

Manage ‘in the moment’ stress



There’s a lot of information available on how to reduce stress over the long term, such as exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep. But what about ‘in the moment’ stress?

e|Care spoke to counselling psychologist, Leah Gous, about how to best tackle this kind of stress.

- **Take a few deep breaths to keep calm and refrain from having an angry outburst.** Go for a short walk, drink a cup of tea, or listen to your favourite music for a moment and, once you’ve calmed down, go back. “Stepping away from the stressful situation has a calming effect and you become less emotional and more rational regarding the problem,” Gous explains. You can even ask someone at work for input and ideas on how you can handle the situation.
- **Try to see the positive side of things.** It’s important to tell yourself that you can do the task at hand. “When you find yourself saying, for example, ‘I can’t do this’ – stop and inject some positivity,” says Gous. Positive self-talk is very important because by continually telling yourself that you can’t do something or that you’ll never finish on time, you programme your brain to think that way. Focus on past accomplishments.

“Think about a previous occasion where you had a similar assignment and succeeded – you’ll realise it’s actually not that bad.”

- **Write down what you need to do.** When you have a lot on your plate, it helps to externalise by writing down what needs to be done. “By writing things down, you remove the stress and make it more objective because you are then able to see that it’s actually not so difficult, making it more manageable,” adds Gous.
- **Talk to someone.** It’s good to talk to someone you trust or to contact your employee wellness programme where there are professionals you can talk to and who will not disclose anything you said.

We all experience stressful moments – sometimes it’s good as it gives us that extra bit of encouragement needed to succeed, and other times it pushes us over the edge. The good news is there are ways to overcome those moments of initial panic and stress and take control.