



Work Stress/Tāmitanga Mahi

Adapted from www.getselfhelp.co.uk

This resource is for people experiencing work-related stress/tāmitanga mahi and provides suggestions for managing this.

Work-related stress has many causes and occurs where work demands, or other aspects of the workplace exceed someone's ability to cope. Work-related stress affects people's health and wellbeing along with organisational productivity, especially if it lasts over a long time. Below are examples of what organisations and employees can do to lessen work-related stress.

You don't have to do this alone. Seeking support from your whānau, friends, GP, or health professional can help you get through. If you feel overwhelmed or just want to talk, call or text **1737** or check out the support options at the end of this resource.

Signs of work-related stress

Some of the impacts of work-related stress on physical health, mental wellbeing, and behaviour are below.

Physical health: fatigue, muscle tension, headache, heart palpitations, sleeping difficulties, stomach upsets, and skin problems.

Mental wellbeing: feeling overwhelmed, unable to cope, depressed/matapōuri, anxious/manawāpa, angry/riri and irritable/āritarita.

Behavioural: increased sick days and other time off work, disinterest, reduced creativity and initiative, poor performance, isolating self at work, or presenteeism (at work but not doing the job effectively).

Causes of work-related stress

Work-related stress can be due to aspects of the job or the workplace.

Job-related causes: may include long hours, heavy workload, tight deadlines, boring work/mahi, a lack of equipment or proper resources, changes to duties, too much - or not enough supervision, a need to develop skills for the job, job insecurity, lack of autonomy, inadequate working environment, few opportunities for promotion, experiencing harassment or discrimination, poor relationships with colleagues or managers, and traumatic or crisis incidents at work.

Workplace-related causes: the organisational culture may not align with personal values, there may be inadequate leadership resulting in poor management practices, a dangerous physical work environment, relationship difficulties with co-workers or conflict between people, a lack of support, organisational change and poor change management.

Managing and reducing workplace stress and its impacts

Many strategies can be used to manage and reduce workplace stress. Below are some things organisations and employees can do.

Goal	What organisations can do	What employees can do
Reduce the causes of stress	Ensure workers know how to make suggestions, ask questions, or raise concerns. Provide a process for workers to regularly put forward workplace improvement ideas. Offer flexible working arrangements	Ask managers about the processes for raising concerns, making suggestions, or asking questions. Talk to your employer about flexible working options.
Increase ability to cope with stress	Offer workplace wellbeing programmes.	Start a work walking group or some other activity that others can join.

Whānau and friends can be great sources of support to help get through and provide another perspective on what can be done to help relieve work-related stress.

- › Consider the changes you and the organisation can make to reduce levels of workplace stress or manage it better. Share your ideas and encourage colleagues to share theirs. Employers have a duty to do things that reduce stress and help employees cope with unavoidable stress without unreasonable cost.
- › Share any work difficulties with someone you trust. Talk concerns over with your employer or human resources manager.
- › Create a list of tasks and schedule those which are difficult at times you feel fresh each day.
- › Eat healthy kai and exercise regularly to maintain your wellbeing/whai oranga.
- › Seek help to reduce or stop substance use.
- › Take regular annual leave to give you time to unwind.
- › Take time for yourself.
- › Practice meditation or relaxation exercises.
- › Maintain work-life balance and boundaries when working from home.

Below are some further ideas on how to maintain your work-life balance and wellbeing when working from home.

Work-life balance

- › Talk to your employer about flexible work options.
- › Set boundaries when you leave or finish work, for example, turn off your work phone and do not check emails outside of working hours, book in exercise classes or do something that you enjoy.
- › Take regular breaks. Go for a walk, do some breathing exercises or do something else that takes your mind off work.
- › Think about what is important to you and how you might spend more time doing those things when not at work.
- › Make plans for your weekends to help you separate your work week and weekends. For example, go on an overnight trip, meet friends for a catch-up, or spend time playing outside with tamariki.

Working from home

- › If possible, have a designated workspace at home that when you finish work you can either close the door or put your computer away out of sight.
- › Maintain a routine such as getting dressed for work each day to help you distinguish between working from home and being at home.
- › Maintain relationships with work colleagues by sending them messages or talking to them to help you feel connected.
- › Take regular breaks. Get up and make a cup of tea to reset and refresh.
- › Go for a walk or spend time outside each day.

If work-related stress continues to be a problem, you may need to consider another job or a career change despite your efforts. Seek advice from a career counsellor or employment specialist.

Apps

- › Smiling Mind is a free app that helps with mindfulness, sleep, and stress. | <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/thrive-inside>
- › Mentemia is a free app that can help you monitor, manage, and improve your mental wellbeing, set daily goals, and track your progress. | <https://www.mentemia.com/nz/home>
- › Clearhead offer free 24/7 support and advice through your phone as well as resources, videos and wellbeing plans. | <https://www.clearhead.org.nz/>
- › Manaaki ora app by Te Rau Ora and the Centre for Māori Suicide Prevention is a free tool offering guidance and tips on how to support your wellbeing or someone else going through difficult times. | <https://terauora.com/news/self-help-wellbeing-app-launched-to-support-maori-experiencing-mental-distress/>
- › Melon is a free app with self-help tools to help manage emotional wellbeing. | <https://www.melonhealth.com>
- › Headspace is a subscription app that provides guided meditation, reminders, and trackers to help you relax and be mindful. | <https://www.headspace.com/>

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Take smalls steps to achieve your goals

