



Factsheet 6

Updated on 21 May 2020

Supporting patients' wellbeing

Looking after our mental health and wellbeing is fundamentally important; for many people stress triggers an autonomic response which results in shorter shallower breaths, depriving their bodies of much needed oxygen.

For people with respiratory conditions such as asthma and COPD this can be extremely challenging; putting stress onto an already stressed respiratory system and causing them to use their reliever Inhaler more frequently.

Here are some easy ways to support people who are stressed and have respiratory conditions

- Encouraging people to stop and take a breath, slow down and focus on taking five or six slow long breaths is often hugely beneficial. The benefits of this are twofold.
 1. It brings conscious awareness to their breath and potential panic attack.
 2. It takes their focus away from the trigger that is causing them stress.
- Encourage people to keep a notebook or diary of their stress triggers; what was happening or what were they thinking about when they felt stressed and short of breath; were they alone or with someone specific and so on. In that way they can begin to see a pattern of what triggers these incidents and begin to take steps to reduce the frequency or even eliminate them.

Other remedial actions can be as simple as:

- Going for a short walk
- Avoiding long conversations with people who cause them to feel stressed
- Stopping watching the news just before they go to bed
- Stopping having arguments with colleagues or family members

Finding and identifying simple new ways to 'de-stress' can bring quite remarkable results.

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More long term benefits can be found in mindfulness breathing, meditation, spending time outdoors every day, taking up a new hobby or sport. Additionally, professional help from a counsellor or lifestyle coach can bring significant benefits; one or two sessions may be all that is required.

Useful resources:

- [Education for Health Wellbeing Helpline](#)
- [Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Breathlessness](#)
- [Breathing Freely](#) which supports with breathing techniques for breathing pattern disorder and manage stress.

Additional information about managing mental health can be found in [Factsheet 2](#).