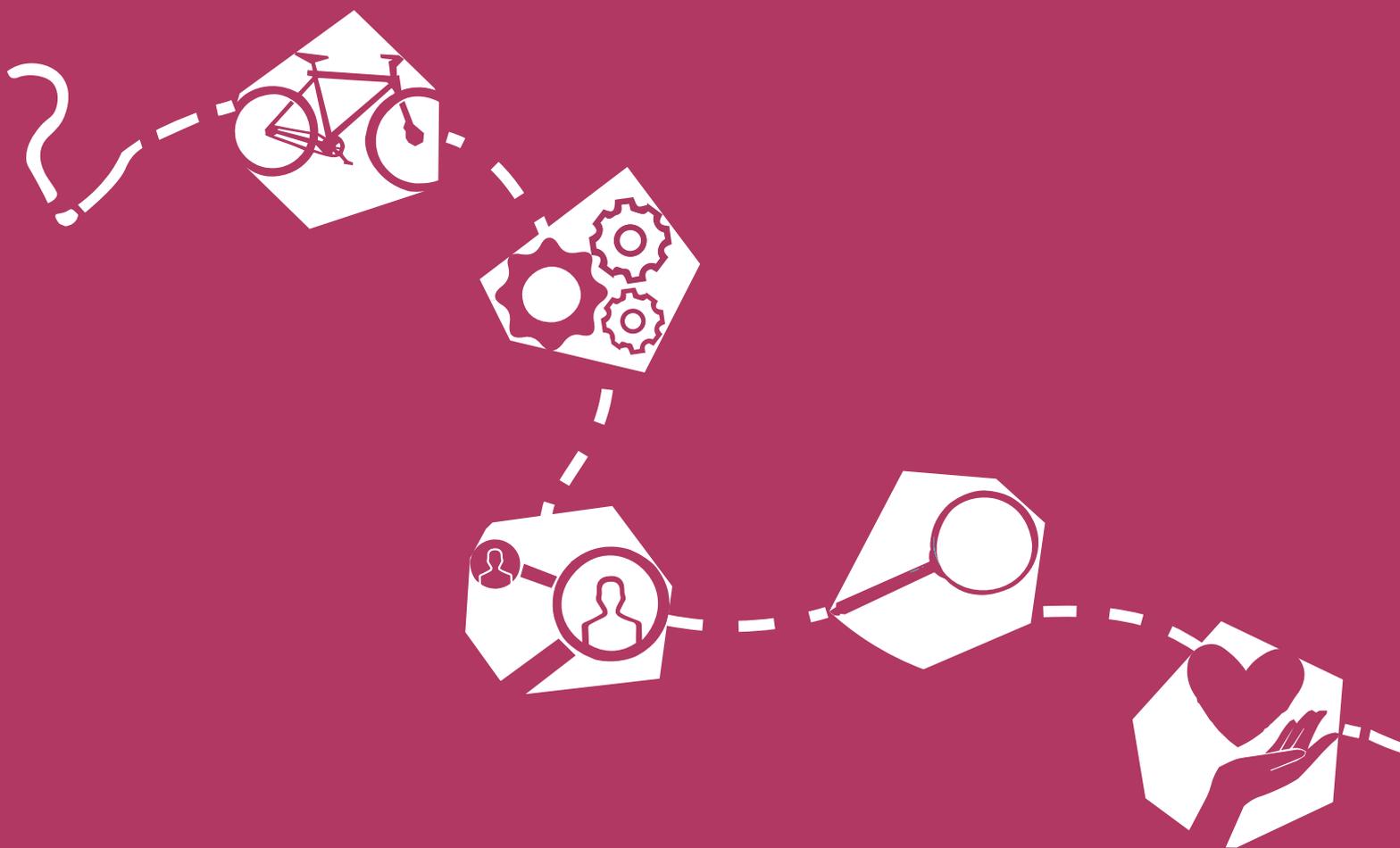


Stress Management FAQs

in partnership with Nel Flint,
Chief Operating Officer, Capita Travel
and Christopher Babayode,
Wellness Expert, NoJetStress



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Dear Members & Partners,

Having spoken to many of you in recent weeks, we at the BTA, have been very conscious of the rising stress across all levels of the industry (including ours).

We continue to fight on your behalf but also wanted to help in a practical and more immediate way. Therefore, this week's FAQs focuses on how best to manage and indeed avoid stress during Covid-19.

A huge thank you to **Nel Flint** and **Christopher Babayode** who have generously given their time and expertise to this guide. Their combined insight means that we have practical takeaway tips for our professional and personal lives that should see us through the current crisis and into good habits on the other side.

Please do continue to let us know what topics we can address and the burning issues for your Company. I look forward to partnering with more of you in the future.

Please stay safe and healthy this Bank Holiday weekend.

Best wishes,



Clive Wratten
CEO, The BTA



Top Tips to manage and avoid stress

1 **Talk to others**
Hello!
How was your day?

2 **Have a routine**


3 **Stay hydrated**


Top Tips to manage and avoid stress

4 **Get fresh air**


5 **Plan distractions**


6 **Sufficient sleep and rest**


7 **Limit blue light exposure**


8 **A healthy diet**


9 **Limit Social Media**


10 **Be forgiving of your self**


Employers' Questions

How aware should employers be of the stress felt by employees?

Extremely, this is one of the most important parts of being an employer at this time. It's worth bearing in mind that in a position of seniority, you are more likely to be privileged, have conducive spaces to work and the ability to be outside.

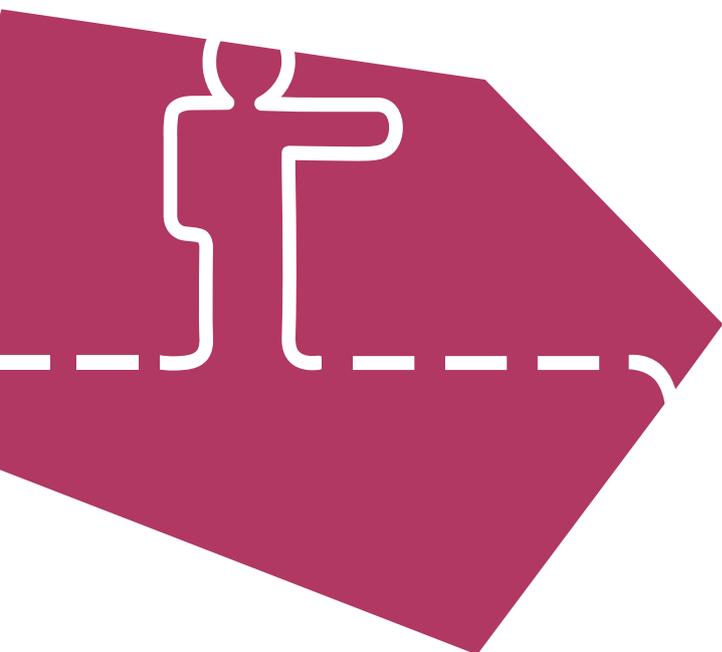
It's imperative that we understand not everyone lives the same life. People are having very different experiences of lockdown and Covid-19 as a whole. Understanding or trying to understand the pandemic from other perspectives will help leaders and managers spot signs of stress and be able to empathise or suggest achievable solutions.

Are you seeing a rise in virtual stress and how are you identifying it?

It's definitely the case that we're seeing people becoming very stressed at new everyday situations. For example, when the Wi-Fi doesn't work. Like most people in the business travel sector, most of our employees are used to being in an office working with systems that are designed for that set-up.

We are now relying on our employees' Wi-Fi and ability to make these systems work. It's little wonder there are more causes of stress. Talking to customers over the computer can be exhausting because you're not able to pick-up on the subconscious cues. In a meeting room, you can tell the mood without really having to think.

It's so much more difficult over a call, which means more listening and talking, constantly trying to read people's faces and a genuine feeling of fatigue when a meeting ends. We are closely monitoring our teams to see if they are looking more tired than normal, struggling to concentrate or generally not behaving in their usual manner.



Employers' Questions

The most common signs of stress that we are seeing is anxiety and uncertainty. This is a first experience of this type of global pandemic for everybody, this means there are very few people (if anyone) to look to for advice which is adding to stress. We're seeing that people are really trying to be ok and we need them to speak out.

Generally, this form of stress and anxiety is being seen when we're talking before a meeting or checking-in on each other in a more relaxed setting than a formal meeting. We're finding it's essential to give people space to have those relaxed conversations

What measures can employers put in place for stress reduction amongst the workforce?

It will really depend on the size and culture of an organisation as to what works for them. It's a good start for there to be an awareness that stress levels are going up and that there's a responsibility to help where possible.

We used to have a digital system that tracked productivity, we've repurposed this to allow team members to let the operational management team know if they're not having a good day. It's a smiley face system that creates an easy way for people to ask for someone to talk to. We have learnt that it's easier to be contacted than to reach out more directly.

Overall, it's really about encouraging conversations. At a Leadership level, people have bad days too. We have to be upfront about it and work around it. Communication at every level is key. For us, there's a twice weekly senior leadership call, weekly manager call and a daily coffee break. This gives us a structure of mandatory and optional touchpoints that allow for different personality types within the organisation.



Employers' Questions

No company can or should take sole responsibility for every element of their employees' welfare. We have encouraged employees to share links to resources they have found useful and these are sent around the company at the end of each day, it might be recipes, children's entertainment or to a guide such as this one! We hope that providing some distractions and lighter content will help people find what works for them.

Should we be concerned about burnout?

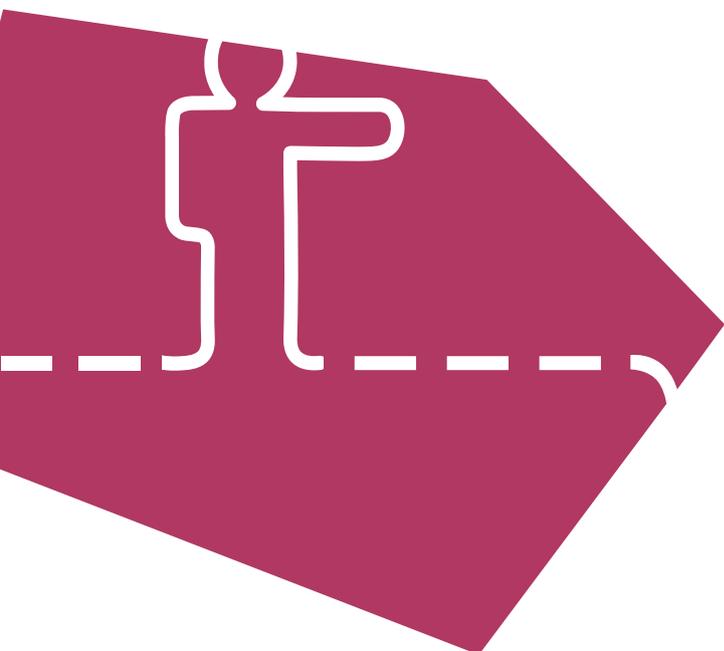
We should always be concerned about burnout. Travelling a lot, long events, the core functions of our industry, all take their toll. Today, we're facing a different sort of burnout and culture will be key to helping our teams deal with it.

It's about letting people talk about their feelings, keeping in touch when colleagues are furloughed and giving people the right information to avoid the stress of not knowing.

At the moment there are less people and less business going on, so it's making sure that people are kept up to date but not giving them information overload. Personal understanding of their characters is probably the best way we can combat this as then you or their managers can predict each person or team's reactions before the update is given.

How are you encouraging employees to take annual leave?

This is something we are talking about regularly. It's really important that people take regular breaks and do take their annual leave to help with stress. A holiday ordinarily means leaving the house by some means and yet we can't do that. We are trying to get across the basic idea that a holiday can also mean taking time away from work which we need more than ever.



Employers' Questions (cont.)

Leadership teams need to set the example and to be even more strict about keeping boundaries between work and their holiday. We have been quick to talk about out of work achievements during annual leave to show that it can still be useful or good time on a personal basis.

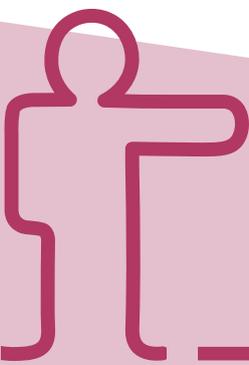
Another measure might be to give people a day off as a Mental Health Day so that the benefits of time away from their work becomes easier to envisage. We're hearing of an increasing number of companies doing this as they start to notice burnout and stress throughout the work force.

How transparent should employees be about other pressures on their time during this crisis?

People should be very transparent about their personal situations so that workplaces can help. This might be a confidential conversation with your manager or a direct approach to the leadership team as is appropriate for the company.

Leadership teams can help the process by explaining their positions. We are still working out how to balance all the demands of life as work invades personal space. We've learnt that children, housemates, pets etc can and will interrupt calls and meetings – especially at the worst moment. It's easier to embrace this than make it even more stressful for that individual.

The longer this crisis continues, the more companies are appointing or highlighting their Mental Health point of contact. This can be of real help for employees who don't feel they can talk to a manager or the Leadership Team. It's Mental Health Awareness Week this week so it's never too late to implement something like this if you don't already have it.



FAQs

Employers' Questions

How are you seeing childcare and working balanced?

It depends what day it is for most people. As a working mum myself, sometimes my son is a dream and can be transferred between myself and his Dad and sometimes it's all gone wrong before the working day starts. Parents are having to learn to be much more relaxed about their lives. Most of us are used to a routine and a very structured existence, this isn't always possible now.

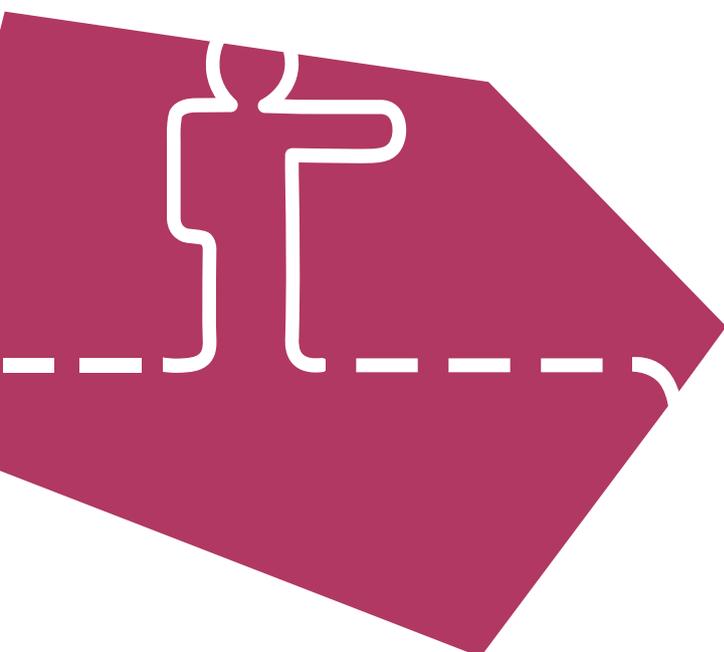
I talk about the tears I've shed before 9am to anyone who sees me in a meeting that morning and increasingly so do my colleagues, it's helping foster a culture that learns as much from failures as the successes.

There are positives in this crisis and the stress we're experiencing, we are all getting more resilient and learning some independence through having to fend or work things out for ourselves.

What can employers do to make this juggling easier?

We have been sharing resources that our colleagues are finding useful e.g. BBC Bitesize or Panda Cam at Edinburgh Zoo. Of course, there does have to be a huge awareness of safeguarding when sharing online content.

Where possible, there needs to be a flexibility about working hours. We've asked ourselves: Do we really need people to be sitting somewhere from 9am – 5pm? Often the answer has been no which has allowed employees to speak up about what would make pressure points easier in their day. As this goes on, initiatives such as a kids' club once a month or book clubs for people to escape will become more important so that people can share their work and life with colleagues, family and friends where appropriate to their situation.



Employees' Questions

What are the symptoms of stress to look out for in ourselves?

The stress of the current situation is very real, but it's what we make of it that will guide our experience of events. Logotherapy is based on the idea that we are all in search of meaning in the context of our lives.

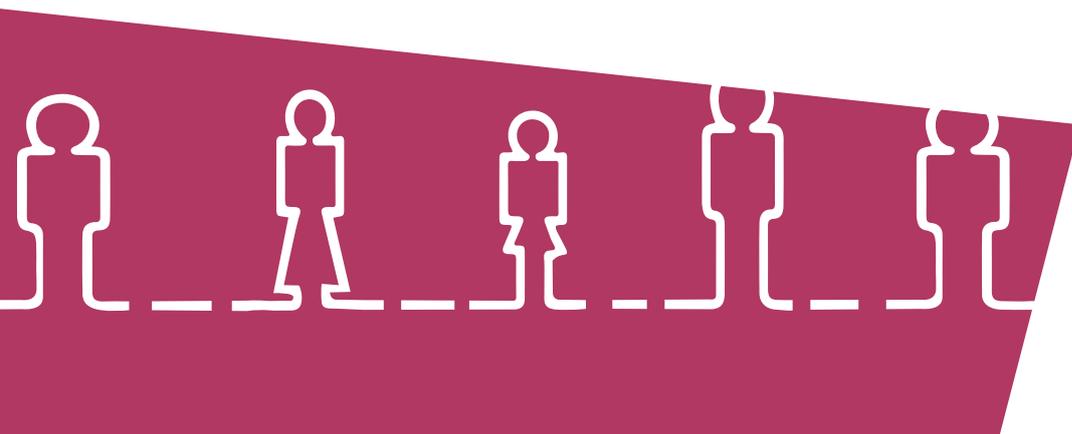
In short, this means that everyone will display different signs of stress at the moment. Some of the emotions in play are the sense of being overwhelmed, anxiety, annoyance, and shortness of temper.

Many people react to these feelings by over-indulging in a favourite treat or past-time, it's a way to divert one's attention or numb the pain but it's also a sign of stress that we should all be alert for.

The underlying element is that the normal routine is being disrupted leaving space for uncertainty and quick coping mechanisms which are not necessarily helpful in the long-term.

What are virtual techniques we can build into our workday especially when they're overrun by stressful Zoom meetings?

Sitting is the new smoking – it really is that damaging to your health and your stress levels. Leaving your workspace between meetings is a great way to refresh. If you need to be beside the computer or phone then jump up and if space allows, do a quick set of burpees or star jumps. It's great to start with just a few and build-up over time. You could give desk yoga a try - if you start to build it into your schedule, it's amazing how quickly a routine builds up.



Employees' Questions (cont.)

It sounds obvious but stay hydrated – without seeing other people getting water or talking at a cooler, it's very easy to forget to make sure you are drinking enough water. Intersperse work with other human contact if you can (even if only for 5 or 10 minutes) and pre-plan breaks away from your computer screen as soon as you feel your energy drop – this is often when you start to feel stressed or frustrated, try to prevent this by making sure you have regular breaks.

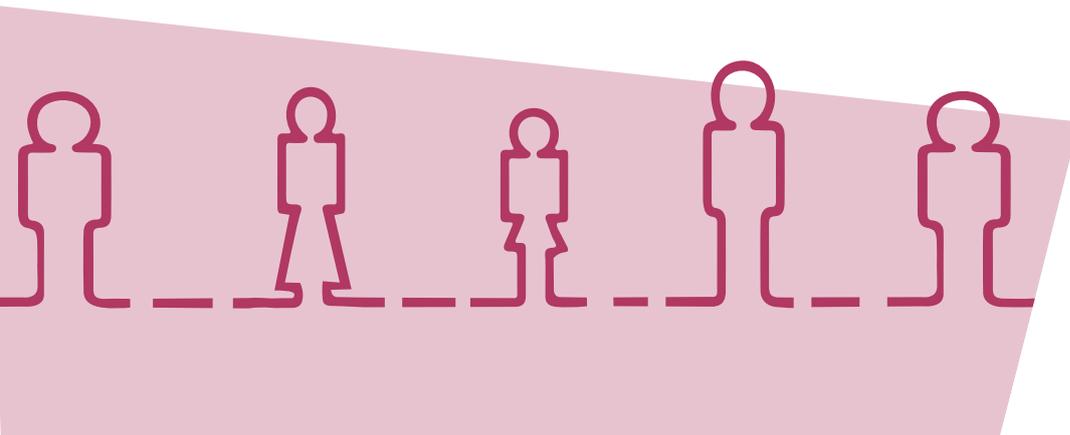
Another trick is to use a timer to break-up the monotony of your day. Whilst we may all have heard of circadian rhythm, we also have smaller rhythms, one of these is our ultradian rhythm, these last for 90 minutes at a time and are a natural cycle to train our work and concentration patterns to for maximum productivity.

For people working across time zones, you can tend to be exposing yourself to blue light on an extended basis through working on your computer at night. This is terrible for your sleep but can be worked around.

One of the best methods I've found, is to download the free app, F.Lux (Mac and PC) which mimics the sunset and minimises blue light exposure in the evening to really help you sleep once all your meetings are complete. Alternatively, or in combination, Blue-Light blocking glasses are another option for evening working and they also work in low light situations of all kinds.

Given lockdown has gone on much longer than expected, how should we re-evaluate our work/life balance?

The longer lockdown goes on, the more we adjust to the new normal, the greater the



Employees' Questions (cont.)

opportunity for an individual to experience a shift in emotion, be it through reflection or a sense of dissatisfaction.

The best thing we can all do now, is to take stock of the journey so far and prepare for the next phase of business travel. I don't see any scenario on the other side of lockdown that doesn't emphasise wellbeing and health in a meaningful way given what we're going through.

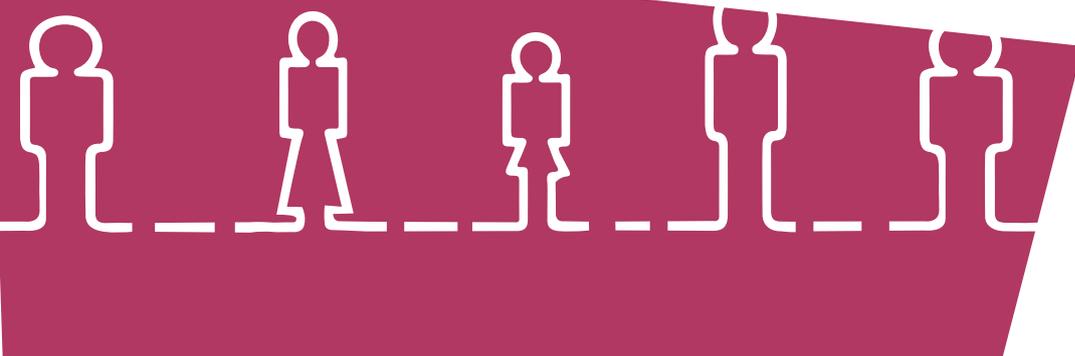
Rather than waiting for lockdown to end, starting the healthy habits now (or doubling down on them) would be prudent. In terms of health I've always maintained that the challenge for our industry is one of a lifestyle nature. Setting up one's lifestyle in the quiet of lockdown is an opportunity to make the most out of what is to come in the future travel space.

Personality and culture will drive the process. What we do individually is the first part, the culture part is how organisations choose to respond, the way forward is what we choose to do individually and a dialogue between the organisation and the individual to help transition into the new norm.

You hear a lot about good diet, what are your top anti-stress lockdown foods?

Stress is an inflammatory condition in both its physical and mental manifestations. Therefore, any food that is anti-inflammatory is a good place to start. Good quality water has to be at the top even though it's not a food, it is an important nutrient for hydration and a great detoxifier.

Another nutrient to be mindful of has been dubbed vitamin O – and that's Oxygen. Getting fresh air, clears the cobwebs of the mind and the change of scenery provides great anti-stress benefits.



Employees' Questions (cont.)

If you are a caffeine drinker and are maxing out on coffee, try green tea instead.

Green tea has theanine which tempers its caffeine content. If you are reluctant to ditch coffee, it's possible to buy theanine as a supplement and blend it into your coffee instead, it will blunt the jitters from too much coffee. Additionally, Theanine is relaxing and helps induce creative alpha brainwave frequencies.

Alkaline diet choices will help everything run smoothly, so an emphasis on more greens, vegetables and fresh food is always better than acidifying de-natured food choices that cause lethargy and sluggishness.

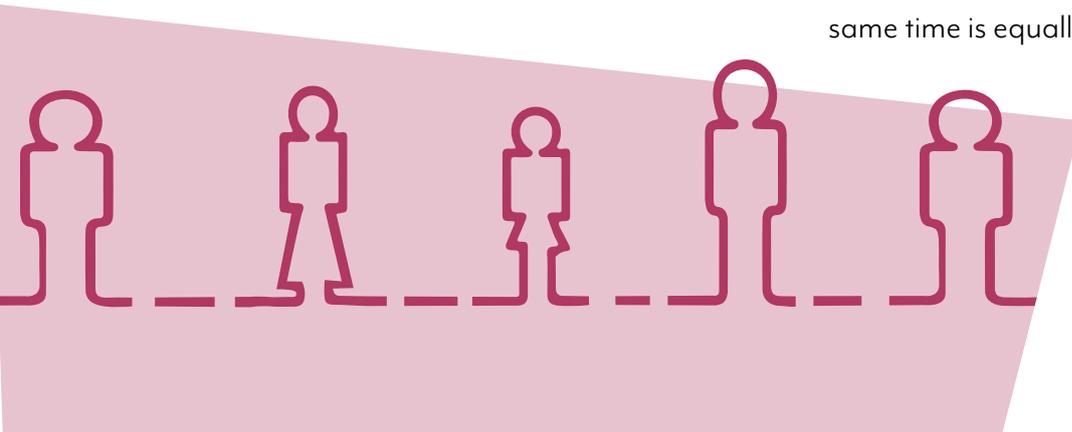
Conversely, eating that comfort dish your mum used to make you when you were growing up, may be useful if it gives comfort and helps you manage a stressful situation better in the here and now.

We need to make allowances whilst trying to build up healthy habits that will stand us in good stead as we continue to navigate this situation.

I am having trouble sleeping, what can I do?

Stress is a big contributor to not sleeping well. Distancing ourselves from any potential sources of stress, at the same time every evening, in preparation for bed, lessens the chance of last-minute situations going to bed with us! If you really struggle up until the minute you get into bed, then journaling before bed is one way of putting distance between your thoughts and your attempt to get some sleep.

Going to bed at the same time every day especially whilst we have the opportunity to do so in lockdown, syncs our circadian rhythm and gives us optimal opportunity to be well-rested. Getting up each day at the same time is equally important.



Employees' Questions

Getting to bed regularly between 10 pm and 12 am is highly recommended. This helps to create a routine and can help break a pattern of trouble getting to sleep. Most importantly, deep wave sleep naturally happens between 10 pm and 2 am and this is the most physically restorative type of sleep. For those doing work of a cerebral nature, REM sleep is essential as it helps us make sense of our waking hours and helps us consolidate learning and memories.

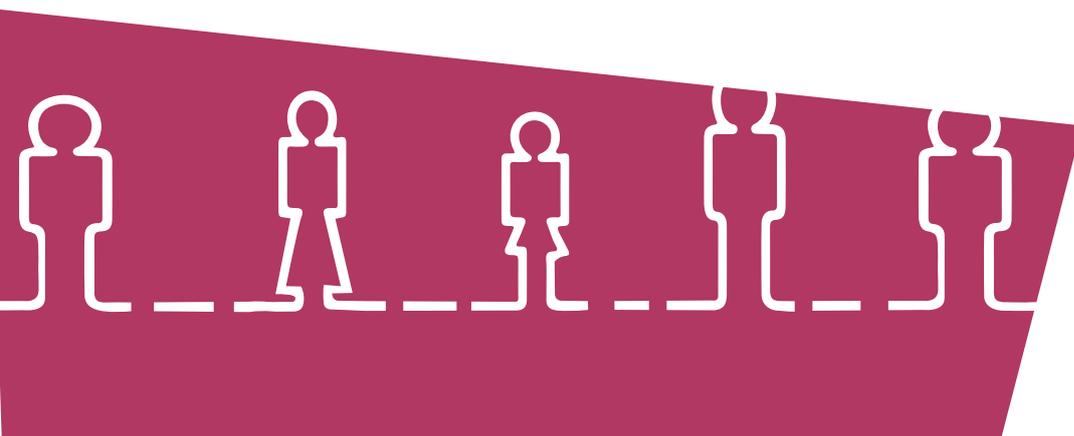
For right now, habits that support good sleep routines should also be considered. If you can, shut off your computer two hours before sleep and get into the routine of using anti-blue light technology.

If you want more help, Magnesium is the relaxing mineral and can be included alongside all lifestyle measures adopted. Magnesium Chloride salts are one up from

the Epsom Salts that many people will know about. These are great in the bath and are quickly absorbed in the body. Magnesium really helps with sleep quality. You can also get Magnesium oil as a lotion that can be applied like a moisturiser and these are very effectively absorbed by the body.

If you are still struggling, there is time-restricted eating (TRE). Time-Restricted Eating is a very acute way of setting your body clock through one of the 3 major pathways, the other 2 are sleep and physical activity.

Not eating outside the restricted time means your body can shut down and prepare for sleep without having to divert energy resources to digestion. An 8-hour window could be a good starting point but always with the view of making sure it ends 3 hours before the intended bed-time.



Summary

From Nel Flint and Christopher Babayode

As we continue to go through COVID-19, our capacity to handle the new norm is dependent on our ability to manage the stresses that come our way.

The habits we develop and the cultures we nurture can provide the tools we need to navigate the situation and reignite our industry in the new normal.

Open communication on a professional and personal level is key to helping us all keep stress at a manageable level. We therefore encourage you to reach out to colleagues across the industry to share knowledge, experiences or just to have a chat.

Stay safe and well!

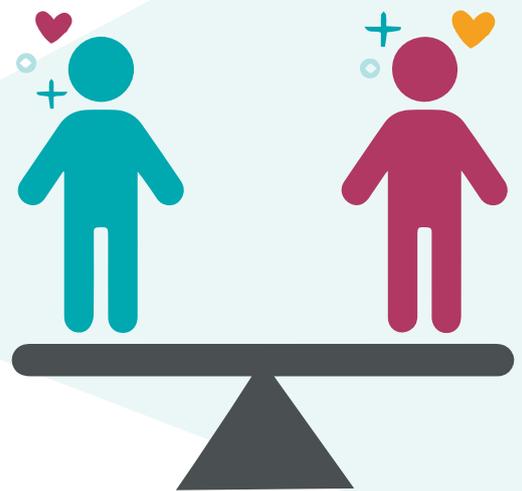
Best wishes,

Nel Flint

Nel Flint, Chief Operating Officer,
Capita Travel and Events

Christopher Babayode

Christopher Babayode, Wellness Expert,
NoJetStress



External Resources

General Coronavirus links

Public Health England www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england

NHS UK: www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance

Places that need volunteers or online help

NHS Volunteer Responder: www.goodsamapp.org/NHS

Samaritans Online Chat portal: www.samaritans.org/chatdonate/



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