

A Stress First Aid Kit

It's often said that stress is actually good for us but prolonged states of stress can leave us feeling drained and little alive.

Approximately one in three clients come to me looking for support with managing stress and anxiety. I help them to take charge of their life, to feel in control again, to feel confident about dealing with stressful situations and life's challenges.



So many people do suffer - and often on their own - from stress and anxiety and the impact it has on our day to day life, mood, mental states and energy levels.

Feeling stressed and anxious causes much tension in our mind and body - particularly in our head, neck, shoulders and belly. As a result we feel tight, agitated, edgy, vulnerable, narrow, unsettled, drained, tired, hopeless, disempowered... Not good at all. Sound familiar?

So although inevitably stress is part of our busy lives – stress doesn't have to take over.

Your Stress First Aid kit:

There are many things we can do to help us relax and to calm down; to live a more balanced life. Here are my top tips:

- **Notice when something is causing you stress**
Look for symptoms in your body, such as tensing in your belly and shoulders, frustration, irritability, compulsive thinking. The fact you recognise when something is causing stress is your opportunity to do something about it.
- **Catch it early**
Stress reactions can build up and fire off very quickly. The longer they go on, the more difficult they are to work with.
- **Do something!**
This may mean you need to stop what you are doing and do something else. Bring your mind into your body, notice your feet, legs and belly and breathe more deeply, notice how your breathing changes as you relax from shallower to deeper breaths. This is an immediate antidote for anxiety and tension.
- **Find the right balance between work, family, friends, leisure, me-time.** This is challenging – it will require awareness, effort and commitment – but the results of your efforts will make it thoroughly worthwhile. Step 1: take a review of all the things you think you have to do in your life and asked yourself these 2 crucial questions:

- What do I **need** to do?
- What do I **want** to do? These questions will help you become clearer about your priorities and how you want to spend the 24 hours you have every day.
- Step 2: Ask yourself **Can I do what I have to do differently**, perhaps more efficiently through e.g. better planning, diary and time management? That way you will create more time and space in your life. You relax, you slow down, you feel emotionally more positive, more energetic, with a clear, open mind - more in control of your life. And as a result we feel so much more able to make time and space for others. It allows you to respond more positively to your loved ones and the people that are important to you.
- **Keep perspective and stay in your own shoes** Taking responsibility for someone else can cause us stress. When we step into someone else's shoes, when we take on their stuff and believe that we have to find solutions for their problems can feel overwhelming, uncomfortable and most of all stressful.

Try and make a physical step back as though you were stepping back into your own shoes. You can also imagine becoming an observer. Being an observer is a powerful way to ensure you do not get emotionally caught up in other people's stuff. You can still support someone through listening and being present without taking on what belongs to them.

- **Doing less and allowing more me-time/time at home**
Weeks sometimes run away from us. Try making an intention to have more weeks with at least one or two evenings at home to rest and relax, to potter around the house, to eat well, to connect and catch up with friends and family... Mark this time in your diary.
- **Make time to switch off**
While stress can cause insomnia, lack of sleep can also cause stress. Take moments in your busy day to stop, switch off, breathe mindfully or even take a nap. The body can recover and recharge its batteries quicker than we think. Often the result is that we are much more productive and focused.
- **Fresh air and moments in natural green spaces**
Take regular walks in your local park or countryside or go on a cycle ride. Half an hour daily or a few times a week can make all the difference. You could try to incorporate a short walk into your lunch break or start walking all or part of your way to work.

Get in touch if you'd like to find out more or want to take up a 30-minute taster session in Victoria Park, East London, or via phone or Skype. Karen@greenspacecoaching.com

I write regular well being and coaching tips in my blog posts at www.greenspacecoaching.com and on my Facebook page: www.facebook.com/greenspacelifecoaching