

# Looking after Yourself.

Looking after yourself is one way to build your resources to better deal with stress (e.g., customer misbehaviour or heightened stress due to COVID-19). When you are looking after yourself, physically and mentally, you will be

- Less likely to see problems as stressors
- More confident that you can deal (cope) with the problem
- Better able to deal with the problem
- Less stressed.

There are a lot of ways to look after yourself, and you should do what works for you. However, it is important to have multiple ways to look after yourself, so that you can interchange your ways when necessary. Here's a few ways that you can look after yourself.

## › Confront, Overcome or Distance Yourself from the Stressor

- Manage the customer interaction by controlling your
  - Emotions
    - Don't catch the customer's negative emotions
    - Find positive emotions to draw on (use your thinking)
    - Use positive emotional contagion to your advantage
  - Thinking
    - Think positive thoughts
    - Think of complaints as being about the situation or specific to the problem
    - Keep perspective
- Don't over-personalise or over-generalise
- Behaviour
  - Be aware of your non-verbal behaviour
  - Use body language effectively
  - Relax your muscles
  - Use breathing to assist you to remain calm and relaxed
- Maintain control over the environment
  - Reduce potential causes of frustrations that may lead to aggression

## › Build Your Resources to Combat Stress

- Ensure you rest when needed, and get the required amount of sleep
  - Adults should sleep between 7 and 9 hours/day
  - Practice good sleep hygiene behaviours (e.g., going to sleep as a consistent time, make your bed comfortable and room dark, minimise caffeine before bed – stop caffeine intake 5 hours before trying to sleep)
- Maintain your routine
- Exercise
  - Even a 30-minute walk can provide health benefits
- Ensure you are eating a healthy and well-balanced diet.
- Seek out information, resources and services, when needed.
- Build your personal skills
  - Training
    - Customer misbehaviour
    - Stress management
  - Personal qualities
    - Practice self-compassion
      - Acceptance of self
      - Seeing self as similar to others
      - Being kind to self

## › Re-think the Stressor

- Avoid negative self-talk.
  - Avoid statement that over-generalise, over-personalise, and are irrational and unhelpful (e.g., "I am no good at this", "I can't do anything right")
  - Use cognitive re-appraisal to challenge negative automatic thoughts
- Use positive and calm self-talk
  - Think calm thoughts about the situation (e.g., "I am doing my job well", "I can do this", "I've got this")
  - Think positively of yourself (e.g., "I have the skills to handle this", "I have support if I need")
- Do not ruminate or dwell on past mistakes or problems
  - When thinking of past situations, think of them as lessons, and what you learned from the situation
- Think of problems as challenges

### COGNITIVE RE-APPRAISAL

Catch the negative thought  
Challenge the thought

- Evidence for and against
  - Based on feeling or fact
  - Logical or irrational
  - Others' perspective
  - Over-simplifying
- Create alternative thought

## › Use Social Support to Express Feelings and Share the Load

- Social Support
  - Collective coping: the problem is shared, not individual problem or individual responsibility
  - Team support
  - Supervisor support
  - Family and friends
  - Share your experiences and lessons from customer interactions
  - Encourage to seek support, resources, etc.
- Make time for social connections
  - Friends, family, colleagues
  - Put time and effort into building and maintaining supportive relationships
    - Spend time with others, celebrate, listen and share with others
- Use journaling to express your problems
  - Writing down your problem (specific and honestly) can help find solutions
- Seek professional support
  - Employee Assistance Plan (EAP)
  - GP
  - Counsellors/Psychologists
  - Lifeline or Beyond Blue

## › Soften the Symptoms of Stress

- Physical and muscle relaxation
  - Breathing exercises
  - Rest
  - Massage
  - Meditation
  - Mindfulness
  - Yoga
- Distraction
  - Movies or tv series
  - Music
  - Gaming
  - Socialising
- Physically get the problem out of your system
  - Sport
  - Gym work-out
  - Boxing
- Psychological treatments
  - Cognitive behaviour techniques
  - Counsellor or psychologist

### › Warning Signs to Seek Help

- › Using unhelpful stress management strategies
  - Denial
  - Rumination
  - Recklessness
  - Overconsumption
  - Self-medicating
- › If you are:
  - Unable to handle the intense feelings or physical sensations
  - Feeling numb or empty
  - Experiencing strong distressing and persistent emotions
  - Being physically tense, agitated or feeling on edge
  - Experiencing disturbed sleep
  - Experiencing relationship problems
  - Experiencing an inability to engage in your regular day-to-day life
  - Feeling that you have no support or nobody to talk to

### CONTACT

If you need help, contact

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- GP, counsellor or psychologist
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636