

# Stress & Anger Management

“Stress is often defined as the body’s response to the demands of life, though stress also involves emotions and the mind. It is the internal, conditioned reaction of a person to perceived external pressures and is experienced as thoughts and feelings as well as physical processes.” (Good Therapy, 2017)

“The American Institute of Stress calls stress America’s leading health problem.” In many cases, the stress experienced by Americans today is felt in response to psychological threats, such as job loss or difficulty finding employment, the death of a loved one, or relationship issues, all of which may occur more than once in the course of life.”

(Good Therapy, 2017)

## **Types of Stressors:**

- ‘Positive’ Vs ‘Negative’ (e.g. wedding, a birth of the baby, moving to a new location, being criticised, poor communication, etc)
- Long-term (e.g. grief and bereavement, chronic illness or disease, etc)
- Constant / frequent (e.g. getting stuck in a traffic on the way to work, constant noise during work or sleep, unpleasant temperature in the work environment)

- Psychological (e.g. getting criticised or disapproved, not feeling satisfied with career progression)
- Destructive habits (e.g. struggling to give up smoking, drinking, etc)

### **Long-term stress can lead to:**

- poor sleep patterns (e.g. insomnia, hypersomnia)
- eating too little or too much
- indulging in self-destructive habits frequently (e.g. smoking, eating 'junk food', drinking alcohol often)
- loss of desire in enjoyable activities
- loss of interest in intimacy
- not enjoying work (and feeling unproductive)
- frequent headaches, migraines
- digestive issues
- chronic pains (and flair-ups of existing problems)
- feeling depressed
- cardiovascular problems
- feeling anxious (or even panic attacks)

### **When dealing with the client, who has stress- and/or anger - related issues, look at the following:**

- what situations cause the person stress and/or anger
- what is possible and not possible to change in the client's situation
- how does the client usually responds to the provoking situations
- is client willing to adopt a different attitude and behaviour in order to improve situation

## **What can you do in therapy:**

- discussing and finding new ways to respond to provoking situations
- teaching the client new skills that can help to deal with stress and anger more appropriately
- teaching the client new communication skills (e.g. assertive way of speaking, negotiating)
- teaching the client to use anger for solving problems and self-motivation

## **Ways of managing stress- and anger- related situations that you can advise to the client:**

- Learning deep breathing and focusing on their present emotions (e.g. mindfulness)
- Engage in regular exercise (which would involve finding the time for it, making it as a priority, and sticking to it. Research shows that regular exercise results in better control of own emotions)
- Make it important to eat healthy, avoid 'junk food' and destructive habits (e.g. research shows that destructive habits such as smoking and drinking alcohol makes the person less resilient to stress)
- Find an outlet to expel emotions (e.g. watch a movie or a tv programme where the person can laugh out loud, exercise such as running, aerobics, martial arts)
- Find relaxing activity (e.g. an activity that quiets the mind such as meditation, yoga, tai-chi, crafting, gardening)
- Learn to focus on positives (e.g. finding at least 3 positives in every situation)

- Learn to plan in advance (e.g. work-related activities, family days out, own holidays, tasks that need to be done. When most of our activities are planned, this can give us a sense of being in control, and where there is less chance of recurring stress and anger)
- Make 'me-time' a priority (e.g. an undisturbed hour after work, going to classes 3 times a week, having a day off or planning next vacation)

## **Recommended Literature:**

*'Counselling for Stress Problems'* (2010), Stephen Palmer and Windy Dryden

*'Working with Emotions in Psychotherapy'* (1997), by Leslie S. Greenberg and Sandra C. Paivio

## **Recommended Websites:**

*'How to Control Your Anger'*: NHS. Available from: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/controlling-anger.aspx>

*'Anger Management'*: Mind Tools. Available from: [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS\\_97.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_97.htm)