



Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

STRESS AWARENESS MONTH APRIL 2021

REGAIN CONNECTION, CERTAINTY AND CONTROL

30 DAY CHALLENGE HINTS AND TIPS



Day 1 – Thursday 1st April

Physical - Set aside some time to stretch your body, taking deep slow breaths and engaging with your core. Visit <https://www.health.com/fitness/everyday-stretches> for some ideas on everyday stretches which can help to relieve tension and support your de-stressing journey.

Mental - Take our free online Individual Stress Test to identify areas for improvement. We will revisit this at the end of the 30 days to see if your score has changed!

Emotional - Have 5 quiet minutes and use this as an opportunity to assess how you're feeling. Are you happy, content, tired, sad, etc? Explore why you feel this way and what you can do to alter your mood.

Day 2 – Friday 2nd April

Physical – We often ignore the early signs of stress, many of which are physical. Take a moment to assess your physical state. Is your breathing fast, slow, shallow, or deep? Are your shoulders hunched? Are you thirsty, hungry, tired, sleepy?

Mental – Why should we care about stress?

Many are unaware of the link between high stress levels and a weakened immune system. Stress has been directly linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Mental illness is actually the second-largest burden of disease in England. Therefore, reducing our stress levels and altering how we react to stressful situations can boost our resilience and prevent illness.

Reflect on your life and the impact that stress has had on you in the past. How did you combat it? What made you feel better?

Emotional – Reflect on your week and write down 3 things that have made you smile.

Day 3 – Saturday 3rd April

Physical – Go out for a walk, even if you don't feel like it. Sunshine provides us with vitamin D which is a natural mood booster.

Mental – Create a simple to-do list for your weekend and get your day off to a productive start.

Emotional – Take a second to reflect on your life so far. What have you accomplished over the past 5 years? What are you proud of? What has been your best achievement?



Day 4 – Sunday 4th April – Happy Easter!

Physical – Have a bath with some Epsom salts to relax your muscles and soothe your mind. Don't have a bathtub? Epsom salts are also great for soaking feet so make yourself a footbath.

Mental – Stay connected. We might not be able to be with our loved ones in person, however, the power of technology means we can invite them to dinner over the phone or WhatsApp/Facetime/Zoom/Skype instead.

Emotional – Thinking positive and being able to appreciate the little things can have an enormous impact on your mindset. Start a daily gratitude journal and write down the things which you're grateful for each day. This will get you into the habit of noticing the little positives and wholesome moments that you experience throughout the week.

Day 5 - Monday 5th April

Physical – Get organised and plan some healthy meals for the week ahead. Eating a healthy, balanced diet with all the necessary vitamins helps with both physical and mental health.

Mental – Be kind to yourself, take time out for self-care – it's like the oxygen mask on the plane; put yours on first and you'll be in a better position to help others.

Emotional – Do you regularly watch the news and find it causes you emotional distress? If so, consider taking a break or altering how you consume the news. A useful tip is to avoid those thought-provoking headlines before bed.

Day 6 - Tuesday 6th April

Physical – It's spring and brighter weather is on the horizon. Why not give your windows a spring clean to let the beautiful sunshine in?

Mental – Want to better understand the impact of stress? Listen to the airing pain podcast going live today at <https://painconcern.org.uk/airing-pain/>

Emotional - Use our tips on how to start a conversation about mental health and ask one of your friends or family how they're feeling today.

How to start a conversation about mental health:

- Are you okay?
- How are things going?
- How are you, really?
- I've noticed that...
- Do you want to take a walk?
- What's on your mind?



Day 7 – Wednesday 7th April

Physical - Why not pick some flowers for a friend? The daffodils are beautiful at this time of year and it is bound to bring a smile to their face!

Mental – Are you aware of the causes of stress identified within the workplace?

These include:

- Workload/volume of work
- Management style
- Non-work factors - family and relationship issues
- Relationships at work
- Non-work factors - Personal illness or health issues
- Pressure to meet targets or deadlines

Do any of these stressors look familiar to you? If so, what could you do to make improvements?

Emotional – Stop for a moment and check-in with yourself. What are you feeling? If you're feeling blue, reach out to a friend or someone within your support network.

Day 8 – Thursday 8th April

Physical – If you are working from home, get up and have a stretch. Make sure you factor in regular screen breaks and take time away from your desk.

Mental – Plan out your day to ensure that you have a work-life balance. Keeping a schedule boosts productivity and helps to ensure that you can make time for yourself.

Emotional – We adopt an engineer's approach to stress: Force over area equals the pressure. When a bridge has too much load on it and if it is left there for long enough, it will eventually collapse. You would be able to see the warning signs before this happens. The bridge would bow, buckle, groan and creak.

The same principle can be applied to a human being with excessive demands and challenges placed on our bridges, we will collapse. That bridge collapse could manifest itself as a nervous breakdown, or serious health issues such as heart attack or cancer.

Watch our video on the bridge here: <https://youtu.be/12qq9hR6zVA>

Have you noticed any bending, buckling or creaking on your bridge?



Day 9 – Friday 9th April

Physical – Put your favourite song on and have a dance! Give yourself that Friday feeling!

Mental – Are you keen to unlock your happy? Use the graphic below to select an activity to activate the happiness chemicals in your brain:

UNLOCK YOUR HAPPY

<h4>SEROTONIN</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being outside in nature• Having a massage• Breathing exercises• Practising daily gratitude• Aerobic exercise <p><i>The mood stabilizer</i></p>	<h4>DOPAMINE</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrating success• Getting enough sleep• Mindfulness/Meditation• Listening to music• Sunlight exposure <p><i>The reward chemical</i></p>
<h4>ENDORPHINS</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having sex• Creative activities• Laughter• Eating cacao rich foods• Random acts of kindness• Taking a hot salt bath <p><i>The pain killer</i></p>	<h4>OXYTOCIN</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practising yoga• Cuddles and hugs• Petting a dog• Telling someone how much you care• Spending time with friends <p><i>The love hormone</i></p>

www.wellbeing.work
www.stress.org.uk



Emotional – Write down a list of things that you are looking forward to doing once the restrictions are lifted. Is it going for a meal? Booking a holiday? Have a think and plan so that you have some exciting things to look forward to!



Day 10 - Saturday 10th April

Physical – Go for a jog or a run! New to running? Have you thought about trying the couch to 5K programme? This offers a gradual introduction to running which is great for the mind and body.

Mental – Your thoughts matter!

Instead of	Try
“I’m a mess”	“I’m human”
“I can’t do this”	“I can do hard things”
“I’m a failure”	“I’m learning”
“Why is this happening?”	“What is this teaching me?”

Emotional – Do you often get stuck in “what if..?” thinking? The best way to handle this is to write down all the ‘what if’ topics that are giving you concerns, then add what you would do if the ‘what if’s’ come to pass. This will help to ease your worries and provide you with a practical action plan.

Day 11 – Sunday 11th April

Physical – Pick a recipe that you have always wanted to try and give it a go!

Mental – Do absolutely nothing. Can you be still, with no input for 2 minutes? 5 minutes? How about 10? It’s not often that we pause to stop the information and this simple act can improve our resilience.

Emotional – Have a think about those around you and all the qualities that you like and admire. Challenge yourself to tell those people your thoughts and brighten their day.

Day 12 – Monday 12th April

Physical – A lot of people struggle to drink enough water throughout the day which can cause a vicious cycle: thirsty because you are stressed and stressed because you are thirsty. Women should aim to drink about 1.6 litres per day and men should aim for 2 litres. Struggling to monitor your intake? Why not use a water bottle with measurements!

Mental – Did you know that just 6 minutes of relaxing into a good book can reduce blood pressure and muscle tension? Have a look at our suggested reading list of stress-busting books at www.stress.org.uk/stressawarenessmonth

Emotional – Why not arrange a group activity for you and your friends? This could be as simple as a group video call, or you could challenge your teamwork skills with a virtual escape room!



Day 13 – Tuesday 13th April

Physical – Are you sleeping well at the moment? Why not have a look at your sleep hygiene and identify some improvements that you can make? Find out more at <https://bit.ly/3ILdLIG>

Mental – Find a few minutes of your day to practice mindfulness as this is a great stress-busting activity. This needn't be a long or complex activity; it can be as simple as practising mindful breathing or eating.

Emotional – Tune in with yourself and finish the sentences below:

- 'I am feeling...'
- 'I think that...'
- 'I am happiest when...'
- 'I am looking forward to...'
- 'I can't wait for...'

Day 14 – Wednesday 14th April

Physical – Move every day. Take time to stand, stretch, adjust, and improve your posture.

Mental – Every year we create a free 7 step achievement plan to help individuals understand and achieve their goals. Visit www.stress.org.uk/stressawarenessmonth to download your copy and get planning!

Emotional – April is a perfect time to wiggle your green fingers – we planted some seeds a couple of weeks ago, it's given us a real lift to see them growing in the spring sunshine.

Day 15 - Thursday 15th April

Physical – Sign up for an online workout class today!

Mental – Can you name your favourite memory? Take a moment to pause and remember all of the little details. How things looked, smelt, tasted, and felt. What emotions did you feel at that exact moment?

Emotional – We conducted a study on causes of stress for the British public in January 2021.

Our of the 2000 participants:

- 46% feel disconnected to others
- 54% feel isolated
- 46% said uncertainty about when things will get back to normal
- 36% had difficulty concentrating
- 38% feel a lack of motivation

Do any of this sound similar to you?



Visit www.stress.org.uk/stressawarenessmonth for more details on the study.

Day 16 – Friday 16th April

Physical – Why not volunteer for a cause that's important to you? You can find out more about volunteering projects at <https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/volunteer>

Mental – Want to learn something new today? Why not listen to a TED Talk at www.ted.com/talks

Emotional – Here's 3 things for you to notice today:

- What you're grateful for
- What energises you
- What's not working and *why*

Day 17 – Saturday 17th April

Physical – Set some time aside to clean and organise a specific space. For example, this could be clearing out a kitchen cupboard, reorganising your wardrobe or venturing into the dreaded attic! Sorting provides a sense of achievement and will help to get your weekend off to a productive start.

Mental – Try a simple grounding exercise to help you unwind on your Saturday.

Can you name:

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

Emotional – Eating cacao rich foods produces endorphins which can improve our mood. Remember this is only in small quantities, we're not advising you to binge on endless amounts of chocolate!

Day 18 – Sunday 18th April

Physical – Have a relaxing evening and get an early night's sleep in preparation for the week ahead.

Mental – Why not try some brain training exercises like sudoku, crossword or word searches?

Emotional – Eventually, our time will all come to an end. Take a moment to consider how you want to be remembered by your friends, family and community. It's common for people to prioritise the goal of earning money and building a career, only to realise that they want to be recognised and remembered for personal values and attributes. This exercise is great at identifying priorities and unveiling what's truly



important to you. You can then use this knowledge to make proactive choices to align yourself with who you want to be.

Day 19 – Monday 19th April

Physical – Get up and do some quick short bursts of activity to get the blood pumping. Why not try:

- 30 star jumps
- 1 minute of high knees
- 15 burpees
- 30 seconds of skipping

Mental – Our Founder and Chief De-Stressing Officer, Neil Shah, has written a stress-busting book, The 10-Step Stress Solution.

The steps include:

- Prioritize your health
- Get a good nights sleep
- Don't be a slave to technology
- Learn to say 'no'
- Get moving to combat stress
- Adopt a positive mindset
- Master your time
- Practice deep breathing
- Stay hydrated
- Eat for wellbeing and NOT for stress

You can find out more about this on our website at www.stress.org.uk.

Emotional – Are you holding any grudges? Is there anything in life that you regret or would change if you had the chance? Take a moment to think about this and then let go of anything that is weighing you down. Life is a journey and we are only moving forward.

Day 20 – Tuesday 20th April

Physical – Try our digital detox tally to work out the impact that technology has on your life. If the number of 'YES' responses outweighs the 'NO's, it's worth reflecting on your score and identifying any elements that can be changed.

Mental – Write down a list of things that you want to achieve by the end of the week.

Emotional – If you're feeling a little blue, remember that you are the sky and your emotions are the weather. You can acknowledge and accept them, without making them part of who you are. For example, instead of saying "I'm Sad", learn to say "I feel sad".



Day 21 – Wednesday 21st April

Physical – Here are some of the best stress-busting activities:

- Practising mindfulness
- Being outside in nature
- Getting a good nights sleep
- Staying well hydrated
- Making time for fun and laughter
- Aerobic exercise
- Unplugging from digital devices

Pick one for your mid-week activity!

Mental – Since travelling abroad is off the cards, why not take yourself on a 10-minute holiday to de-stress? The power of the brain is amazing, and this nifty little trick is perfect for helping you to relax.

Listen to Neil and explore this activity at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hNcWDMtY_Y

Emotional – Find a quiet spot and write a letter to your future self.

Day 22 – Thursday 22nd April

Physical – Why not trade that sugary snack for a piece of fruit and help towards your 5 a day?

Mental – Ikigai is a Japanese word to describe your reason for being and the thing that gets up in the morning. Have you found your Ikigai? Take our free survey to find out! Visit <https://ikigaisurvey.questionpro.com/>

Emotional – Take the time to think about the mental state of those around you and identify who may be struggling. Is there anyone who comes to mind and if so, what can you do to help?

Day 23 - Friday 23rd April

Physical – In need of a relaxing activity to help you wind down, ready for the weekend? Try our stress colouring book, created by the amazingly talented Sam Antolik. Available at www.stress.org.uk/stressawarenessmonth

Mental – Reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while. A call or text can make someone's day!



Emotional – Think of 3 good things which have happened to you over the week.

Day 24 – Saturday 24th April

Physical - Green therapy: if you have a garden, go outside – if not, use your exercise time wisely and plan a route where you can get a nature fix – green is good!

Mental – Perform a random act of kindness for someone around you. You'll be surprised about how much a little act can impact someone's day.

Emotional – Send a motivational text to someone that you know is struggling.

Day 25 – Sunday 25th April

Physical – You're never too old to get creative! Try a creative activity today, whether it's writing, crafting, baking, cooking or photography – the worlds your oyster!

Mental – Why not stimulate a different part of your brain and try learning a new language? There are plenty of fantastic language apps including Duolingo, MemRise, Babbel, Hello Talk... ¡Puedes hacerlo!

Emotional – Take some time to reflect on the past week and the one ahead. What were the positives? What challenged you? What did you overcome? What do you hope to achieve in the upcoming week?

Day 26 – Monday 26th April

Physical – Clean and organise your workspace / room for the busy week ahead. A useful tip is to start with what you see around you and gradually increase your circle of influence.

Mental – Create a jar for your happy memories and add them as you go along. At the end of the year, you can open the jar and remind yourself of all the wonderful things that happened and what you achieved.

Emotional – If you're in a position to do so, donate some supplies to your local food bank. Unsure of what to give? Most food banks have a website with details on their stock levels and the items they need most. It's always useful to check beforehand to ensure that your donation makes the most impact.



Day 27 – Tuesday 27th April

Physical – Make a note of the support resources available to you:

- CALM
Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)
Website: www.thecalmzone.net
- Mental Health Foundation
Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- Mind
Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)
Website: www.mind.org.uk
- PAPYRUS
Phone: HOPElineUK 0800 068 4141 (9am to midnight, every day of the year)
Website: www.papyrus-uk.org
- Rethink Mental Illness
Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)
Website: www.rethink.org
- Samaritans
Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)
Website: www.samaritans.org.uk
- SANE
Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it most: www.sane.org.uk/textcare
Peer support forum: www.sane.org.uk/supportforum
Website: www.sane.org.uk/support
- YoungMinds
Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)
Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Mental – Smiling can alter our brain chemistry and make us feel happier. It is also infectious so smile at someone you pass and kickstart a chain reaction!

Emotional – Pet a dog! Giving attention to our furry friends' releases Oxytocin, the love hormone.



Day 28 – Wednesday 28th April

Physical – Have you ever thought about buying a plant for your room? Adding a bit of green is good for our health and brightens up our space!

Mental – Is there a hobby or activity that you've always wanted to try? Why not find out more and sign yourself up for some sessions!

Emotional – Thank a friend or someone close to you for the benefits that they bring into your life.

Day 29 – Thursday 29th April

Physical – Why not try and learn a new breathing technique to help you slow down and unwind?

Mental – Meditate: there are many different types, try a few out and at least one will work for you. No-one can tell you if you're doing it right, you can be guided but you'll figure it out yourself – the way you do it is the right way!

Emotional – If you're in a position to do so, pick your favourite charity and make a donation. No matter how small, every contribution has the ability to make a big difference!

Day 30 – Friday 30th April

Physical - Your body is the only one that you'll get, treat it better and it will reward you. Feed, water and let it out once in a while – change things up to keep it guessing!

Mental – Complete our Individual Stress Test to see if your score has improved over the past 30 days!

Emotional – Take a moment to check-in and look inwards. How are you feeling now your 30-day challenge is complete? What are you looking forward to for the next 30 days?