

## **Stress Buster – Course Content**

### **Week One – (What is Stress?)**

The first session looks at causes of stress, symptoms of stress and how they affect us. It covers an explanation of how this very common problem is fuelled and is kept going once it starts. Another aim of the session is to tackle myths about stress. We shall cover ways we can identify our own personal stress cycles and identify our goals. Finally, it introduces techniques which can be quickly learnt to help control stress.

### **Week Two – (Controlling your Body)**

This session builds your understanding of the physical effects of stress on the body and what can be done to control those effects. It looks at how stress affects anxiety and mood, e.g. the role of the Fight/Flight survival response. We introduce evidence-based strategies to combat stress, such as deep muscle relaxation, breathing techniques and exercises. The session also introduces ways in which exercise and simple techniques for reactivating your life can help.

### **Week Three – (Controlling your Thoughts)**

This session looks at developing an understanding how our thoughts and thinking styles help create and maintain stress. It explores how you can control these effects, thinking your way out of stress and using challenges to stressful thinking styles. Finally, it introduces key control skills, e.g. 'wait a minute', 'the big five challenges' and 'breaking stress up'.

### **Week Four – (Controlling your Actions)**

This session looks at how our behaviour affects stress and explores options to do things differently. We cover some of the less helpful responses to stress such as 'safety behaviours' avoidance and withdrawal, and how these can actually fuel stress. Helpful techniques to help face our fears are introduced, e.g. reality testing, problem solving, and giving up safety behaviours. We cover '20 ways to cope'.

### **Week Five – (Sleep, hyperventilation, panic, controlling your future)**

The final session looks at panic attacks, how panic occurs and what can be done to prevent it. It examines how panic affects your thoughts, actions, and body, but also looks at the role of hyperventilation (over-breathing) in fuelling panic.

The session looks at controlling sleep. We cover the different phases of sleep and what can be done to restore a good night's sleep. The session looks to planning for the future to help you get the most out of the course.