

## Your Stress Diary

Life has its challenges, and some stress is inevitable. Keeping a stress diary is an effective way of finding out both what causes you stress, and what level of stress you feel comfortable with. In this diary note your stress levels and how you feel throughout the day. In particular, write down stressful events. Record the following information:

- At a regular interval, for example every hour, record routine stress. Note:
  - the time
  - the amount of stress that you feel (perhaps on a scale of 1 to 10)
  - how happy you feel
  - whether you are enjoying your work
  - how efficiently you are working
- When stressful events occur, write down:
  - What the event was
  - When and where it occurred
  - What important factors made the event stressful
  - How stressful the event was
  - How you handled the event
  - Did you tackle the cause or the symptom?
  - Did you deal with the stress correctly?

After a few weeks you should be able to see some patterns in this record. This should give you two types of information:

1. You should be able to understand the level of stress you are happiest with, and the level of stress at which you work most effectively. You may find that your performance is good even when you feel upset by stress.
2. You should know what the main sources of unpleasant stress in your life are. You should understand what circumstances make the stresses particularly unpleasant, and should begin to understand whether your strategies for handling the stresses are effective or not.

Having this information will help you make choices. Knowing what the sources of stress are in your life, what does and doesn't work for you to cope, and what resources you have empower you to cut back where there is too much stress and to deal with the existing stress in effective, efficient ways.