Stress worksheet

Compare pressures with available resources. Include organisational and practical problems, not only personal habits.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Demands: tasks and pressures

Resources: time, energy and support

What happens when I am overloaded?

What needs changing around me?

What can I change or ask for?

First step / support / review date

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Problem-solving worksheet

Work on one practical problem. Include options that share the load or change the circumstances.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Specific problem

What I want to change

Possible option	Benefits / support needed	Drawbacks / feasibility

My plan: who, what and when

What happened at review

Next step or source of help

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Boundary-setting worksheet

Consider safety and power differences first. Keep wording brief and concrete; use support when needed.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Situation / effect on me

What I want to explain

My request or limit

A possible alternative

Timing, safety and support

A likely reply	A response I could use

Outcome / follow-up

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Personal rules experiment

Make a specific prediction and a fair test. Plan any safeguards before practice; record observations afterwards.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

BEFORE PRACTICE

Personal rule / prediction / belief 0-100%

Task / reasonable standard

What to change / precautions / when to finish

AFTER PRACTICE - observations and learning

What happened?

Learning / a more flexible rule

Next step

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Weekly balance planner

Plan lightly. Blank days are allowed; care, recovery and support count. Add dates beside the days if useful.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Essential commitments and what can be shared

Possible obstacle / support / smaller step

Day	Essential priority	Recovery / connection	Support or smaller version
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

One adjustment for next week

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Stress warning-sign plan

Keep the learning visible. Match each early sign with a practical response rather than waiting for a difficult week.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What I have learned

If I notice...	A small response I can use	Support / when to review

Helpful habits to keep

Support / when to ask for help

Review date / reminder

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Toolkit guide and contents

The worksheets come first. Select what fits your goals; you do not need to complete every sheet.

Using this collection

A worksheet cannot resolve unsafe working conditions, abuse, financial hardship or medical problems. Seek appropriate practical or professional support. New or concerning physical symptoms should not automatically be attributed to stress. Avoid boundary or behavioural experiments that could expose you to retaliation or genuine danger. Where a relationship or workplace is unsafe, plan support first rather than trying to manage it through a scripted conversation alone.

Worksheet starting pages

01 Stress worksheet

02 Problem-solving worksheet

03 Boundary-setting worksheet

04 Personal rules experiment

05 Weekly balance planner

06 Stress warning-sign plan

Guidance and fictional examples follow this index. Individual website downloads also contain fillable fields; this complete toolkit is for printing.

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Using this resource

Stress worksheet

What this helps with

Stress can arise when demands exceed available time, energy, control or support. This map compares the demands around you with the resources you can draw on. It makes room for organisational and practical changes as well as personal responses. It is not a circular disorder model and does not assume that stress is caused mainly by faulty thinking.

How to use it

1. List the main demands and what each requires from you.
2. Note the time, energy, control and support actually available.
3. Identify thoughts or rules that increase pressure, without dismissing genuine obligations.
4. Record how you respond and what happens to recovery or support.
5. Choose one practical need and one possible response to discuss or change.

A fictional worked example

Rina was caring for a relative while covering extra shifts. She told herself that asking for help would let everyone down, skipped breaks and answered messages late at night. Her map showed that the workload was genuinely too large, not simply a problem with her attitude. She identified a rota discussion and advice about caring support as practical priorities. She also noticed that replying immediately to every non-urgent message extended the working day. Her first plan combined asking for help with one agreed limit on evening messages. She did not set a goal of becoming calm enough to tolerate unlimited demands.

Keep in mind

Include actual inequalities, illness and unsafe conditions; do not use the map to blame yourself for them. If workload or relationships pose a risk, seek appropriate support. New physical symptoms need suitable healthcare advice rather than being assumed to be stress.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Stress.

Health and Safety Executive. Work-related stress and how to manage it: Causes of stress at work.

Health and Safety Executive. What are the Management Standards? Accessed 24 October 2026.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Problem-solving worksheet

What this helps with

When several problems compete for attention, thinking harder can become another source of overload. Structured problem solving narrows the task to one specific difficulty and a step you can actually try. It works best for a practical problem with some possibility of action. It is less useful for repeatedly asking what might happen in an uncertain future. You can acknowledge that uncertainty while choosing what is within reach today.

How to use it

1. Describe one specific problem and a realistic outcome you would prefer.
2. List several options before judging them, including asking for help.
3. Compare likely benefits, costs, feasibility and any safety concerns.
4. Choose one small step; specify who, when and what support is needed.
5. Review what happened on an agreed date and adapt the plan.

A fictional worked example

Lewis felt overwhelmed by missed household bills and kept reopening the same letters without acting. He defined the immediate problem as not knowing which payment needed attention first. Possible options included making a short list, contacting the providers or asking a trusted relative to sit with him. He chose to list the letters on Saturday morning with support, then contact one provider about available arrangements. The plan did not solve every financial difficulty, but it made the next action clear. At review he noted which information was still missing and decided whether specialist advice would be useful.

Keep in mind

Use qualified advice for financial, legal, employment or medical decisions; this sheet organises thinking rather than providing that advice. If there is immediate danger, act on safety needs first. Problems outside your control may need support and acceptance of limits rather than more planning.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Problem solving.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Boundary-setting worksheet

What this helps with

A boundary describes what you can realistically offer or what needs to change. It does not guarantee that another person will agree or feel pleased. Planning the conversation can help you be clear about the demand, its effect and the request, without overexplaining or promising more than you can manage. In situations with a power imbalance, practical support may be needed. A safe and fair context matters as much as wording.

How to use it

1. Identify the specific demand and its effect on your work, health or responsibilities.
2. Decide the request or limit in clear, realistic terms.
3. Draft a brief statement and any workable alternative.
4. Consider likely responses and how to repeat the request without overcommitting.
5. Choose timing and support; review what happened and whether further action is needed.

A fictional worked example

Haroon was regularly asked to take on additional tasks near the end of his shift. He prepared a discussion with his manager: "I can complete the urgent report today. If I also take this new task, the other deadline will need to move. Which should I prioritise?" His aim was to clarify workload, not prove that the manager was wrong. He brought a factual list of current tasks and noted the agreed priorities afterwards. The conversation did not remove all pressure, but it replaced an unspoken assumption that everything would be done. He planned to seek further support if the pattern continued.

Keep in mind

Do not use a direct boundary experiment where it could increase abuse, coercion or retaliation. Seek suitable support first, such as a trusted professional or workplace representative. Do not remove essential caring or safety responsibilities without an appropriate alternative arrangement.

Sources and attribution

Health and Safety Executive. Work-related stress and how to manage it: Causes of stress at work.

Health and Safety Executive. Management Standards: Control.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Personal rules experiment

What this helps with

Personal rules can provide direction, but very rigid standards may make ordinary tasks take far more time and energy than they need. An experiment tests one prediction about changing a rule slightly. It does not ask you to become careless or lower important professional standards. Choose a low-stakes task where a reasonable standard is clear. The learning comes from observing the result, not simply telling yourself to stop being a perfectionist.

How to use it

1. Write the rule and identify how it affects time, effort or recovery.
2. Choose a low-risk task and define a reasonable standard in advance.
3. Predict what would happen if you reduced one unnecessary extra effort.
4. Try the agreed change without replacing it with reassurance or hidden rechecking.
5. Compare the result with the prediction and consider a more flexible rule.

A fictional worked example

Sofia spent half an hour rewriting informal messages about social plans because she feared sounding thoughtless. She chose one low-stakes message and agreed a reasonable standard: clear, polite and accurate. Her prediction was that sending it after one ordinary read-through would lead to criticism. She sent the message and returned to another activity without asking a friend to check it. The reply simply confirmed the plan. Sofia noticed that she still felt uncertain for a while, but had saved time. Her new rule was that everyday messages can be considerate without being polished repeatedly. She did not apply the experiment to safety-critical work.

Keep in mind

Choose low-risk tasks only. Retain clinical, legal, safeguarding, technical and other required checks. Do not use this exercise to test genuinely unsafe shortcuts or ignore disability-related support needs. If a rule concerns severe OCD or trauma symptoms, seek an approach matched to your individual difficulty.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Problem solving.

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Stress.

Bennett-Levy, J., et al. (Eds.). (2004). Oxford guide to behavioural experiments in cognitive therapy. Oxford University Press.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Weekly balance planner

What this helps with

When pressure rises, breaks, meals, connection and sleep routines are often the first things squeezed out. This can leave less capacity for the next demand. Recovery planning is not a promise that a brief break will solve an excessive workload. It helps you protect a few practical needs while identifying what must be reduced, shared or changed. Choose a plan for your actual week, including the possibility that energy will vary.

How to use it

1. Identify essential commitments and what can be delayed, simplified or shared.
2. Choose a few recovery actions that feel realistic and restorative to you.
3. Place them alongside tasks rather than waiting until everything is finished.
4. Plan a smaller version and support for demanding days.
5. Review whether the plan helped capacity and what structural pressures remain.

A fictional worked example

Ben worked rotating shifts and cared for his children on days off. A rigid daily wellbeing timetable felt impossible. He instead identified a few flexible anchors: eating during a planned break, a short quiet transition after work and one conversation with a friend each week. He also asked a family member to share one practical task. Some days the quiet transition was only a few minutes. His review focused on whether those changes were useful and achievable, not whether he completed a perfect routine. He noted that staffing pressure still needed a workplace conversation; personal recovery time could not solve that problem alone.

Keep in mind

Adapt plans for health conditions, disability, caring responsibilities and shift patterns. Do not replace treatment or necessary support with self-care tasks. Persistent exhaustion, major sleep disturbance or concerning physical symptoms merit appropriate professional advice. Recovery should not require ignoring essential safety needs.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Stress.

Health and Safety Executive. Management Standards: Control.

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Using this resource

Stress warning-sign plan

What this helps with

An early-warning plan links signs of overload with actions you can recognise and use. It should include changes in circumstances, not just symptoms inside you. For example, extra responsibilities may call for a workload conversation rather than another calming exercise. Review the plan when things are relatively settled and after demanding periods. It is a guide to noticing and responding sooner, not a way to guarantee that stress will never return.

How to use it

1. List your early signs in thoughts, body, behaviour and daily routine.
2. Identify circumstances that make overload more likely.
3. Match each sign with one realistic action or source of support.
4. Define what would mean the current plan is insufficient and professional help is needed.
5. Set a review date and keep the plan somewhere easy to find.

A fictional worked example

Jodie noticed that overload usually began with skipping lunch, rereading emails late at night and becoming short-tempered at home. Her plan linked those signs to a review of current demands, a conversation about priorities and asking for practical help. After several weeks of pressure, she also noticed persistent low mood and difficulty sleeping. Rather than adding more tasks to her self-help plan, she arranged a healthcare discussion. The sheet helped her distinguish an ordinary busy week from a pattern needing more support. She kept useful strategies from earlier weeks while accepting that circumstances and needs could change.

Keep in mind

Seek assessment if distress persists, functioning deteriorates or physical symptoms concern you. This is not a diagnostic checklist or crisis plan. If a situation becomes unsafe, prioritise appropriate protection and urgent support rather than waiting for the scheduled review.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Stress.

Health and Safety Executive. Work-related stress and how to manage it: Causes of stress at work.

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