

The Importance of Maintaining Structure and Routine

Some people love to have a solid daily routine, while others shudder at the thought of having a predictable schedule. During times of great stress, however, maintaining structure and routine can help you feel more organised and in control. It is as equally important to mix things up and let yourself out of your comfort zone sometimes by spicing up your routine.

Having a routine can be helpful at any time, particularly if you are trying to establish healthy habits, but these routines can be particularly important when aspects of your life feel uncertain.

A sudden lack of structure

Many people are either working from home, back in the office or faced with the prospect of an unknown period of unemployment. Those working at home may quickly discover that the constant isolation and lack of a normal schedule can be mentally taxing.

A lack of structure and routine can actually exacerbate feelings of distress and make you pay more attention to the source of your problems. As Goldman, a psychologist and clinical assistant professor at the NYU School of Medicine, explains: "If people don't have structure and are sitting around with less to focus on, then they also probably will find themselves thinking about the stressful situation more, which can also lead to additional stress and anxiety."

One way to get out of this cycle that promotes ruminating over the source of your stress is to maintain some structure and routine throughout your day.

The benefits of having a routine

Research has consistently shown that routines can play an important role in mental health. One study, for example, found that routines could help people better manage stress and anxiety.

Having a regular routine can help you:

- Lower stress levels
- Form good daily habits
- Take better care of your health
- Help you feel more productive
- Help you feel more focused

Getting necessary tasks out of the way can also help you find more time for healthy behaviours like exercise and leave you more time to enjoy fun activities and hobbies.

Some things that you can do that will help you maintain a routine when you're stressed:

Focus on things you can control

Managing your own behaviours can help you feel more in control of the situation. Goldman recommends focusing on the things that are within your power to control. The key is to create a routine that adds structure and a sense of predictability to your day. Of course, your schedule may change somewhat depending on the day of the week, but sticking to a basic structure for when you wake, eat, work, do activities and sleep can help you feel less stressed out and more organised. Structuring your day also ensures that you accomplish those basic tasks that must be done, which will leave you with the time to schedule in other things that you want or need to accomplish.

Follow a routine that supports your health

There are some things that you can make a part of your daily routine to help manage stress levels. These include:

- Staying active and getting regular daily exercise
- Making sure that you are well-rested
- Eating healthy meals on a regular schedule
- Setting realistic goals
- Trying to stay positive
- Preparing for challenges but not ruminating on things you can't control
- Staying in touch with friends and family members
- Setting aside time for activities that you enjoy

It's important to find things to fill your time so you don't end up engaging in unhelpful or unhealthy behaviours.

Make Your List

One helpful activity is to make a list of the things that you normally do during the day. Include everything from work to meal preparation to household chores. Once you have an idea of the basic tasks you need to accomplish, you can start creating a general outline for what you might need to accomplish each day to stay on track.

While it's important to get the essentials done, be sure to find things that you can look forward to, whether it's watching a favourite television show or calling up a friend. Making these little rewards a part of your routine can help you stay upbeat and focused when you are working on a task that you might not enjoy as much.

If you would like to learn more about **'The Importance of Maintaining Structure and Routine'** then please join our webinar on **Friday 20th October at 12pm** using the details below –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7441137789463652183>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

If you wish to contact the Care first telephone counselling and information line then please don't hesitate to call the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.