



ITEC



VTCT

UMH3 – Understanding stress and anxiety

Learning outcomes

LO1 Understand stress and anxiety

LO2 Understand the causes of stress and anxiety

LO3 Understand how stress and anxiety affects individuals and others

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people experiencing stress and anxiety



LO1: Content and Assessment criteria

- 1.1. Describe what is meant by the terms stress and anxiety
- 1.2. Outline the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety





Activity

- Think of the terms stress and anxiety, what do they mean to you? Can you put those feelings into your own words.



Stress and Anxiety

1 in 6

Workers will experience depression, anxiety or problems relating to stress at any one time



In 2018/19 **44%**

of all work-related ill health cases were caused by stress, depression or anxiety



Definitions and descriptions

Stress:

- Stress is a term that is often used to describe how people feel when faced with situations they find difficult to cope with
- It can also be described as the degree to which you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope as a result of pressures that are unmanageable
- Essentially, it relates to our body's natural response to a situation or event. What contributes to stress (a feeling of being under abnormal pressure) can vary hugely from person to person



Common signs and symptoms of stress

- Feelings of constant worry or anxiety
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings or changes in mood
- Irritability or having a short temper
- Difficulty relaxing
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs to relax
- Aches and pains, particularly muscle tension
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Feelings of nausea or dizziness
- Eating more or less than usual
- Loss of sex drive



Common signs and symptoms of anxiety

People experiencing general symptoms of anxiety may also experience the symptoms of stress but may also include more severe symptoms such as:

- **Physical:**

- Palpitations, chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Hyperventilation
- Difficulty in breathing or a tight band across the chest
- Dry mouth, nausea, gastrointestinal symptoms
- Tremors and shaking
- Hot flushes or increased perspiration



Common signs and symptoms of anxiety

People experiencing general symptoms of anxiety may also experience the symptoms of stress but may also include more severe symptoms such as:

- **Psychological:**

- Unrealistic and or excessive fear and worry. You want to run away/escape from the situation
- Things are speeding up/slowing down
- Confusion
- Difficulty making decisions
- Feeling on edge
- Unwanted, unpleasant repetitive thoughts
- You're detached from your environment and the people in it
- Rumination – thinking a lot about bad experiences, or thinking over a situation again and again



Common signs and symptoms of anxiety

People experiencing general symptoms of anxiety may also experience the symptoms of stress but may also include more severe symptoms such as:

- **Behavioural:**
 - Avoidance of situations; often only a short term solution
 - Repetitive compulsive behaviour
 - Distress in social situations



LO2: Content and Assessment criteria

2.1. Describe the possible causes of stress

2.2. Describe the internal and external demands that result in stress

2.3. Describe the possible causes of anxiety



Possible causes of stress

- A variety of situations can cause stress and individuals experience these differently depending on their vulnerability to stress
- Stress is a normal part of life. We move between fight and flight and rest and digest. Exposure to stress in many situations is beneficial as it can focus our minds to complete tasks
- Stressful situations can be present in a number of ways:
 - Physical stress
 - Environmental stress
 - Emotional stress
 - Acute life events
 - Chronic stress



Internal and External demands of stress

Stress can be initiated by factors that can be **internal demands** (self-imposed) or **external demands** (demands imposed by outside sources).

- **Internal demands, for example:**

- Low self-esteem
- Fear
- Uncertainty
- Self-criticism
- Jealousy



Internal and External demands of stress

Stress can be initiated by factors that can be **internal demands** (self-imposed) or **external demands** (demands imposed by outside sources).

- **External demands, for example:**
 - Environmental stress
(poor housing, social isolation, employment, moving house, holidays)
 - Emotional stress
(relationship problems, leaving home, caring for a family member, conflicting cultural values)
 - Acute life events
(bereavements, physical illness/accidents, victim of crime or abuse)
 - Chronic stress
(accommodation issues, debts, prolonged use of drugs/alcohol, existing mental health issues)



Possible causes of anxiety

Anxiety (fear) is a natural response which is useful in helping us to avoid dangerous situations and help motivate us to achieve goals.

There are many possible causes of anxiety.

- There are various types of anxiety disorders:
 - Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
 - Panic disorder
 - Phobias
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)





Activity

1. In pairs, each person look up and review one of the above anxiety disorders. Then explain the one you have reviewed to the other person you are working with
2. Once you have completed the above task, make a list of as many ways in which stress and anxiety may affect people in their everyday life or of those living with them



LO3: Content and Assessment criteria

3.1. Describe the emotional, behavioural, physical and mental effects of stress on an individual and others

External theory examination

3.2. Outline the long term effects of the stress response system on an individual

3.3. Describe the physical, cognitive and behavioural effects of anxiety on the individual and others



Effects of stress on the **individual** and others

Emotional and mental effects of stress – Anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, frustration, low self-esteem, struggling to make decisions, constant worry, forgetfulness

- **Behavioural** effects of stress:

- Being irritable and snappy, verbally or physically aggressive
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Avoiding certain places or people
- Drinking or smoking more

- **Physical** effects of stress:

- Headaches or dizziness
- Muscle tension or pain
- Stomach problems
- Chest pain or a faster heartbeat
- Sexual problems



Long term effects of stress on the individual



Physical, cognitive and behavioural effects of anxiety on the **individual and others**

- **Physical** – physically, the person may experience a racing heartbeat, sweating, muscle tension and pains, shaking, breathing heavily, dizziness, faintness, indigestion or diarrhoea
- **Cognitive** – the individual may feel worried all the time, tired, irritable, they may have disturbed sleep and find it difficult to concentrate
- **Behavioural:**
 - Avoidance behaviours
 - Escaping from an anxiety-producing situation
 - Engaging in unhealthy, risky, or self-destructive behaviours
 - Becoming overly attached to a safety object or person



Physical, cognitive and behavioural effects of anxiety on the **individual and others**

The effects on others can be wide ranging. Those close to the individual may feel fear and worry themselves about what the individual is experiencing and the future.

In some instances those close to the individual may experience frustration or resent the individual as they don't fully understand the situation and the experiences of that person.



LO4: Content and Assessment criteria

4.1. Explain the steps that can be taken to manage stress

External theory examination

4.2. Describe the steps that can be taken to manage anxiety

4.3. Describe the treatments available for people experiencing stress and anxiety

4.3. Outline the two organisations available to help with the management and support of stress and anxiety



Managing stress

- The first important step is to realise when it is becoming a problem
- Identify underlying causes
- Review your lifestyle
 - Are you taking on too much?
- Build supportive relationships
- Eat healthily
- Be aware of smoking and drinking
- Exercise
- Take time out
- Take part in activities you enjoy
- Be mindful
- Get restful sleep



Managing stress

- Don't be too hard on yourself
- Take control
 - The act of taking control is in itself empowering
- Challenge yourself
 - Setting and achieving challenges helps build confidence
- Work smarter not harder
- Try to be positive
 - Recognise the good things in life and try not to focus on the negatives
- Accept the things you can't change
- Help other people
 - This can include volunteering or simply doing someone a favour



Managing anxiety

- Identify triggers
 - Use potential triggers to identify periods of high anxiety or to manage fearful situations
- Communication
 - Connecting and communicating with others can improve personal wellbeing
- Exercise/physical activity
 - Has been known to reduce symptoms of anxiety through the release of endorphins
- Diet/nutrition/avoid stimulants
 - Avoid certain foods and stimulants that can trigger anxiety or panic symptoms
- Good nutrition is seen as beneficial for general good mental health



Managing anxiety

- Relaxation techniques or complementary therapies
 - These techniques and therapies can be used to minimise the symptoms of anxiety and promote relaxation and wellbeing
- Redirection of focus:
 - Social activities
 - Volunteering
 - Sports participation
- Group support with others experiencing similar problems
- Self-help and self-management
 - Utilising specially designed resources



Treatments available for people experiencing stress and anxiety

- Talking therapies. Counselling or cognitive behavioural therapies are effective for individuals experiencing anxiety
- Medication. Managed by a GP or clinical psychologist
- Drug treatments are used to provide short-term help, rather than looking at the root of the anxiety problems
- Antidepressants used to treat depression have shown to be of some help when dealing with anxiety. This may be linked to the possibility of a similar role of serotonin imbalances linked to anxiety and depression
- Drugs may be most useful when they are combined with other treatments or support



Organisations available to help with the management and support of stress and anxiety

- Anxiety UK – One of the UK's leading charities for anxiety disorders
- The Samaritans – Provides emotional support 24 hours a day
- Anxiety Alliance – Provides help and support for those with an anxiety disorder
- Mental Health Foundation – Offers information on mental health, mental health problems, self-help and how to get help
- Other organisations:
 - Mind
 - Rethink
 - Stress Management Society





Learning check

- **List three** possible treatments for stress and anxiety
- **Outline two** methods for managing stress
- **Outline two** methods for managing anxiety
- **Identify one** cognitive, physical and behavioural effect of anxiety on the the individual
- **Identify three** long term effects of stress on the individual
- **Outline two** causes of stress and two causes of anxiety
- **Describe** the difference between internal and external demands of stress
- **Identify two** physical, psychological and behavioural signs and symptoms of anxiety
- **Identify three** common signs and symptoms of stress

