Understanding Mental Health and Stress

Key Takeaways

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a state of wellbeing that allows us to manage stress, work productively, and contribute to our communities. It is not fixed and can change over time, just like physical health. Maintaining mental health relies on daily habits, supportive relationships, and healthy coping strategies.



Understanding Stress

- Stress is the body's natural response to challenge. It can be helpful and motivating (sometimes called positive stress or eustress), but when demands exceed our resources, stress can become harmful. Chronic or overwhelming stress can damage both physical and mental health.
- Everyone has a different capacity for stress. Recognising and managing your own stress is essential.

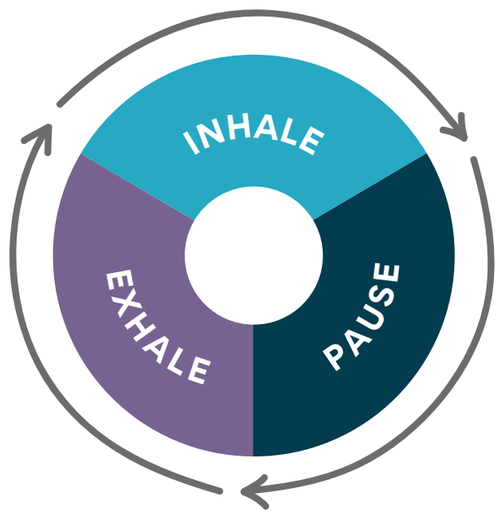
Resilience and Self-Care

Resilience means adapting to challenges and recovering from setbacks. Building resilience can include:

- Staying connected with others
- Prioritising sleep, good nutrition, hydration and movement
- Practising healthy thinking patterns and reframing setbacks
- Engaging in meaningful activities
- Using techniques like breathwork, journaling, or mindfulness

The Physiological Sigh

One simple and quick tool to reduce stress instantly is the physiological sigh.



- **Inhale:** Breathe in slowly through the nose
- **Pause:** Pause and take a second, shorter inhale
- **Exhale:** Exhale slowly and fully through the mouth (longer than both inhales combined)

This activates calming pathways in the body and can reduce tension.

The Seven Pillars of Wellbeing

1. Sleep
2. Nutrition and hydration
3. Movement and exercise
4. Social connection
5. Financial awareness
6. Health knowledge
7. Mental health skills

Small, regular habits in each area are more helpful than aiming for perfection.