever you need - confidence, calm, motivation, compassion. The key is consistency, speaking them with belief (even if it feels silly at first), and choosing words that feel personal.

Practice self-compassion by forgiving yourself for past mistakes and move forward by accepting all parts of yourself. Mistakes are lessons, not life-sentences.

Finally, it's okay to step away from a stressful situation temporarily. Give yourself permission to pause, regroup and take a break. Ensure you're getting enough sleep, as fatigue can exacerbate stress and make it harder to concentrate, regulate emotions, or stay productive throughout the day. Prioritize a consistent sleep schedule, wind-down routines, and a restful environment to support both your mental and physical wellbeing.

FIRST AID ACTIONS IN SEVERE STRESS SITUATIONS

Mental health crises, such as severe stress or overwhelming emotional distress, can affect anyone and require immediate care. Recognizing signs and symptoms like panic, confusion, or withdrawal is crucial. This guide outlines practical steps to provide first aid, including how to identify a crisis and offer support to someone in need. We will be particularly looking at the following 6 scenarios:




ANXIETY

SYMPTOMS



- Excessive worry or fear
- Racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating
- Rapid heartbeat or chest tightness
- Shortness of breath or hyperventilation
- Restlessness or feeling on edge
- Irritability or mood swings
- Sweating or chills
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Nausea or stomach discomfort
- Avoidance of triggering situations
- Seeking constant reassurance
- Feeling detached or spaced out (depersonalization)



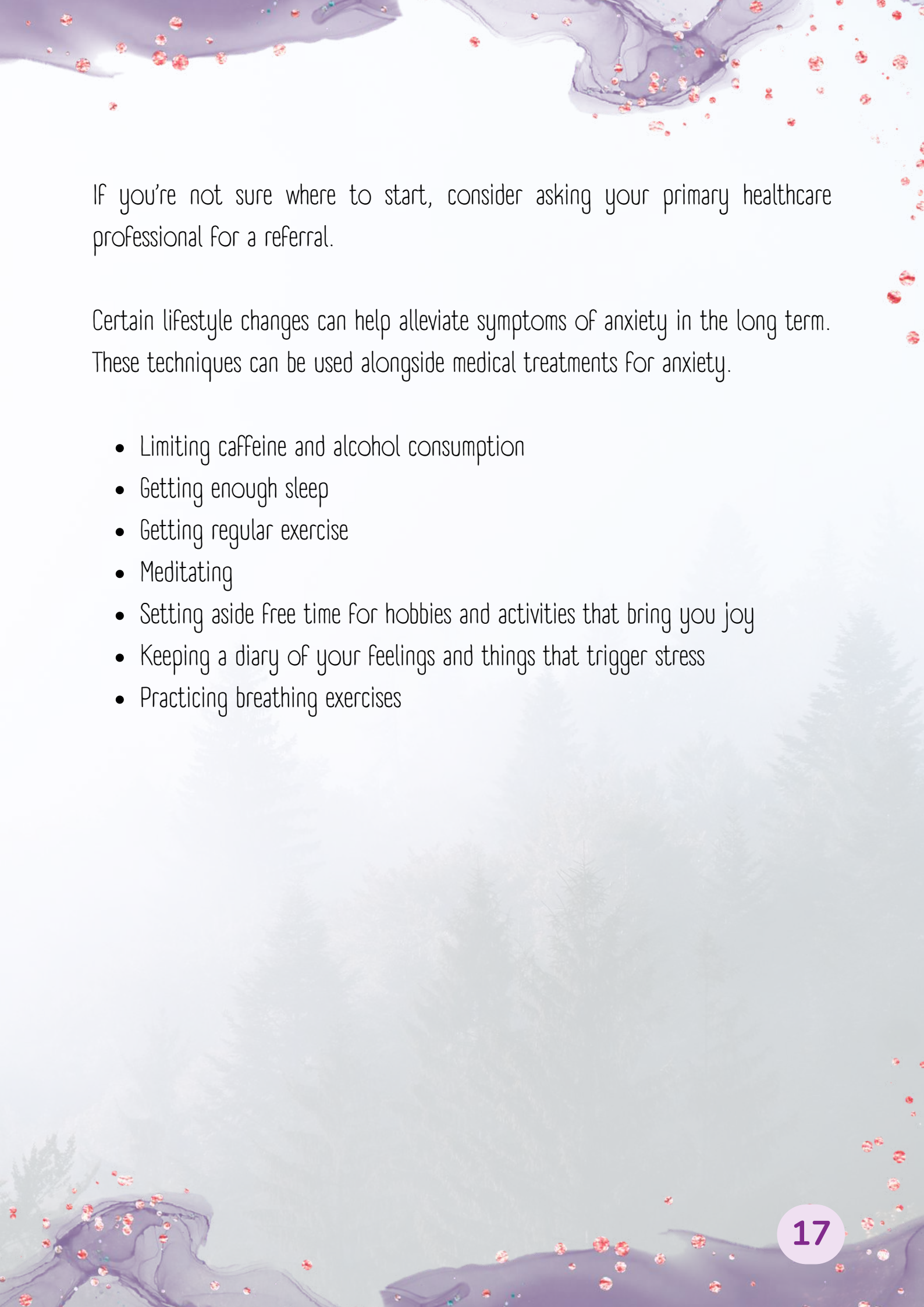
ANXIETY is a feeling of fear, worry, or unease. While it can occur as a reaction to stress, it can also happen without any obvious trigger. Stress and anxiety can produce a range of physical and psychological symptoms.

The big difference between stress and anxiety is the presence of a specific trigger. Stress is typically tied to a specific situation. Once that situation resolves, so does the stress. Anxiety, by contrast, doesn't always have a specific stressor.

Most people experience some feelings of stress and anxiety at some point, and that isn't necessarily a "bad" thing. Stress and anxiety can sometimes be a helpful motivator to accomplish tasks, but unmanaged stress and anxiety can start to interfere with your daily life and take a toll on your mental and physical health.

DEALING WITH ANXIETY

It's best to talk with a mental health professional any time stress or anxiety starts to affect your day-to-day life. You don't need to have a specific mental health condition to benefit from therapy. A qualified therapist can help you identify potential triggers and create effective coping mechanisms to minimize their impact, even if you don't meet the diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder. It's also worth reaching out if stress or anxiety leaves you feeling hopeless, or if you start having thoughts of harming yourself or others.



If you're not sure where to start, consider asking your primary healthcare professional for a referral.

Certain lifestyle changes can help alleviate symptoms of anxiety in the long term. These techniques can be used alongside medical treatments for anxiety.

- Limiting caffeine and alcohol consumption
- Getting enough sleep
- Getting regular exercise
- Meditating
- Setting aside free time for hobbies and activities that bring you joy
- Keeping a diary of your feelings and things that trigger stress
- Practicing breathing exercises

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

I AM
EXPERIENCING
ANXIETY



1

Regulate Your Breath

First, regain control over your breathing and calm your nervous system. Try the box breathing technique we've covered earlier:

- Inhale for 4 sec. → Hold for 4 sec. → Exhale for 4 sec.
- Repeat 3–5 times to settle your body. Wait 4 sec. before the next breath cycle.

2

Ground Yourself

Engage your senses to anchor yourself in the present with the 5-4-3-2-1 method:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste



3

Use Positive Affirmations

Speak kindly to yourself, especially if negative thoughts are present:

- *"I am safe".*
- *"This feeling will pass".*
- *"I trust myself to get through this".*

4

Shift Your Space or Posture

Stretch, walk, or change rooms. Movement helps release tension and reset your focus.

5

Reflect or Journal

If possible, write down or sketch your thoughts. Write (type) down the exact thought and feelings you are going through. Label the emotion, and remind yourself it's temporary. Don't look for perfect logic sentences. Could be just single words. Keep doing it until you feel better.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

**SOMEONE
ELSE IS
EXPERIENCING
ANXIETY**



1

Stay Calm and Present

Just be there. Your calm energy helps regulate theirs. Speak slowly, keep your tone soft, and avoid sudden movements.

2

Ask Gently

You can say something like: *"I'm here with you. Would you like help with breathing or grounding?"*. Respect their space if they say no, but stay nearby.

3

Guide Their Breathing

Do the box breathing technique: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds. Repeat together for a few cycles (wait 4 seconds before the next breath cycle). You can say: *"Let's breathe together. In... hold... and out..."*.

4

Help them ground

Try guiding them to ground naturally via a simple conversation:

You	<i>"Can you name 5 things you see around you?"</i>
Them	<i>"Um... the lamp, the window, my phone..."</i>
You	<i>"Perfect. Now 4 things you can touch?"</i>
Them	<i>"My sweater, the chair, my necklace..."</i>
You	<i>"Great. What are 3 things you can hear?"</i>
Them	<i>"The fan... birds outside... your voice."</i>
You	<i>"Nice. 2 things you can smell?"</i>
Them	<i>"My tea... and maybe the candle."</i>
You	<i>"And 1 thing you can taste?"</i>
Them	<i>"The mint I had earlier."</i>
You	<i>"You did amazing. You're right here, and you're safe."</i>



5

Validate Their Experience

You can say something like:

- *“You’re safe right now”.*
- *“This feeling will pass”.*
- *“You’re doing great”.*

Avoid saying “calm down” or “don’t worry”—it can feel dismissive. Dim lights, reduce noise, and give them space if needed. Ask before touching—some people find comfort in a hand on the shoulder, others prefer no contact.

Emotions are messy and unpredictable. Sometimes the person you’re trying to help isn’t ready or able to engage at all. And that’s okay. So if none of these seem to work, what matters most is presence and compassion—not precision. Think of these techniques not as magic fixes, but as offerings. Or you simply sit with them and breathe in silence. Even if it feels awkward or doesn’t go to plan, you showing up with patience, warmth, and a gentle voice already makes a huge difference.


PANIC ATTACK

SYMPTOMS



- Shaking
- Numbness
- Hot Flashes
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Heart Palpitations

- Difficulty Breathing
- Dizziness
- Fear of Losing Control
- Derealization
- Chest Pain
- Fear of Dying



A **PANIC ATTACK** is a sudden surge of intense fear or discomfort that peaks within minutes—even when there's no real danger present.

Panic attack symptoms, like chest pain, difficulty breathing, dizziness, trembling, and a racing heart, are caused by an overreaction of the sympathetic nervous system. The symptoms can peak quite fast and may feel like they last an eternity and sometimes even mimic a heart attack.

Panic attacks can be a **normal reaction** in times of stress, like when unexpected life changes occur. However, when panic attacks are triggered by less obvious things, occur more frequently, or lead to a sense of dread, please seek professional help. Left untreated, panic attacks can lead to panic disorder, heart conditions, and avoidance behaviours like agoraphobia. Panic attacks can be managed by psychotherapy with a certified psychotherapist and/or prescribed medication. Increased physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, in general, are beneficial outside the immediate experience of a panic attack. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and smoking. These can make panic attacks worse.

As panic and heart attacks share symptomatic expression, in case of doubting or having a pre-existing heart-related condition, immediately seek urgent medical care. While scary, in case of a panic attack, remember to sit down with a glass of water and do breathing regulation exercises.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

I AM
EXPERIENCING
A PANIC
ATTACK



1

Regulate Your Breath

First, regain control over your breathing and calm your nervous system. Try the box breathing technique we've covered earlier:

- Inhale for **4** sec. → Hold for **4** sec. → Exhale for **4** sec.
- Repeat 3–5 times to settle your body. Wait 4 sec. before the next breath cycle.

2

Remind yourself: this feeling isn't dangerous

Panic attacks *feel* life-threatening, but they aren't. They're your body's way of reacting to perceived danger. You're not going crazy, and you're not in danger. It's temporary. The key is not to fear it.

3

Ground Yourself

Engage your senses to anchor yourself in the present with the 5-4-3-2-1 method:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

4

Based on your surroundings

Depending on where you are at the moment:

- Run your hands under running water or hold an ice cube.
- Plug into music or an audiobook—something soothing, even if it's just ambient sounds or instrumental tunes. Play your favourite music or comfort show for gentle, familiar noise.
- Drink some water or tea.
- Try movement as a calming rhythm. Focus on your footsteps—count them: left, right, left, right...or match your breathing to your steps: inhale for 4 steps, exhale for 4 steps.
- Count backward from 100 by threes (i.e. 100, 97, 94 etc.)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

**SOMEONE
ELSE IS
EXPERIENCING
A PANIC
ATTACK**



1

Stay Calm and Present

If someone is experiencing a panic attack, staying calm and supportive is essential. Speak gently and reassure them that they are safe and the panic will pass.

2

Ask gently

Make eye contact (if they're comfortable) and remind them: *"You're safe. I'm right here. It's going to be all right"*.

3

Guide Their Breathing

Try the following familiar rhythm: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds. Repeat together for a few cycles (wait 4 seconds before the next breath). You can say: *"Let's breathe together. In... hold... and out..."*.



Alternatively:

- Ask them to look at their feet.
- Then ask them to put their finger on their mouth and ask them to slow their breathing down by breathing from their nose.
- Get them to sit down.

4

Give space—but not silence

Avoid overwhelming questions; just stay with them, even in silence. Ask if they'd like help with grounding techniques like naming things they see or feel.


Most panic attacks peak within 10 minutes and fade within 20–30 minutes, after which the adrenaline rush cuts off and as the heartbeat slows down, people feel better. **If however, the panic attack lasts for more than 30 minutes, please reach out for professional medical help.**

INSOMNIA

SYMPTOMS



- Trouble falling asleep at night.
- Waking up frequently during the night.
- Waking up too early in the morning.
- Feeling tired, irritable, or having difficulty concentrating during the day.
- Worrying about sleep or having anxiety about not getting enough rest.



INSOMNIA is the difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early and being unable to go back to sleep.

Insomnia can be short-term (acute), lasting a few days or weeks, often triggered by stress or life events, or long-term (chronic), persisting for months or more. Causes can include:

- Stress, anxiety, or depression
- Poor sleep habits or irregular schedules
- Medical conditions (e.g., asthma, chronic pain, GERD)
- Medications or stimulants like caffeine and nicotine
- Hormonal changes (e.g., menopause, pregnancy)

Most insomnia cases are not extreme and are treatable. You should seek help for insomnia if it persists for more than a few weeks, affects your daily functioning, or is accompanied by other concerning symptoms like mood changes, anxiety, or extreme fatigue. If you consistently struggle to fall or stay asleep, wake up too early, or feel unrefreshed despite getting enough sleep, it's important to consult a healthcare provider. Seeking help is especially important if insomnia is impacting your ability to focus, work, or maintain relationships, as untreated insomnia can increase the risk of other health issues, including anxiety, depression, and heart problems.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

I AM
EXPERIENCING
INSOMNIA



1

Stay in bed

Try the box breathing technique while still laying/sitting on your bed:

- Inhale for **4** sec. → Hold for **4** sec. → Exhale for **4** sec.
- Repeat 5–10 times (or more as long as it feels soothing) to get your body back to its natural sleep pattern. Wait 4 sec. before the next breath cycle.

2

Leave the bed

Your goal is to reset the mental "sleep stage" without giving up on rest. So, if you're tossing and turning for 20+ minutes:

- Get up and move to a cozy spot (like a sofa or armchair).

- Keep lighting dim—bright lights signal your brain that it's wake time.
- Do a quiet activity (see below), but avoid anything too stimulating: don't grab your phone or start cleaning the house.

3 Do a quiet activity

The trick is to stay physically low-energy while mentally occupied. Choose something that helps you gently shift focus like:

- Reading a few pages of a calming book (nothing thrilling or too emotional).
- Write or sketch in a journal—this channels racing thoughts.
- Other things you can try: knitting, organizing a drawer, or playing a mellow puzzle game.

4 Try sleep-specific audio

Certain sounds can guide your brain into a slower rhythm:

- Ambient or nature sound playlists (rain, forest, waves).
- White noise or pink noise apps.
- Guided sleep meditations.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

**SOMEONE
ELSE IS
EXPERIENCING
INSOMNIA**



1

Stay Calm and Present

Listen without judgment: Let them vent if they need to. Just being heard can ease the mental tension.

2

Ask gently

Say something like *"I know this is frustrating. You're not alone"*. Don't say *"just try to sleep"* or *"you'll be fine"*—even well-meaning advice can feel dismissive.

3

Help create a sleep-friendly environment

Dim the lights, lower noise, and make the space cozy. Offer calming aids like herbal tea, a warm blanket, or soft music. Suggest a relaxing activity: reading, journaling, or listening to a sleep meditation.



4

Encourage gentle calming technique

Try breathing exercises together. Offer to sit quietly with them while they wind down—your presence can be grounding. Try the Box breathing technique:

- Inhale for **4** sec. → Hold for **4** sec. → Exhale for **4** sec.
- Repeat 5–10 times (or more as long as it feels soothing) to get your body back to its natural sleep pattern. Wait 4 sec. before the next breath cycle.

Alternatively, you can also try the **4-7-8 breathing technique**:

1. **Inhale** quietly through your nose **for 4 seconds**.
2. **Hold** your breath **for 7 seconds**.
3. **Exhale** completely through your mouth **for 8 seconds**, making a soft “whoosh” sound.
4. Repeat the cycle 4 times to start.


You can do this lying down in bed or sitting upright—whichever feels most comfortable. Just keep your tongue resting against the roof of your mouth, just behind your front teeth, throughout the exercise.

MUSCLE CRAMP

SYMPTOMS



- Sharp, localized pain in the affected muscle.
- Tightness or stiffness that doesn't ease with rest.
- Visible or hard knots of muscle tissue beneath the skin.
- Muscles feeling sore or fatigued, even without exercise.
- Restricted movement due to pain or tension.



MUSCLE CRAMPS (muscle spasms) are sudden, involuntary contractions or tightening of a muscle that can cause intense pain and can last from a few seconds to several minutes.

Stress can cause muscle cramps, and it's more common than people realize. Your body doesn't just carry emotional tension—it stores it physically, often in the form of tightness, spasms, or cramps. In particular, chronic stress leads to prolonged muscle tension. Overworked muscles can cramp as they struggle to recover energy. Anxiety and stress can increase sweating or reduce thirst, leading to dehydration—a known trigger for cramps. Common areas affected include the neck and shoulders, the jaw (from clenching or grinding), the lower back and legs, and hands and feet.

You should seek medical help for muscle cramps if they are frequent, severe, or persistent, especially if they occur without a clear cause like exercise or dehydration. If cramps are accompanied by other symptoms such as swelling, redness, muscle weakness, or numbness, it could indicate an underlying medical condition, such as nerve compression, circulation problems, or a mineral imbalance. Additionally, if cramps disrupt sleep regularly or don't improve with self-care measures like stretching or hydration, it's important to consult a healthcare professional for further evaluation.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

I AM
EXPERIENCING
A MUSCLE
CRAMP



1

Stop and gently stretch the muscle

If it's your **calf**, try pulling your toes upward toward your nose while keeping your leg straight.

For a **thigh cramp**, gently lift your leg and squeeze the opposing muscle group.

Hold the stretch for 15–30 seconds, then release slowly.

2

Massage the area

Use your hands or a foam roller to gently knead the cramped muscle. You can also try trigger point pressure—press firmly on the tightest spot for 30 seconds, then release.



3

Apply heat or cold

- Heat (like a warm shower, towel or heating pad) helps relax tight muscles.
- Cold (like an ice pack wrapped in a cloth) can reduce inflammation once the pain starts to ease.

4

Elevate the muscle if possible

If it's your leg or foot, prop it up slightly to improve circulation.

5

Hydrate

Drink water or an electrolyte-rich drink (e.g. coconut water, watermelon juice, orange juice, milk) —dehydration is a common cramp trigger.

6

Walk it out

If you can, gently walk or shake out the muscle to restore blood flow and loosen tension.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

**SOMEONE
ELSE IS
EXPERIENCING
A MUSCLE
CRAMP**



1

Stay Calm and Reassuring

Say something like *"It's okay, I've got you. Let's ease it together"*.

2

Help them stop any activity

If they were walking, exercising, or stretching—pause everything.

3

Stretch the cramped muscle

Gently stretch the cramped muscle:

- For **calf** cramps: Help them flex their foot upward (toes toward the shin).
- For **thigh** cramps: Support their leg and guide a gentle stretch by bending the knee or lifting the leg.
- For **hand** cramps: Encourage them to open and close their fist slowly, then stretch fingers outward.

4

Massage and sooth

- Use your hands to gently knead the muscle—start light, then increase pressure if they're comfortable.
- If available, apply a warm compress or heating pad to relax the area.
- Once the cramp eases, a cold pack can help reduce lingering inflammation.

5

Hydration check

Offer water or an electrolyte-rich drink like coconut water or a sports drink. Dehydration is a sneaky culprit behind many cramps.

6

Help them breathe and relax

Guide them through slow, deep breaths to calm the nervous system. You can say something grounding like: *"Let's breathe together—inhale... hold... exhale..."*. Try the Box breathing technique: Inhale for 4 sec. → Hold for 4 sec. → Exhale for 4 sec. Repeat 4–15 times (or as needed).


If the cramp doesn't ease after a few minutes, or if it's unusually intense or recurring, gently suggest to get medical assistance.

HEART ATTACK

SYMPTOMS



- Shortness of Breath (struggling to breath)
- Intense (stabbing) chest pain or discomfort
- Upper Body Discomfort
- Light-headedness or Dizziness
- Sweating
- Nausea or Vomiting



A **HEART ATTACK** happens when the blood flow to a part of the heart muscle becomes blocked, often due to a build-up of fat, cholesterol, or other substances that form a plaque in the coronary arteries. This blockage deprives the heart muscle of oxygen, causing damage or death to heart cells. If not treated promptly, a heart attack can result in serious heart damage and is potentially life-threatening. In some cases, heart attack symptoms can be subtle or mistaken for other issues, especially in women, older adults, and people with diabetes. Recognizing these signs and seeking immediate medical help (usually by calling emergency services) is crucial for survival and minimizing damage to the heart.

Stress doesn't always cause a heart attack—but it can be the tipping point if other risk factors are present, and therefore it contributes to a heart attack, both directly and indirectly. Chronic stress impacts the heart by raising blood pressure and heart rate, triggering inflammation that promotes arterial plaque buildup, elevating cortisol and adrenaline which disrupt heart rhythms and circulation, and encouraging unhealthy habits that increase the risk of heart disease. So stress, is not just an emotional experience; it has real physical consequences for your heart too. Those most at risk of a stress contributed heart attack are people with existing heart conditions, women over 50 (especially for stress-induced cardiomyopathy) and those experiencing chronic stress, anxiety, or depression.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

I AM
EXPERIENCING
A HEART
ATTACK



1

Immediately call **112** for help

2

Do **NOT** Drive

Do not drive yourself to the hospital, but rather wait for an ambulance. Emergency medical personnel can start treatment immediately, which improves your survival rates.

3

Stop what you're doing

Sit down (on the ground) and rest to reduce strain on your heart.

4

Chew Aspirin (if available)

If you're not allergic and have no contraindications, **chew** and swallow 1 adult aspirin (325 mg) or 4 baby aspirins (81 mg each). Aspirin will help thin your blood and improve blood flow to the heart.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

**SOMEONE
ELSE IS
EXPERIENCING
A HEART
ATTACK**



1

Immediately call **112** for help

2

Stop what they're doing and
Reassure them

Sit them down with knees bent and head/shoulders supported to reduce strain on their heart. Say something like: *"Help is on the way and I'm staying right here with you"*.

Remove any obstacles for breathing e.g. loosen tight clothing.

3

Offer them an Aspirin

Only if they are fully conscious and able to swallow: Ask them if they are allergic to aspirin, and if no contraindications, ask them to **chew** and swallow 1 adult aspirin (325 mg) or 4 baby aspirins (81 mg each).

4

If they become unresponsive

Lay the person flat on their back. Tilt their head back slightly and lift the chin to open the airway. Look, listen, and feel for breathing for no more than 10 seconds. If they're not breathing or have no pulse use an AED (automated external defibrillator) if available. If not, start CPR immediately:

- Place the heel of one hand in the center of the chest, other hand on top.
- Keep arms straight, shoulders above hands.
- Push hard and fast: at least 2 inches deep, 100–120 compressions per minute.
- Let the chest fully recoil between compressions.



DO NOT:


- Give food or drink.
- Leave them alone.
- Delay calling for help.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

SYMPTOMS



- Feeling hopeless, worthless
- Feeling trapped in a situation with no way out.
- Frequently thinking about death or dying.
- Talking about wanting to die or expressing a desire to harm oneself.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or social activities.
- Sudden changes in mood, such as becoming unusually calm or happy after a period of depression.




SUICIDAL THOUGHTS, also known as suicidal ideation, involve thinking about or planning suicide. These thoughts can range from fleeting ideas of self-harm to detailed plans for taking one's life. Suicidal thoughts often occur when someone feels overwhelmed by emotional pain, hopelessness, or a sense of being trapped in difficult life circumstances.

What many people don't realize is that chronic stress and burnout can quietly escalate into suicidal ideation, even in people who've never struggled with mental health before. A [study published in BMC Psychiatry](#) found that stress was positively associated with suicidal ideation, especially when using maladaptive coping strategies like *avoidance* or *self-blame*. Over 740,000 people die by suicide each year, which is roughly 1 death every 43 seconds, making suicide the fourth leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds worldwide.

How does suicidal ideation look like:

- **Passive ideation:** *"I wish I wasn't here" or "Life feels pointless".*
- **Active ideation:** Thinking about methods, timing, or writing a note.
- **Recurring thoughts:** These may come and go, especially during periods of intense stress, depression, or emotional pain.

It's important to know that having suicidal thoughts doesn't mean someone will act on them, but it's a serious signal that they're struggling and need support.



Individuals considering suicidal thoughts would often **engage in risky or self-destructive behaviours**, such as drug abuse, reckless driving, or deliberate self-harm. These actions may reflect **a diminished regard for personal safety**, or serve as indirect expressions of distress. They might also make **subtle or overt preparations for death**, such as giving away cherished belongings, withdrawing from loved ones, writing a will, or searching online for information about suicide methods. In some cases, they may express **feelings of hopelessness** or speak about being a burden, signaling a deep emotional struggle that shouldn't be ignored.

These behaviors are often cries for help, even if they're not consciously recognized as such. Suicidal ideation may also manifest as verbal cues or emotional withdrawal, such as expressing feelings of being a burden, lacking purpose, or saying goodbye in a way that feels final.

It's crucial to pay attention to these signs—even if they seem subtle or out of character—because early intervention and compassionate support can dramatically reduce the risk of suicide. **Many people who survive a suicide attempt later say they're grateful they didn't succeed.** Recognizing this inner struggle and offering a safe space to talk can be the lifeline someone desperately needs.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

I AM
EXPERIENCING
SUICIDAL
THOUGHTS



1

Promise yourself to wait

Just wait! Make a small commitment:

“I won’t act on these thoughts right now. I’ll wait”.

Then, please contemplate these gentle reminders:

- Many suicide attempt survivors report feeling immediate regret often within seconds after the attempt!
- These thoughts are not a sign of weakness—they’re **a signal** that you’re in pain and need support.
- You don’t have to go through this alone.
- Many people who’ve felt this way have found healing and joy again.
- You are worthy of care, connection, and a future.

**2****Tell someone / Call 112**

PLEASE KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE! There are people around you who will listen to you, support you, and help in any way they can. Reaching out can feel hard, but you don't have to carry this burden by yourself. If there's no one "close" to call, and if you're experiencing self-harm urges, or overwhelming distress, please seek immediate help from a medical professional or go to the nearest emergency room—support is available!

3**Pause and breathe**

Take slow, deep breaths: Inhale for **4** sec. → Hold for **4** sec. → Exhale for **4** sec. Repeat 3–5 times.

If you're still feeling flooded, continue until you feel calm. You don't need to count perfectly—just focus on longer exhales.

4**Remove harmful items and/or move somewhere else**

If you have access to anything you could use to hurt yourself, try to remove it or ask someone to help you do so. Move to another (safer) space if needed.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

**SOMEONE
ELSE IS
EXPERIENCING
SUICIDAL
THOUGHTS**



1

Stay calm and present

Sit with them or stay on the phone and just listen without judgment or panic. Do not over-react or become upset.

If they've already attempted suicide, call 112 and stay with them until the ambulance arrives.

2

Ask directly but gently

You won't put the idea in their head by asking, so try:

- *"Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"* or
- *"Are you feeling like you don't want to be here anymore?"*

If they say yes, ask them: *"Do you have a plan?"* and *"Do you have access to anything that could hurt you?"*



3

Remove harmful items (if safe to do so)

- Gently ask if you can help move anything dangerous out of reach.
- Stay with them or make sure someone else can.

4

Help them connect to support / Call 112

- Encourage them to call a crisis line or mental health professional.
- Offer to stay with them while they make the call or take them to the nearest emergency room.

Meanwhile, *listen without trying to fix*. You don't need to have all the answers. Let them talk and again just listen without judgment. Validate their pain. Say things like: *"I'm here with you"*, *"You're not alone"*, *"I care about you, and I want to help."*

6

Follow up

Check in later. A simple message like *"Thinking of you today"* can mean everything. Help them build a safety plan, start a recovery journal or find further professional support.

SUICIDE HELPLINES



European Union



112

112 is the official emergency number across the European Union.

- Works in all EU member states, plus countries like Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the UK.
- You can dial it free of charge, 24/7, from any mobile or landline phone, and it connects you to police, ambulance, or fire services—even if you don't know the local emergency numbers.
- Can be dialed even if your phone is locked or out of credit.
- Operators often speak English and the local language.

SUICIDE HELPLINES



Bulgaria



112

- +359 800 2 02 02 – Emergency **psychotherapeutic help** and emotional support is available thanks to Kabinet www.kabinet.bg.
- +359 2 492 30 30 – A confidential phone number at the Bulgarian Red Cross (for Sofia) in cases of **addictions** to drugs, medicines and alcohol; **suicide prevention**, depressive states and sexual disorders; HIV virus carriers and diagnosed AIDS cases; victims of **human trafficking**, and for **psychosocial counselling**;
- +359 2 981 00 06 – Emergency and Mobile **Psychiatric Care** Unit. Available 24-hours.

SUICIDE HELPLINES



Croatia



112

- +385 1 4833 888 - Plavi Telefon (Blue Phone). Offers **confidential support** for various mental health issues, including suicidal thoughts.



Cyprus



112

- +357 800 0 777 3 - Cyprus Samaritans. A hotline for people who feel lonely, depressed, anxious, and wish to **talk to an individual without feeling like they'll be judged**. The hotline is available Monday through Sunday from 4:00pm-12:00am

SUICIDE HELPLINES



Cyprus



112

- **+357 224 02 101** - ΟΚΥΠΥ: Mental Health Administration – Mental Health Services. A hotline for individuals who wish to contact professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrists. This applies to anyone suffering from anxiety, stress, depression, etc.
- **1410** - ONEK. A hotline for youth (up to 30 yrs) who suffer from anxiety, depression, and stress. It's free of charge and anonymous. The hotline is available from Monday – Friday 10:00am-11:00pm & Saturday and Sunday 3:00pm-11:00pm.

SUICIDE HELPLINES



The Netherlands



113 & 112

- **113 (or +31 800 01 13)** – The primary helpline for suicidal behavior in The Netherlands. This service is **accessible 24/7** and offers **free, confidential support** through telephone and online chat. **Trained counselors and psychologists** provide emotional support, active listening, and crisis intervention. If an **imminent life-threatening situation** is detected, they work with emergency services to provide immediate assistance. Website: www.113.nl, **Online chat** is also available through the website for those who prefer written communication.
- **+31 880 767 000** – De Luisterlijn (The Listening Line) – A confidential helpline offering **emotional support** to individuals dealing with stress, loneliness, or mental health issues. **Trained volunteers** are available to listen and provide support without judgment.

SUICIDE HELPLINES



Spain



024 & 112

- **024 (or +31 800 01 13)** - This is a telephone helpline for people with **suicidal thoughts, ideations or risk of behaviour**, and for their relatives and friends, basically through emotional support by means of active listening by 024 professionals. This is a nationwide service (accessible from all over the country), free, **confidential** and available **24 hours** a day, 365 days a year.
- **+34 914 59 00 55 / +34 717 033 717** - The Telephone of Hope. It is a volunteer and social action NGO that offers a comprehensive and free support service to people who are in crisis situations.
- **+34 911 385 385** - Suicide hotline by the La Barandilla Association to help people who are in moments of suicidal crisis, as well as their families.

SUICIDE HELPLINES

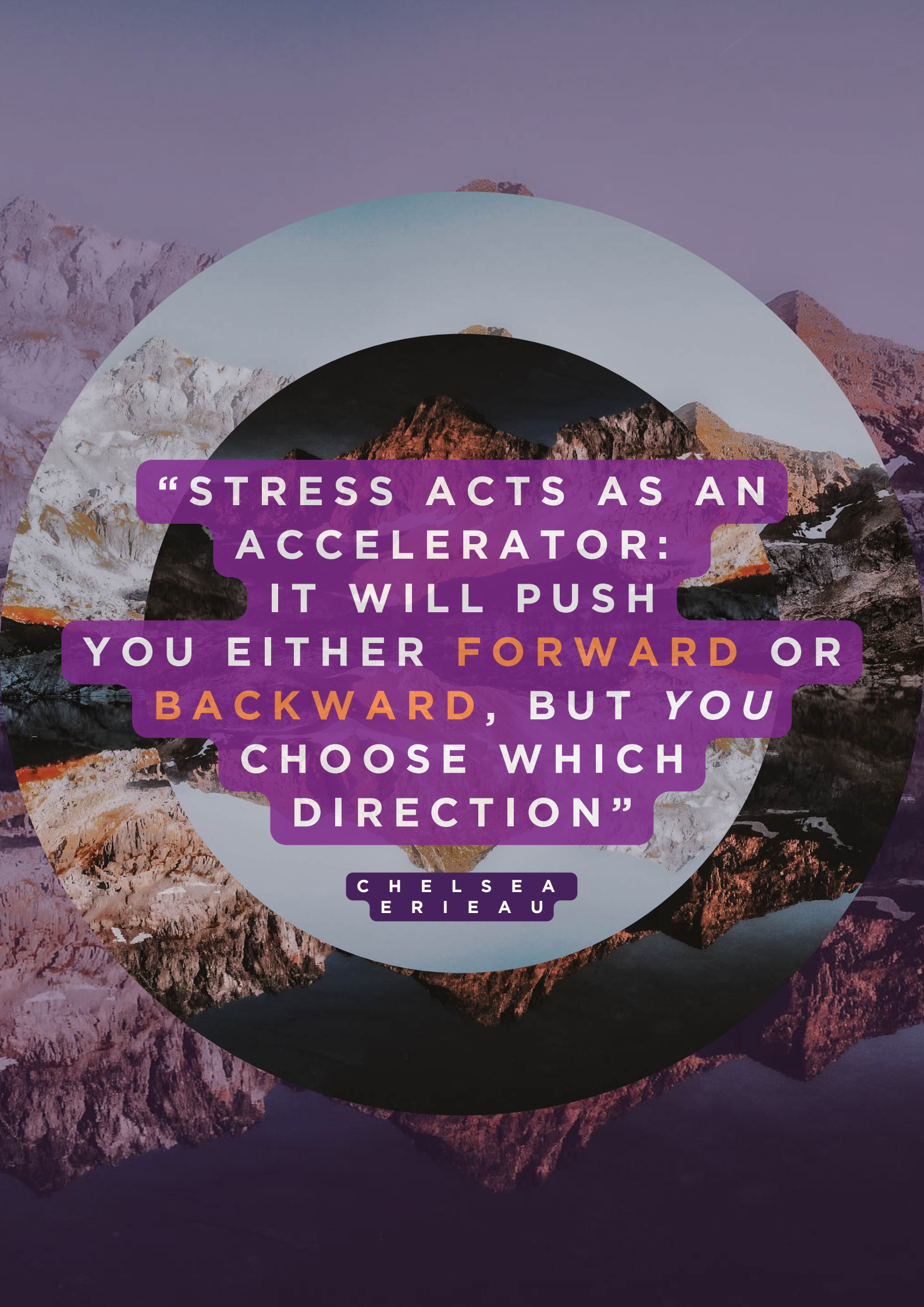


International Suicide Helplines

Open Counseling has a database of available hotlines worldwide. Scan the QR code below to access it or visit <https://blog.opencounseling.com/suicide-hotlines>.



SCAN ME




“STRESS ACTS AS AN
ACCELERATOR:
IT WILL PUSH
YOU EITHER FORWARD OR
BACKWARD, BUT YOU
CHOOSE WHICH
DIRECTION”

C H E L S E A
E R I E A U



YOUR PERSONAL STRESS FIRST AID KIT

Sometimes, we all need a little extra support. There are days when we feel ready for anything life brings, and other times when things just seem too overwhelming. The Personal Stress First Aid Kit is here to help you start thinking about ways to care for your emotional well-being. Since *you choose what goes into* your kit, it's tailored to your unique needs. It's about giving yourself the freedom to decide how best to take care of you.



The concept is simple: your kit is a collection of items that bring you comfort, positivity, or a sense of calm. You can make it as portable as you like, even taking it along if you're expecting a tough day. Pick a container that feels right for you—maybe a box, envelope, or pouch.

Next are some ideas of what you might include, but feel free to add anything that speaks to you.

In your Stress First Aid Kit, consider adding:



A playlist or disc of your **favorite music**.



Photos that make you smile—a loved one, or a memory from a happy time.



A symbol of **love** or **friendship**.



Important **contact numbers**: Friends, support lines, or your doctor.



Excerpts from a favorite book, poem, or inspiring quote.



Something that reminds you of an **achievement**, like a cork from a celebration, a certificate, or a craft you're proud of.



A list of qualities
you appreciate
about yourself.



A small item to
fidget with, like a
stress ball, beads,
or even a piece of
string.



A collection of
positive notes or
messages from
others, like a
birthday card or a
thoughtful
compliment.

ABOUT THE STRESSOUT PROJECT

the StressOut project an Erasmus+ funded project, aimed to provide tools for stress and burnout prevention and management on both a personal and business level. The project will facilitate the creation of an innovative training course with experiential training activities to enable both employers and employees to combat work-related stress and burnout, as well as effective techniques on how to prevent them via an easily accessible and modern tool - a mobile app.

TRAINING COURSE



25+ topics to guide you to a better mental health.

GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



Learn how to recognize, prevent and manage stress in your organization.

STRESS ASSESSMENT



A tool to help you recognise and deal with stress.

MOBILE APP



A multitude of resources available for free right at your fingertips.

Visit www.stressout-project.eu to learn more.

Additional resources

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



BURNT OUT? | WHAT DOES WORKPLACE STRESS DO TO MY BODY | NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



ROBERT WALDINGER: WHAT MAKES A GOOD LIFE? LESSONS FROM THE LONGEST STUDY ON HAPPINESS | TED

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR INNER VOICE IS CRUEL | ETHAN KROSS

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



DR. WEIL EXPLAINS HOW TO DO HIS 4-7-8 BREATHING TECHNIQUE. RELAXING BREATHING EXERCISE

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



4-4-4-4 BOX BREATHING DEMONSTRATION

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING METHOD: 5 SENSES GROUNDING EXERCISE TO MANAGE ANXIETY

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



REDUCE STRESS THROUGH PROGRESSIVE
MUSCLE RELAXATION

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



BEAT ANXIETY WITH THE MOST ADDICTIVE
EXPERIENCE ON EARTH | STEVEN KOTLER

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



HOW TO CALM YOUR ANXIETY, FROM A
NEUROSCIENTIST | THE WAY WE WORK, A TED
SERIES

LISTEN ON
SPOTIFY



ANXIETY & STRESS RELIEF MUSIC PLAYLIST ON
SPOTIFY

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



WHAT CAUSES PANIC ATTACKS, AND HOW CAN
YOU PREVENT THEM? | TED-ED

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



HOW TO FALL BACK ASLEEP IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



MUSCLE CRAMPS: CAUSES, RELIEF AND
PREVENTION

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



**HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS & HOW TO TREAT A
HEART ATTACK - FIRST AID TRAINING - ST JOHN
AMBULANCE**

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



**HOW CAN YOU HELP SOMEONE WHO IS
SUICIDAL?**

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



**WHAT'S A SAFETY PLAN AND HOW CAN IT
SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH THOUGHTS OF SELF-
HARM?**

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



**LEARN BASIC FIRST AID: HOW TO USE AN AED |
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE**

WATCH ON
YOUTUBE



**EMERGENCY FIRST AID COURSE | ST JOHN
AMBULANCE**

LEARN MORE



www.stressout-project.eu



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The partnership behind the StressOut project

There are 6 organisations behind the StressOut project coming from 5 European countries – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Spain and the Netherlands.

