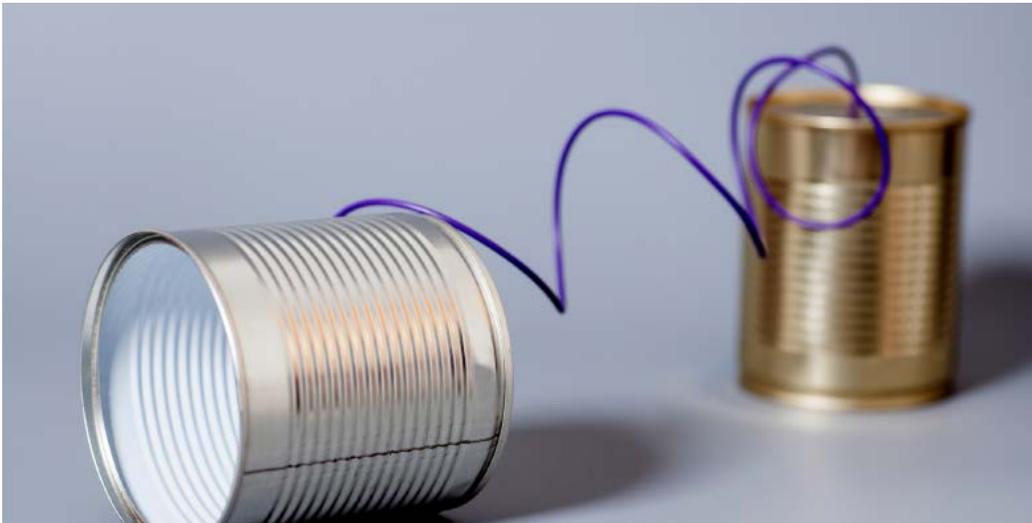


COMMUNICATION AND STRESS

Removing barriers for improved results



Having the ability to get things off your chest, share your concerns and ask for help is the first step in effectively managing stressful situations. That said, when you decide to open up about stress—whether you’ve been bottling it up for a while, or have only been stressed for a few hours—it can be hard to communicate your thoughts and feelings clearly.

Here are some tips for improving communication when you’re stressed.

- Focus on your breathing – slow, deep breaths will help to bring any nerves or anger under control.
- Try to relax your muscles, particularly your shoulders and your jaw.
- Remove any distractions from your immediate vicinity. This will enable you to concentrate better on what is being said and on body language.
- Prepare for the conversation by writing a list. This way you will be sure that everything you want to discuss is covered and that you won’t lose your train of thought as the conversation progresses.
- When the other person is speaking, don’t just be planning what you’re going to say next—actively listen to what is being said and respond when appropriate.
- Use ‘I’ statements rather than ‘You’ statements. If someone has upset you, don’t start with ‘You upset me...’ it is better to approach it with ‘I feel upset because...’
- Make an honest effort to understand the other perspective. Even if you don’t agree with it, sometimes a bit of understanding is all it takes to resolve things.



If the conversation feels like it is not heading in a positive direction, suggest putting some time and distance between the situation and resume when things calm down.

- Negotiate a compromise. Compromising shows that you've been listening, that you care, and that you're invested enough to work with the other person to find a solution that you both can live with. It doesn't necessarily have to be forever either; you can always re-evaluate after a period of time.
- Understand that it may take more than one conversation to resolve your stress.
- If the conversation feels like it is not heading in a positive direction, suggest putting some time and distance between the situation and resume when things calm down.

Speaking up about being stressed is important, as is asking for help when you're overwhelmed. It is also important to be available to listen and support someone who reaches out for help when they're stressed. How you respond to the request for support is crucial and will determine how comfortable they feel opening up and how willing they are to be vulnerable with you.

Here are some tips for communicating with someone who is stressed:

- **Listen.** Listening is a vital skill that doesn't always come naturally, so it may help to develop your abilities. It is important that while you're listening, you give the person your undivided attention, maintain neutral, open body language, and hold space for them to open up.
- **Be empathetic.** Showing empathy towards someone who is experiencing stress simply means seeing it from their perspective. You don't have to agree with everything they say or feel, just do your best to put yourself in their position to understand them better.
- **Make a referral.** Don't feel like you have to have all the answers. Sometimes the best thing you can do is direct the person to professional support, such as CCA@YourService, your Employee Assistance Program, or a behavioral health benefit. Encourage them to call right then and there.
- **Follow up.** Let the person know that you'll be checking back with them to see how they are getting on.

Whether you're experiencing everyday stress or a major life challenge, **CCA@YourService** can help. The program provides you and your family members free, around-the-clock access to a range of stress management and work-life balance resources.

PHONE: 800-833-8707

WEB: www.myccaonline.com

