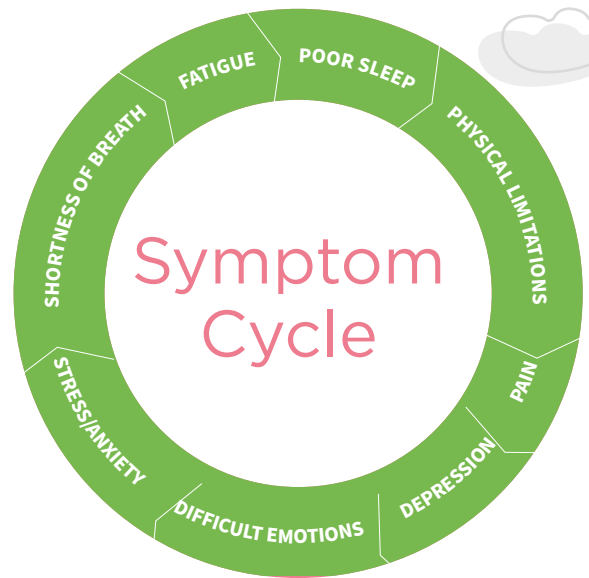
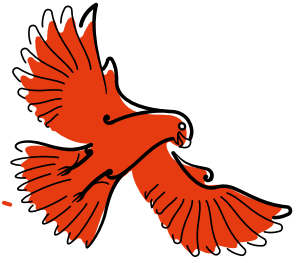


Stress

This kete will help you to understand your stress and make a plan to manage it.



Stress can be caused by a number of different issues, including other symptoms such as fatigue or pain. These symptoms are often linked to each other. Because they are all connected they can make each other worse and turn into a symptom cycle.

Breaking the cycle

Understanding that these are all connected is the first step in breaking the cycle. You might not be experiencing all these symptoms at the same time.

This kete has tools and resources that can help you find some things you can do to break the cycle, and make a plan to improve your stress.



Learn more at:
hn.org.nz

Book recommendation:
Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions, by Kate Lorig, et al. Bull Publishing, 2020

Stress

What is stress?

Stress is a natural response to a demand or threat in our environment and we all experience it. A certain level is needed as it helps you rise to the occasion and get things done. But long-term stress can affect your health and wellbeing.

Signs of too much stress include:

- ▶ headaches
- ▶ stomach/puku aches
- ▶ poor sleep
- ▶ feeling tired, anxious, irritable or angry
- ▶ lack of concentration
- ▶ needing to use coffee or sugar to keep going
- ▶ increased skin infections, mouth ulcers, colds, rashes or asthma.

Health conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, anxiety and depression can result from ongoing stress. Therefore, it's important to learn to manage stress to keep physically and mentally healthy.

How can I deal with current stress?

- ▶ Include relaxing things in your day – listen to music, take photos, do some mindfulness meditation, have a bath, practice breathing exercises.
- ▶ Do some exercise.
- ▶ Get plenty of sleep.
- ▶ Eat healthily.
- ▶ Don't dwell on things that are worrying you, distract yourself with an activity, or by getting into nature.
- ▶ Talk to a friend or whānau member who understands.

How can I avoid long-term stress?

- ▶ Think about the sources of stress in your life and see what can be changed or stopped.
- ▶ Problem-solve and break down larger more stressful tasks into smaller steps.
- ▶ Consider that you might be trying to do too much in one day, be realistic about what you can achieve.
- ▶ Look at your lifestyle – is it healthy with respect to food, drink, sleep and exercise?
- ▶ Try to maintain some work/life balance.
- ▶ Make sure you do some of the things that are important to you and spend time with loved ones.

Try the step-by-step problem solving process on the next page.



Problem solving

A step-by-step process.

- ▶ Sometimes problems can stop you from reaching your goals.
- ▶ It can be hard to deal with problems on your own.

Here is a step-by-step problem solving process you can go through with a friend or family member. This will give you some ideas about how to solve the problems that are holding you back.

Here are the steps:



1 Identify and define the problem		
<i>I'm having problems with how a colleague is communicating with me.</i>		
2 List ideas and possible solutions		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talk to my boss about it.</i> <i>Ask a friend who had a similar problem for ideas.</i> <i>Email my colleague and make a time to talk about it.</i> 		
3 Rate each idea		
Idea	Pros/For	Cons/Against
1.	<i>My boss will understand.</i>	<i>It feels like telling tales.</i>
2.	<i>My friend sorted out his problem so knew what to do.</i>	<i>What worked for him might not work for me.</i>
3.	<i>It would address the problem more directly.</i>	<i>I don't like confrontation so it would be hard to do.</i>
4 Choose one idea		
<i>Talk to my boss.</i>		
5 Put into action		
<i>Emailed my boss to explain and make a time to meet and discuss.</i>		
6 Review		
<i>Meeting went well. She was supportive and will meet with us both to talk about my concerns.</i>		

What is the problem?
How would you explain it?

How could you fix the problem? (Whānau or friends could help you with this).

What are the good things about each idea? What are the things that could stop you putting your ideas into action?

What is the best idea? (Whānau or friends could help you decide).

What do you need to do to fix the problem?

Did your idea work?
What went well?
What didn't? How could you learn from this?

What can you try next?

My problem solving process



1 Identify and define the problem

2 List ideas and possible solutions

3 Rate each idea

Idea	Pros/For	Cons/Against

4 Choose one idea

5 Put into action - what I am going to do

6 Review - what worked well?



Learn more at: hn.org.nz -
search for **problem solving** and
making changes.



Talking with family and friends

Talking about your feelings.

- ▶ Communication is very important for keeping families close and well-connected.
- ▶ Many couples and families go through life without talking much about their feelings or what's really worrying them.

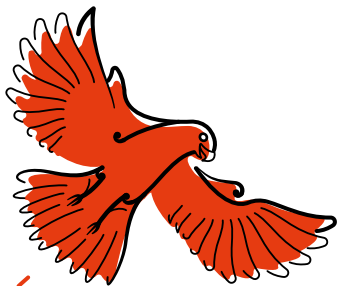
I want to tell them about how stressed I feel. Hiding it makes me feel lonely and sad but I'm worried. We never talk about our feelings.

It's such a relief not to keep all this to myself. I feel like I don't have to pretend I'm okay.

I wish Dad talked about how he's feeling. He seems stressed lately and I'm worried about him.

I need to make some changes. It'd be great to talk about this with you.

I'm worried about my husband's mental health, it could be good to talk about it and get some suggestions.



Everyone needs to talk honestly about what they're feeling.

Having honest conversations could reduce stress, make you feel closer to family and friends, and feel that you have support.

Whatever your reason - it's always good to talk and share ideas.



What would you like to talk about?

Think of a problem or issue you'd like to discuss.

Have a look at this example.



Who do you want to talk to? **MY WIFE AROHA.**

What do you want to talk about? **TALK ABOUT WHY I HAVE BEEN SO STRESSED LATELY**

► **Try it.** What works for you?

Who do you want to talk to?

What do you want to talk about?



Who do you want to talk to?

What do you want to talk about?

Who do you want to talk to?

What do you want to talk about?



Feeling good

Five ways to wellbeing.

- ▶ Doing these 5 things can make you feel better about yourself, both physically and mentally.

Connect

Me whakawhanaunga

Spend time with people in your life who make you feel good. Are they friends, family, colleagues or neighbours? These connections can support you and enrich your life.

Give

Tukua

Do something for a friend or a stranger. It feels good to give and makes you feel part of your community.

Take notice

Me aro tonu

Be aware of the world around you and see the beauty in everyday and unusual things - reflecting on them helps you appreciate what matters to you.

Learn

Me ako tonu

Try something new or rediscover an old interest. Take on a new responsibility or challenge - learning makes you more confident and can be fun.

Be active

Me kori tonu

Physical activity helps in so many ways, so find something that you enjoy that suits your ability.

Use the weekly activity diary to plan how you will build some of these into your day.



Learn more at: hn.org.nz

- Search for **wellbeing** and **mental health**.



My weekly activity diary

To keep track of what I am doing



Use this diary to plan your week and record your activity towards your goals.

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Mental wellbeing/ Te taha hinengaro Relaxation Fun Sleep							
Spiritual wellbeing/ Te taha wairua Music/singing Mindfulness Church/prayer							
Social wellbeing/ Te taha whānau Whānau Friends Work/study/volunteer							
Physical wellbeing/ Te taha tinana Healthy eating Being active Managing symptoms							

Sleep

Tips to improve your sleep.

- ▶ Without a good night's sleep, it can be hard to function properly. Poor sleep can make you feel tired and grumpy. The good news is there are things you can do to improve your sleep by making a few changes to your daily routine and habits.



Set your body clock



- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, including weekends.
- Keep your daytime routine the same, even if you've had a poor night's sleep.
- Get out into bright light as soon as you wake up – light regulates your body clock.

Wind down at bedtime

- Relax before going to bed; try reading, having a bath or listening to music.
- Make your bedroom dark, cool and quiet and ensure that your bed is comfortable.
- Don't go to bed hungry. Drinking a warm glass of milk before bed may be helpful.
- Avoid heavy meals within 2 hours of bedtime as this can interrupt sleep.

Keep your evenings stimulant-free



- Don't drink any caffeinated drinks within 6 hours of going to bed.
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol 2 hours before going to bed.
- Avoid using your computer, mobile phone and other electronic devices at least 30 minutes before going to bed.

Go to bed when you're tired



- If you go to bed at the same time each night, you should start to feel sleepy at bedtime.
- If you're awake after 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing in another room.
- If you have things on your mind, write them down. Keep a pen and paper by your bed.

Be active in the day



- Regular daytime exercise improves sleep.
- Avoid strenuous exercise within 3 hours of going to bed.

If you want to make some changes, you could try using the sleep tips tracker to keep a record of the things you are doing.

If you have ongoing sleeping problems, see your doctor for advice. There are treatments available.



Learn more at:
hn.org.nz/sleep



Sleep tips tracker

To help you get a better night's sleep



Having difficulty sleeping? There are lots of things you can do to help get a better night's sleep. Use this form to record the things you are doing - remember the more of these you do, the more likely you are to get a good night's sleep.

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Did some exercise during the day							
Avoided napping during the day							
No caffeine within 6 hours of going to bed							
No physical exercise within 3 hours of going to bed							
No alcohol within 2 hours of going to bed							
No smoking within 2 hours of going to bed							
No heavy meals within 2 hours of going to bed							
No computer, mobile phones or other electronic device 30 minutes before going to bed							
Didn't go to bed hungry							
Relaxed before bedtime							
Put pen and paper by my bedside so I could write down things on my mind							
Set a bedtime routine and went to bed on time							
Got out of bed when awake in the night for more than 20 minutes							
Woke up on time							
Rate 1 - 10 how good your sleep was							

Relaxation

Relaxation is good for your health.

- ▶ Being able to relax is vital for good health.
- ▶ Life can get busy and we don't notice how tense or stressed we have become.

Are you relaxed? **Check now**

1

SHOULDERS

Are they up around your ears or relaxed? Push them up and then let them fall down.

2

FOREHEAD

Is it creased and frowning? Or smooth and relaxed? Push your eyebrows up then let them fall into a relaxed position.

3

JAWS

Are your teeth clenched? Let them come apart without opening your mouth. Feel your jaw muscle. Is it hard or relaxed? Let it go.

4

TONGUE

Is it up against your front top teeth? Let it lie on the floor of your mouth.



5

HANDS

Are they clenched like fists ready for a fight or floppy and relaxed?

6

BREATHING

Is it from your chest and rapid, or from your stomach and slow with full 'out' breaths?

7

TOES

Are they curled up tight or relaxed?

Ways to relax

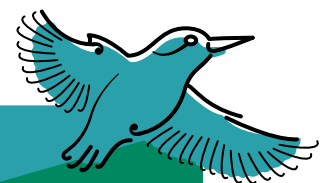
Some people relax by going for a walk or doing some gardening. Others relax by reading a book, listening to music, watching a movie or talking to friends.

How do you relax?

.....

.....

.....



Learn more at:
calm.auckland.
ac.nz

Deep breathing

- ▶ Deep breathing, or breathing into your stomach, can make you feel better and help you to relax.
- ▶ This is also called diaphragmatic breathing.



Deep breathing technique - this can be done sitting or lying down

1

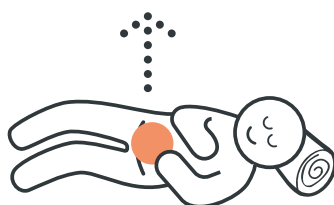


Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head on a pillow.

You can also put a pillow under your knees to support your legs.

Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

2



Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand.

The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

3



Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you breathe out through your lips like you are going to whistle.

The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

You may notice an increased effort is needed to use the diaphragm correctly. At first, you might get tired doing this exercise but keep at it because, with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

Practise for 5-10 minutes, about 3-4 times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even increase the effort by placing a book on your stomach/puku.

Symptom diary

You can help your doctor diagnose and treat your condition by preparing some answers to possible questions about your symptoms. Since some symptoms are difficult to describe, it is helpful to write down information about your symptoms as you experience them, such as when they occur and what you did to manage them.

Date and time	What symptom(s) did you experience (eg, shortness of breath, knee pain)?	How long did the symptoms last?	How intense were the symptoms (on a scale of 1-10)?	What was the trigger for the symptom/s (eg, exercise, stress)?	What did you do to reduce the symptoms?

My stress action plan



Now it's time to start making a plan to improve your stress.

Start with a goal, it can be anything that you would like to achieve that is important to you. When you decide on what you will do to work towards your goal, try to make it:

- **Specific** - not vague.
- **Measurable** - so you know you are doing it.
- **Achievable** - if it's too hard you won't manage it.
- **Realistic** - if it's not possible you might not even get started!
- **Trackable** - something you can record over time and see how you're doing.

Here's an example:

Goal: Hemi wants to feel less stressed and anxious about work.

Actions: He needs to work on his mood first thing in the morning and after work by doing relaxing things like breathing and exercise.

Chosen action: Hemi decides to do a 10 minute relaxed breathing exercise with an app before he gets up each day and after he gets home from work.

Confidence: He is fairly sure he can do this so rates his confidence as 7 out of 10.

If a big change feels too much, break it down into a set of steps. Small steps are a great way to start.



My action plan: What is my goal and action plan?



My stress action plan goal:

Why do I want to do this? _____

How will this help? _____

What could I do to achieve this: _____

My stress action plan:

How much or how often will I do this? _____

When will I do this? _____

Who can help me: _____

How confident am I that I can do this: ☹️ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 😊

Things I am not ready to do yet: _____

What might stop me achieving these goals or making these changes? _____

You are more likely to be successful if your confidence level is 7 or more. If you are less confident, you might like to make your action plan easier.



For more copies, visit
hn.org.nz/kete