

Stress

One of VGC's Be Safe rules is **Be fit for work**.

At VGC we do our best to ensure everyone is well and fit to carry out their role.

If you have a physical health issue, you go to your pharmacist, GP, dentist or optometrist for help. But people who suffer from hidden health issues like stress, depression and anxiety may feel unable to ask for help.

Stress

Stress is the body's natural response when it senses dangers. But too much stress, left unchecked for too long, can interfere with our lives and make us unwell



Stress flows into the container. If the container overflows, problems develop = 'snapping'

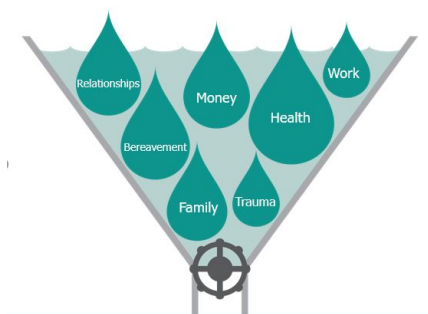
We all experience stress differently depending on how vulnerable we are. Factors like your genes, unique life experiences and your environment impact on how large or small it is.

For example, if you are quite vulnerable to stress you have a smaller stress container. It will overflow more quickly compared to a person with a large container and low vulnerability to stress.

Types and sources of stress

Can include **relationships, family, financial, bereavement, health, trauma and work**.

Work-related stress in the construction industry can come from :- heavy workloads, long working hours, travel, being away from family, job insecurity, money worries, tight deadlines and high risk activities.



Stress

Stress flows into your container. The more stress we're under the faster our container fills up.

When your stress levels build up, the container overflows and issues develop. This looks different for everyone – we all have a unique 'stress signature'. Some common signs our container is overflowing include:

- Irritability or tearfulness
- Indecision, inability to concentrate
- Consuming more caffeine, alcohol or cigarettes
- Frequent tiredness, headaches or stomach upsets

What's your 'stress signature'?

Coping methods

Helpful coping strategies = tap working lets the stress out

Unhelpful coping strategies = tap blocked so water fills up and overflows

Helpful	Unhelpful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxation techniques • Exercise • Read, play games, puzzles • Hobbies • Socialising • Sharing your feelings • Ask for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over working • Eating too much / not enough • Drinking too much alcohol or coffee • Smoking • Angry / erratic behaviour • Taking non-prescribed drugs • Withdrawing from friends

Questions

These questions below can help you understand if you are doing enough for your mental (and physical) wellbeing.

- Do I sleep well?
- Do I spend enough time with friends and family?
- Do I eat healthy food?
- Do I exercise regularly?
- Do I take suitable breaks?
- Do I spend time outside / close to nature / doing hobbies or sport?

Each 'no' answer suggests where you could look after yourself better.

Stress

Do not neglect the things that keep you well.



It can be hard with the demands of work and personal life, but try to use the helpful coping strategies where possible:

- Keep active
- Eat well
- Drink sensibly
- Avoid caffeine late in the evening
- Wind down before bed and avoid electronic devices, especially in the hour before
- Do something you are good at
- Take a break
- Keep in touch with friends and family
- Talk to friends and colleagues if you feel stressed – don't bottle it up!
- Ask for help

Support

1. Speak to your line manager/HR. They can support with work challenges and direct you to a mental health first aider.
2. VGC's dedicated wellbeing champion is a trained mental health first aider. Call Fiona on 07464 919245 to chat in confidence.
3. Part of the VGC employee benefit scheme is the freephone Construction Worker Helpline: 8am – 8pm on 0808 801 0373
4. Samaritans 24-hour free helpline: phone or text 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org
5. Contact your GP.

