

## 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. We also look at techniques which can be quickly learnt to help control stress, and get going on reactivating different areas of our lives.

### **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 also look at panic and panic attacks, and explain why these happen. Evidence based strategies to combat stress, are introduced, such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Imagery and Controlled Breathing. The session also looks at how life style factors (Exercise, food, alcohol, caffeine) can affect stress levels in the body.

### **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. This session introduces key control skills, e.g. 'wait a minute', 'the 3 big thought challenges' and 'breaking stress up'. We also look at Rumination and it's affect on our stress levels.

### **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 also take a look at Procrastination and give tips on how to overcome it.

### **Week Five – (Sleep, Anger, Assertiveness & controlling your future)**

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 also examines the roles of anger and assertiveness in our lives, and looks at techniques to control anger, and communicate more assertively. We also tie the whole course together and look at ways in which we can use the techniques learnt to help us in the future.