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*Mental health for all*

# Team Stress-Busting Resource for Managers

Stress is a common and growing issue in the workplace. Common causes include workload pressures, unaddressed performance problems, unclear expectations, unresolved conflict in work relationships, and personal issues. Because stress affects everyone, understanding and managing it is crucial.

**Here are some exercises designed to help your team:**

- Productively understand causes of stress for employees
- Proactively manage stress and build resilience
- Bring employees together to share ideas and strategies used to manage stress

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## Exercise 1 – Team De-Stressing Brainstorm

This exercise works best in a small group setting with employees from your team. Kick off the meeting by discussing the importance of managing and reducing unwanted stress. As a people manager, communicate your dedication to supporting employees who may be feeling overwhelmed or stressed.

**How to run the team brainstorm:**

- Provide each employee with a few sticky notes
- Individually, have each employee write down various causes of stress they have previously experienced or are currently experiencing
- Collect and read out the different causes of stress
- In a group, brainstorm potential solutions or ideas to help manage those stressors
- Discuss how employees, you as a manager, and other people involved can play a role in reducing unwanted stress

At the end of the session, express to employees that you are there to support them and are always available to discuss these types of challenges with them.

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## Exercise 2 – Stress Solution Spaces

We all have stress. And we have all found ways to manage our own. Give your team members a chance to share their own solutions. Set up a **bulletin board – virtual or real** – for your team members to share ideas about what they do when the stress runs high. Post photos, memes, events!

Set up a quiet “**recharge zone**” for your team to chill out. This could be a screen-free area. Add a tea pot and some relaxation teas.

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## Exercise 3 – Stress Relievers

For every stress, there is a stress reliever. Here are a few workplace-based stress relief activities you can use to take the edge off.



### In meetings

- Everyone has a favourite joke, and everyone can use a little laughter therapy. Ask your team to help create a communal joke jar, and then start every meeting with a joke du jour.
- It's a tough meeting, and the tensions are running high. Sometimes the ice just needs breaking. Ice breakers can do just that. Ask your team to suggest their favourite ice breaker and make it a habit to start your meeting with one.



### At lunch

- Having a quiet lunch alone may be just what someone needs to take it down a notch. Respect preferences for alone time.
- When it's right, though, a pot luck lunch may help diffuse a little stress and build team energy.



### Take a break

- Respect each other's need for space and time alone but decompress with a special team walk or activity.
- Set the clock for a mindful moment break together (Use the Mindful Moments Activity found on the Not Myself Today Portal). It is surprisingly relaxing to meditate in a group.
- Take a team break for a stretch, planks or squats. Call it stretch-o-clock!



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## Exercise 4 – Stress Down Day

Leave Casual Fridays behind. It's not “dress down day” anymore. Put the focus on mental health and celebrate “Stress Down Day” instead.

Choose one day per week as Stress Down Day and encourage employees to “dress to de-stress.” Think: relaxing, Sunday afternoon casual.

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## Exercise 5 – Declutter to Destress

Cutting through the mess can also mean cutting through the cause of stress.

Allot 30 minutes to give your team members an opportunity to declutter their desks. Play mood music to set the scene. Or show a clip of Marie Kondo showing just how it's done.

