

# UNDER PRESSURE?

MANY OF US SUFFER FROM STRESS, OFTEN WITH DEBILITATING EFFECTS – BUT THERE ARE WAYS TO HELP YOU GET THE BETTER OF IT

**F**eeling tense, irritable and overwrought? You're not alone. Most of us experience stress at some point in our lives for many reasons – perhaps as a result of a difficult relationship, a skewed work/life balance or just life-induced anxieties.

Vicky Pattison is just one celebrity who knows this only too well. Despite being hugely in demand work-wise, the 28 year old has admitted that her hectic schedule nearly caused her to have a breakdown last year. 'I was working too hard... I was careering towards a meltdown,' she said. But she admits she still hasn't found a balance in her life, saying: 'I can't say no. I'm my own worst enemy. If I've got a day off and a call comes in, I'll say: "Fill it!"'

TV presenter and singer Olly Murs encountered a similar problem when his workload became too much. He recently opened up about how the stress of hosting last year's *X Factor* and promoting his new single took its toll. 'In the lead-up to Christmas it hit me hard. I had a week in bed when I couldn't move,' he said, adding: 'I was a bit of a zombie. I had to have three or four days in silence when I just chilled out, got off my phone and had a bit of "me" time.'

According to the most recent figures from the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Labour Force Survey, stress accounted for 35 per cent of all work-related ill-health cases last year. It was also the cause of 43 per cent of all sick days taken last year. The main triggers were workload pressures, including tight deadlines and having too much responsibility without enough managerial support.

Vicky has sought help from *This Morning* life coaches Nik and Eva Speakman to help her cope with feeling overwhelmed, and also credits her 'brilliant mum', her 'lovely sister', and 'a gorgeous support structure in general' for keeping her stress levels down.

With National Stress Awareness Day coming up on Wednesday November 2, we take a look at the most effective ways to avoid suffering from 'burnout'...

## WHAT IS STRESS?

A certain amount of pressure can be motivating, but long-term stress, where people feel out of control, is not. The HSE explains: 'Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excess pressure or other types of demands placed upon them. It arises when they perceive they're unable to cope with those demands.'

Problems occur when the pressure we're under seems overwhelming. We might think we don't

have the skills to manage the pressure, and feel unable to cope.

Gregory L Fricchione, one of the authors of the recently published *The Science Of Stress* (Ivy Press), says that finding ways to cope with pressure efficiently is key to living happier lives. 'Educating ourselves about stress – personally and as a society – and what we can do about it through sound self-care approaches, is the first step in taking the action needed to meet the biggest health challenge of this century,' he says.

## WAYS TO COMBAT STRESS

Carole Spiers is the chair of the International Stress Management Association and the founder of National Stress Awareness Day, which began in 1998.

Her advice to avoiding stress is finding your natural 'SPEED':

- Sleep – get a minimum of seven hours every night.
- Priorities – focus on those which are most important.
- Empathy – find friends who'll empathise with you.
- Exercise – set an exercise goal to meet every week.
- Diet – limit sugar, heavy meals, alcohol, smoking and caffeine.

Carole tells OK!: 'Stress is like a light switch; your mind turns it on automatically but you need to learn how to turn it off. You need to learn ways to help you beat stress and switch off the stress response.'

Try to...

- Use physical activity to 'work off' stress.
- Recharge your batteries with adequate rest and sleep.
- Manage your time better – try to prioritise and delegate.
- Learn stress reduction techniques.
- Take regular breaks and allocate some time for yourself.
- Recognise and acknowledge that which you cannot change.
- Be assertive by learning to say 'no'.
- Take up a hobby such as yoga, singing, walking or cycling.
- Don't procrastinate by leaving everything to the last minute.
- Eat healthily: snack on vegetables and fruit rather than chocolate and crisps.



**Above: Stressed presenter Olly Murs says he stayed in bed for a week feeling like a 'zombie'. Left: This Morning life coaches Nik and Eva Speakman have come to the aid of Vicky Pattison (right). Yoga (below) can help combat stress**



- Drink at least two litres of water per day to keep hydrated.
- Communicate with others and ask for help when you need it.



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**STRESS-BUSTING TIPS FOR THE OFFICE**

**Carole Spiers gives her tips on avoiding stress-induced office meltdowns...**

- Turn off your email alerts to stop distractions.
- Don't confuse activity with actually achieving something.
- Allocate a time for phone calls to save interruptions during the day.
- Write a 'to do' list at the end of each day.
- Speak face to face rather than on email.
- Organise your files to make your day more efficient.
- Approach the most difficult task first.

CAROLE SPIERS, AUTHOR OF 'SHOW STRESS WHO'S BOSS!', IS CEO OF THE CAROLE SPIERS GROUP. SHE'S RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING AUTHORITIES ON MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS. NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS DAY IS ON WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 2. VISIT [WWW.CAROLESPIERSGROUP.CO.UK](http://WWW.CAROLESPIERSGROUP.CO.UK) AND [WWW.ISMA.ORG.UK](http://WWW.ISMA.ORG.UK).

**HOW THE STARS MANAGE STRESS**

**KATE WINSLET**

The actress insists organisation is the key to keeping calm. She says: 'I plan everything in advance; who's dropping off the kids, who's picking up. We have charts, maps and lists on the fridge and all over the house. I feel like I'm with the CIA!'



**ANGELINA JOLIE**

The Hollywood mother of six admits that spending time with her family is her number one stress-buster. She says: 'Sitting on the floor with the kids colouring for an hour, or going on the trampoline. You do something you love, that makes you happy, and that gives you your meditation.'



**LENA DUNHAM**

Meditation is something *Girls* star Lena turns to, describing how it 'allows me to balance'. She says: 'I think we can get caught up in the challenges, physical, material

and ambition,' and explains: 'There is so much fear and anxiety and it accompanies modern life. Meditation is the thing that sort of reminds me who I am.'



**KENDALL JENNER**

She may be one of the world's most famous models but Kendall Jenner isn't immune to feeling the pressure. 'My way to de-stress is either listening to music or talking to my sister, Kourtney. She's going to teach me how to meditate and that should help a lot.'

**VICTORIA BECKHAM**

Fashion designer and mum-of-four Victoria Beckham says 'learning to delegate' is helping her to control her stress levels. In a recent interview, she said: 'What I am learning to do, and finding really difficult, is delegating. I am a control freak, a workaholic, and I like to do everything myself. But the truth is, I am in a position to have help.'



**MICHELLE OBAMA**

America's First Lady relies on her workouts to keep calm. She says: 'If I'm ever feeling tense or stressed or like I'm about to have a meltdown, I'll put on my iPod and head to the gym or out on a bike ride along Lake Michigan with the girls.' **OK!**



FEATURE BY OK! HEALTH EDITOR YASMINE GRIFFITHS  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES

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**DIARY**

**25 WEEKS PREGNANT**

**FOOTBALL HERO JAMIE VARDY'S WIFE WRITES EXCLUSIVELY ABOUT HER WEEK**



**T**he tiredness is kicking in now, especially when all the homework is done and the kids are in bed. I sit on the sofa and I'm like: 'Jamie, I can't move!' The baby is moving all the time and Sofia is noticing and



poking my tummy! She's become so clingy and jealous and always wants cuddles [left]. I was hoping she'd help to fetch nappies for me, but she's so bad at helping me with her own nappies, I can see me changing two nappies at the same time! I'm not forcing

potty training on her yet, though.

My older kids, Megan and Taylor, are constantly asking: 'Do we know the sex yet?' I'm going to book in to look around the Leicester Royal Infirmary maternity ward as Hope For Cancer runs its clinical trials there. When Jamie and I got married, instead of presents, we asked guests to make donations to that charity [above right] and then we matched their donations, so it'll be amazing seeing where the money is being used. It's close to my heart after my granddad died of cancer and I had a loop biopsy on my cervix after I gave birth to Taylor.



**NOTHING FITS!**

None of my clothes fit anymore – my tops haven't fitted since I was four weeks pregnant! But I've found a brilliant French maternity brand website, [www.enviedefraise.co.uk](http://www.enviedefraise.co.uk).

**I'M NOT POSH!**

Jamie and I did an interview with a magazine to promote his autobiography last week and they compared us to Posh and Becks [right] on the front cover – it was so embarrassing. I was mortified and hate people making that comparison because we never once discussed them in the interview. Obviously I admire what they have done as a couple, but we're nothing like them and never will be – we're just Jamie and Becky.



**MOVING ON UP**

According to a newspaper, the locals near our new home aren't sure 'party-loving' Jamie will 'fit in'. I can't remember the last time we had a party and we're not moving to fit in, we're moving because we want to live in a house where strangers aren't going to turn up at 3am drunk, shouting, scaring and waking up our kids!