

# Police support Mental Health Awareness Week 14th – 20th May



This year, for Mental Health Awareness Week (14th – 20th May), the Mental Health Foundation is focusing on stress.

Research shows that two thirds of us experience a mental health problem in our lifetimes, and stress is a key factor in this. By tackling stress, we can go a long way to tackle mental health problems such as anxiety and depression and, in some instances, self-harm and suicide.

Inspector Julie Robertson from Safer Communities Mental Health said, “Stress is a normal human response which we all

experience at times in our lives, however for many people, stress can become unmanageable. We are supporting Mental Health Awareness Week in its aims to raise awareness of the signs of stress, the effects stress can have and how people can take steps to reduce stress and get support.

This is about prevention and intervention to reduce the number of people who are unable to manage their own stress by providing pathways to appropriate support with the aim of improving outcomes for individuals and their families.”

### What Causes Stress?

Many aspects of life can cause stress such as work, money matters and relationships with partners, children or other family members. When a person is stressed it can get in the way of managing their responsibilities which in turn can cause them to feel under more pressure. People often feel over-stressed as a result of life events such as divorce, redundancy, moving house and bereavement, or by a series of minor irritations such as feeling undervalued at work. Sometimes there are no obvious causes. Some stress is normal but too much can be harmful and stress is only healthy if it is short-lived. Excessive or prolonged stress can lead to illness and physical and emotional exhaustion, which can have serious negative outcomes in the long-term.

### Identifying the signs of stress

Everyone experiences stress. However, when it is affecting your life, health and wellbeing, it is important to tackle it as soon as possible. Some of the more commonly identifiable signs are listed below.

- 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
- Eating more or less than usual
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs to relax
- Aches and pains, particularly muscle tension
- Diarrhoea and constipation
- Feelings of nausea or dizziness
- Loss of sex drive

Although these are indicators of behaviour of those experiencing stress, they may also be indicative of other conditions. If you are experiencing these symptoms for a prolonged period, and feel they are affecting your everyday life or are making you feel unwell, you should speak to your GP or phone Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87.

Advice on managing and reducing stress can be found on the Mental Health Foundation website by clicking [here](#). Why not support mental health week yourself? you can find helpful downloads and resources on [this link](#).