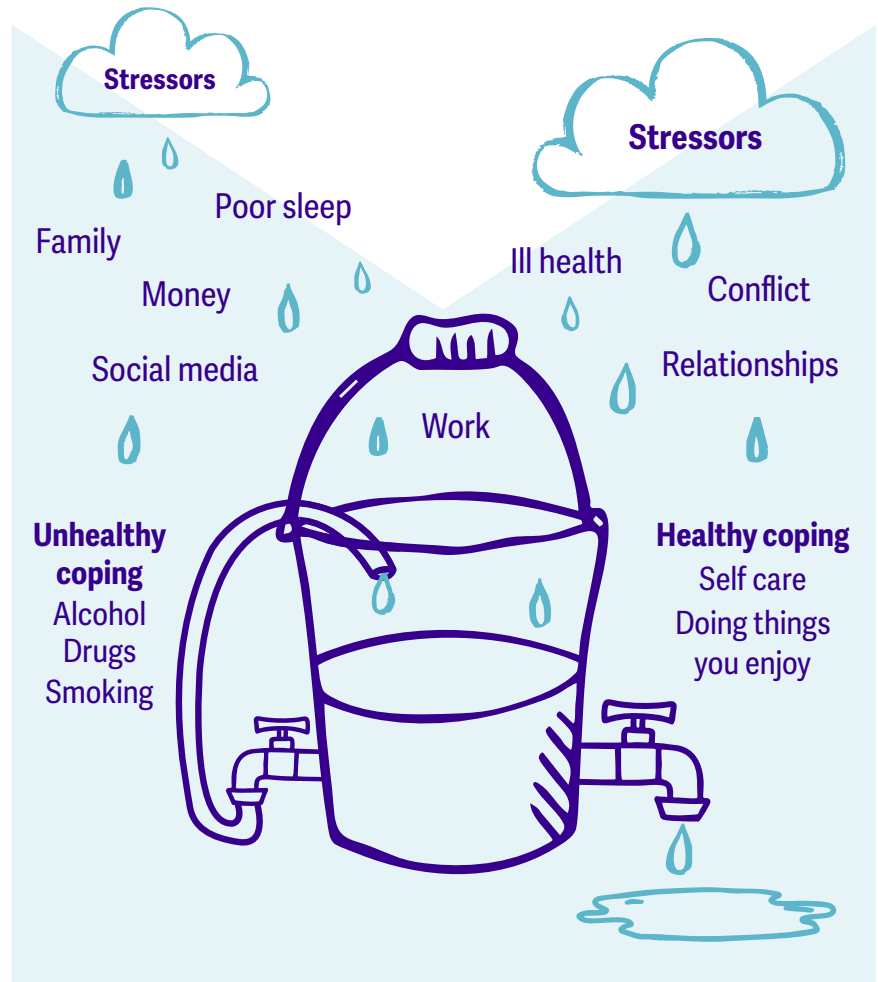


The stress bucket

An exercise you can do on your own or with work colleagues is 'The Stress Bucket'.

This is an idea developed by Brabban and Turkington (2002) and helps people to better understand stress, what causes them to feel stressed, and how to manage it in a healthy way.

For this exercise you will need: paper and pens



1. Introduction

Imagine that you have a bucket that collects stress like water. When the bucket overflows, it can lead to burnout or other negative outcomes.

2. Drawing your bucket

Draw a bucket on a piece of paper. This bucket represents your capacity to handle stress.

3. What causes you stress?

Write down all the things that cause you stress (stressors) inside the bucket. These can be work-related, personal, or any other sources of stress.

4. Adding water

Each stressor adds water to the bucket. The more stressors, the fuller and more difficult to carry the bucket becomes, and it may overflow.

5. Identifying outlets

Think about positive ways to reduce stress and prevent your bucket from overflowing. These outlets can be activities like exercise, hobbies, talking to friends, getting out in nature, or any other stress-relief methods.

For ideas, read the Mental Health Foundation's publication 'Our best mental health tips' available at www.mentalhealth.org.uk.

Draw taps or holes on your bucket to represent these outlets. Note that there are unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking alcohol or smoking which we should not rely on to manage stress.

6. Reflection

Think about your current stress levels and how well your current

outlets are working. Are there enough outlets to manage the stress? What new outlets can you add?

7. Action plan

Write an action plan to put new stress-relief methods in place and improve existing ones. This plan should be realistic and achievable.

8. Review

Revisit your stress bucket regularly to see what changes you notice. Is your stress more manageable? Are there new stressors to consider?

If doing this activity as a group exercise, remind everyone to be empathetic and supportive during the discussion. Ensure confidentiality and respect for personal experiences shared.