

# Stress coping strategies

## **Create a to-do list**

**To-do lists** are a very useful way to visualise what needs to be done and in what order and it's very rewarding to cross off completed tasks! Make sure you list the tasks in order of genuine importance and consider what could be delegated.

Replacing your overwhelming mental to-do list with a realistic and manageable list of tasks with an achievable time-frame will do wonders to reduce your stress level. And try not to worry about things you can do nothing about, don't even put them on your list.

## **Why are to-do lists useful?**

People often try to do things from memory – that **does** work to a certain degree. But it's not always a dependable method. When you're under pressure you can forget the most obvious things. And it's usually harder to order things if you can't see what's to be done in black and white. You can't always rely on your memory to keep track, so a to-do list is a great way of getting your thoughts in order.

There's lots of ways of ordering your to-do list. It doesn't always have to be in priority order, although that is the most obvious. You could also order by task size, maybe large tasks interspersed with smaller tasks, or sorting depending on when you are best able to do particular jobs – if you work better in the morning do the tough ones then. Maybe get a horrible job done first to get it out of the way. Or do a nice job first to put yourself in a good mood. You have to make your list suit you. You could group them by what must be done TODAY, what must be done THIS WEEK, what must be done THIS MONTH and have a to-do list system. But don't let management of your to-do list take over!

You need to keep in mind when ordering by priority, that the lower priority or smaller jobs could be at risk of continually being pushed to the bottom and never getting done if higher priority jobs keep arriving. Continually monitor your list.

And make sure you allow for the unexpected - allow time for disaster!

Try to spend some time on achieving long-term goals, even if they appear to be lower priority tasks that could be done 'tomorrow', otherwise you will get stuck keeping on top of short-term goals and never move on.

It's all about planning, seeing what has to be done and making sure you organise each day so it's the best it can be for you – and lists can of course be sorted to take into account changing circumstances. To-do lists are there to help you, not to back you into a difficult corner!