**Fifth Self-knowledge Worksheet: Stress Management and Self-care plan**

Stress becomes a problem when it lasts a long time, or if you feel overwhelmed and unable to cope with your situation. When this happens, it is time to take steps to manage your stress to ensure that you can function well at work and at home.

Use your self-knowledge and insight to identify what causes you to be stressed and what signs alert you to the fact that you are stressed. Develop a self-care plan that incorporates processing time (talking about what’s happened or through journalling), distraction, exercise, rest and relaxation.

Think about how you manage your stress by considering the following:

1. What causes you stress ie stress triggers?

Stress can be triggered by different life experiences, and everyone is stressed by different things. There are 2 types of stressors - external (where we experience outside forces) and internal (self-generated, and we have some control over them).

Read through the following common causes of stress and circle all of those that currently apply to you:

**External:**

Major life changes

Loss

Problems at work

Relationship difficulties

Financial problems

Deadlines

Problems with children and family

Financial

Other?

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**Internal**

* Self-doubt
* Negative self-talk
* Unrealistic expectations
* Perfectionism
* Lack of assertiveness
* Frustration
* Boredom

1. What are your signs that you are stressed?

Thins about how you react to stress and circle all the following signs and symptoms that apply to you when you are stressed:

* Mental signs
  + Trouble thinking clearly
  + Memory problems
  + Can’t concentrate
  + Low attention span
  + Poor judgement
  + Anxious or racing thoughts
  + Constant worrying
  + Other?

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* Emotional signs
  + Moodiness
  + Easily upset or hurt
  + Irritability or short temper
  + Agitation, unable to relax or keep still
  + Feeling overwhelmed
  + Sense of loneliness and isolation
  + Depression or general unhappiness
  + Other?

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* Physical signs
  + Tightness in muscles
  + Aches and pains
  + Headaches, trembling, sweating
  + Nausea, dizziness
  + Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
  + Loss of appetite
  + Lack of sleep, dreams, nightmares
  + Other?

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* Behavioural signs
  + Eating more or less
  + Sleeping too much or too little
  + Isolating yourself from others
  + Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
  + Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
  + Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
  + Other?

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1. What are your strategies for managing your stress

When you notice yourself getting stressed, assess and manage your stress levels by rate yourself on the 10 point scale. *If you have scored 5 or more on the scale, make sure you engage your self-care plan.*

* + Eat, sleep and exercise in a healthy manner
  + Do things you enjoy
  + Spend time with people whose company you value
  + Other ……………………………………………………………………………………….
  + ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Managing stress involves identifying your triggers and signs of stress as early as possible and having a plan for what you can do to cope effectively with them.

Some strategies that can help you to manage your stress and reduce your symptoms include:

**Your body**

* Know your stress triggers
* Recognise early warning signs and symptoms and act on them to reduce stress
* Practise relaxation techniques or meditation
* Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet
* Exercise regularly—aim for at least 30 minutes every day
* Get enough sleep—aim for around 8 hours every night

**Your thinking**

* Try to worry less about things you can’t control, and make plans for dealing with the things you can control
* Set small, manageable and achievable goals
* Apply problem-solving techniques—identify the problem, clarify its nature and map out options for dealing with it
* Work on having a positive attitude
* Think positively about yourself and recognise your achievements
* Take time out to visualise a calm and peaceful place
* Develop, keep and use your sense of humour

**Your behaviours**

* Plan and organise ahead to allow enough time to get tasks done
* Use 'to do' lists and set priorities to help you achieve your goals
* Seek guidance and support from trusted people when you are feeling stressed
* Discuss your worries and concerns with someone that you trust
* Share your experience with the Volunteer Coordinator or another Peer Connect or Support Group Facilitator
* Create a balanced lifestyle for yourself and allow time for recreation and relaxation
* Allow yourself time to pause and rest
* Schedule fun and activities that you enjoy
* Spend time with family, friends, and pets
* Reward yourself when you reach your achievements and goals
* Limit your intake of alcohol, caffeine and other drugs

Stress Management Plan:

The following are my ideas for how I will manage my stress when I notice that I am 5 or more on the stress scale:

I will try the following:

1. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

2. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

3. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

5. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

6. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………