

# Mental Health & Resilience

## Building Engagement & Wellbeing

“Stress is the mind’s and body’s way of preparing us to face a challenge. A certain level of stress is necessary to not only function, but to motivate us to reach our full potential. Too much stress, however, can be a health hazard. The first important step in stress management involves noticing when our stress levels have become unhealthy. Once stress overload is recognised there is a range of stress management skills available to address the problem.” (<https://wayahead.org.au/get-the-facts/recognising-and-managing-stress/>)

### Posture Check

We spend a lot of time typing, swiping and generally looking down. This means we are hold awkward postures for extended periods of time. The means these postures can start to feel normal and we don’t realize they are leading to aches, pains and possibly injuries.



**Check your seated and standing posture.**

- Stretch your spine to the sky
- Chin down
- Shoulders back

**Remember:** your ear should be over your shoulder, which should be over your hip.



### Roll-Reset-Relax

**Ergonomics aims to ensure** we can work in a relaxed neutral work posture. But we often end up sitting in an awkward posture for long periods and that leads to a lot of aches and pain

- Do this Roll Reset Relax every time you find ourselves leaning forward, resting on our arm, slouching in our chair
- The roll reset relax helps us reset our posture back to relaxed and neutral position.

**Download this handout with notes:** Helping your team to make this one dynamic stretch an automatic work habit can reduce upper body aches and pain by up to 50% - Just by doing this regularly

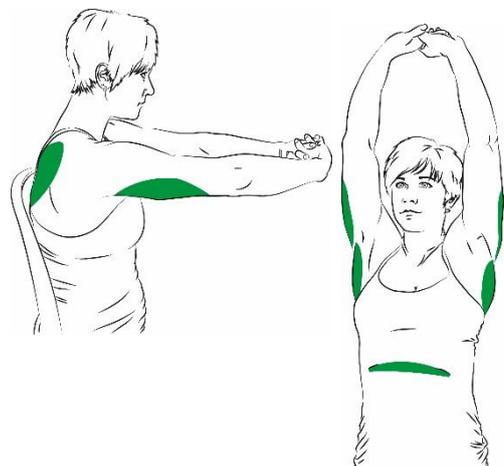
### Dynamic Seated Stretches

**Dynamic stretches warm up muscles, release tension and get the blood flowing.**

- Do these action based stretches at least 5 times a day

#### Dynamic Stretch Sequence

- Clasp your hands the reach forward to the screen until you feel the stretch across your back.
  - In this position, gently stretch towards each corner of the computer screen
  - Now move your hands over head, stretch up and then gently stretch to the left and right.
- Repeat hole sequence 3 times.



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### Symptoms of ongoing mental distress

#### Physical

- Headaches – often associated with pain in the neck and head region, in other words, tension headaches.
  - Consultants are at increased risk of headaches because the work requires long hours of working in a static posture holding tense shoulders and upper back. Add to this poorly adjusted screen height and ....
- Chronic pain - Aches and pains are a common complaint that can result from increased levels of stress.
  - Prof Hedge research showed that over 80% of consultants experience work-related aches and pains
  - My research also showed that over 11% experienced chronic pain. That is pain that does not go away after rest.
  - Other studies have shown that increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol may be associated with chronic pain.
- Acne
- Difficulty sleeping
- Rapid or increased Heart rate – also called heart palpitations –
  - A fast heartbeat and increased heart rate can also be symptoms of high stress levels.
- Nausea and fatigue
- Muscle aches and pains (may build to chronic pain)
- Increased Sweating – exposure to stress may also cause excess sweating and possible a change in odour... 😞
- Digestive Issues - Constipation or diarrhoea

#### Behavioural

- Problems in relationships
- Increased nicotine, alcohol or caffeine use
- Reduced engagement with enjoyable activities
- Avoidance of stressful situations that need to be dealt with
- Frequent Sickness – Stress may help suppress the immune system
- Decreased Energy and Insomnia – chronic fatigue can also be associated with prolonged stress.
  - Stress may also disrupt sleep and cause insomnia, which can lead to low energy.

#### Emotional

- Tense
- Anxious
- Irritable
- Lack of enthusiasm

#### Cognitive

- Depression – studies suggest that chronic stress may contribute to the development of depression.
- Negative thoughts/worrying
- Loss of concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty making decisions
- Bad dreams or insomnia

Download this handout here: <https://beyondergo.com.au/manage-mental-physical-stress/>



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# Engagement & Wellbeing through Mindfulness

## Some ways in which mindfulness enhances well being

- Heightens awareness of present moment experience; a psychological tool to bring the mind back from past or future;
- Enhances body awareness, which can help with posture adjustments in static work positions, and when encountering stress at work;
- Enhances ability to 'be with' experience; cultivation of acceptance, and of learning ways to be with difficult situations – particularly one's own thoughts and feelings;
- Clarity of purpose & goals; fosters commitment and motivation

## Simple mindfulness practices

- Focus on breathing: sensations of breathing, rise & fall of breath, observing the breath
- Body sensing: taking awareness through body, noticing sensations, e.g., tension, relaxation
- Cues in day to bring oneself back to present moment

## How to develop a mindfulness practice

- Start simple, 5 -10 mins/day, on 'most days of the week'
- Join a practice group or course
- Apps (supplement to formal training)
- Individual counselling/coaching with a psychologist who works in the area of mindfulness skills development

## Addressing common barriers to a mindfulness practice

- "I don't have the time". You can start with as little as 5mins/day.
- "I'm not sure how to practice". Seek professional training/advice/feedback.
- "I'm not religious". Neither is mindfulness.
- "I can't empty my mind". That's great, it means you're alive! Mindfulness is about recognising where one's focus is, and bringing it back to the present moment – a constant process.

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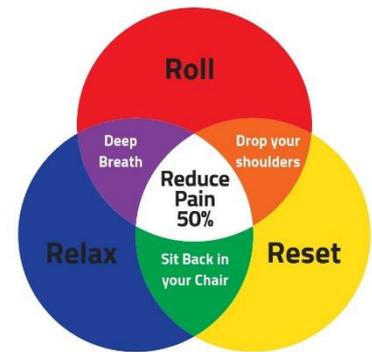


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# How to Introduce Roll-Reset-Relax – Stress and Muscle Tension Release to Staff



## Introduction

We know **long hours** of computer work can lead to **overuse injuries**, like carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive strain injuries (i.e. RSI), chronic pain, frozen shoulders, and tendinitis.

**Signs** you may already be experiencing include scratchy or sore eyes, tension headaches, and aches in your neck, shoulders and backs.

**Overuse injuries affect** nerves, muscles, vascular structures, tendons, ligaments, and even bones.

**Symptoms start** as an ache or soreness, decreased function or restricted movement, numbness, and weakness. These signs should subside after rest.

**But if left untreated**, the mild ache or stiffness continues to build and can result in severe pain and loss of use of the affected limb. At this stage, those symptoms can persist over months or years and lead to permanent damage.

**These aches, pain and overuse injuries occur because** working with screens requires us to hold static and often awkward postures for long periods. This builds up muscle tension in our neck and shoulders, resulting in headaches, neck, shoulder and upper back pain. **The only way to release that tension is by doing big movements, consciously relaxing muscles and purposely resetting our body back to a relaxed neutral work posture.**

Try this simple set of actions to release muscle tension and reset your posture back to a relaxed and neutral posture.

- Squeeze your shoulders to your ears
- Now squeeze your shoulder blades together
- Push your shoulders down
- Now pull your shoulders as far forwards as you can
- REPEAT 3 times in a circular motion
- Take a deep breath and consciously relax your muscles and your tomach
- Reset your posture

**Ergonomics aims to ensure** we can work in a relaxed neutral work posture, but we are often unaware we have been sitting in an awkward position for a long time.

We need to **do this Roll-Reset-Relax every time** we find ourselves leaning forward, resting on our arm, slouching in our chair

- The **Roll-Reset-Relax** helps **reset your posture back to a relaxed and neutral position.**
- Making this one dynamic sequence an automatic work habit can **reduce your upper body aches and pain by up to 50%** - Just by doing this regularly

Download the Roll-Reset-Relax handout here: <https://beyondergo.com.au/roll-reset-relax/>



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