

Practical support strategies for coping with stress

	Self-coping	Support from others (Social support)
During a busy period at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop. Notice that you are rushing. Take a breath and get some perspective. You can't rush like this all day. Slow down to improve your effectiveness overall. • Increase your focus on the most important task at hand. • Build micro-breaks into your dispensing practice. Pause to look out over the pharmacy or out the window; have a drink or a bathroom break; notice the music/song playing in the store for a moment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calmly and respectfully ask others to wait a minute or two so you can focus on finishing your immediate task • Ask someone to take a phone message or hold the call until you finish the task at hand • If you are worried about what others think of your productivity, let your manager and other colleagues know that you are practising mindfulness breaks in your day to improve your attention and efficiency overall.
After a particularly busy day or week at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a ritual, such as getting changed after work, as a way of practising 'switching off' work and onto your personal life. • You may like to spend 5-15 min writing down tasks for the next day, journal reflection on what you learned today, list what CPD needs showed up for you today. • If you feel that you want to look up some CPD/legal info before the next day, limit this time to 30 mins. Then move on to something relaxing, enjoyable, or meaningful. • Put your work into context with the rest of your life. Your work will get easier as you become more experienced and work through challenges. • Plan fun, social, relaxation activities for your weekend and at least a couple of weeknights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact a fellow intern/ pharmacist to discuss any challenges that you had through the day/week. Be open in sharing, but not too often. Be sure to ask about your peer's day/week too. • Chat with or have dinner with a non-pharmacist friend/family member about something non-pharmacy to help shift your focus off your work for a while. • Take an exercise or creative class with others one night a week. • Have a friend over to watch a regular TV show or movie together.
Persistent stress or anxiety that is getting in the way of your ability to work and enjoy life with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get specific support to improve your situation. Don't suffer this out alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your GP about your stress or anxiety levels, any physical symptoms, depressed mood, and what options are available. • If relevant, talk to your Internship provider about your situation. • If you feel highly distressed or are experiencing suicidal thinking, contact Lifeline (13 11 14) or Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467).

Problem-solving strategies for coping

Work through practical improvements to reducing your stress at work. For example, review your own and shared workflow practices. Develop your own practices for specific tasks that you know will provide safety for patients and 'cover yourself' as being a reasonable process that you follow. This will help you to rest assured after work each day that you have done the best you could in the circumstances.

Discuss and propose potential improvements to workflow practices with your peers and manager in a non-confrontational way. Take the attitude that you are just curious about how it would work if you changed X or Y; perhaps you have even been trying this out already and found it helpful. If there are patient safety or Occupational Health and Safety issues that need to be discussed, you may need to be more assertive in stating the importance of a workplace change suggestion; not aggressive though. Consider who else you could discuss these kinds of issues with (other pharmacist peers; PSS; Worksafe/SafeWork; health department in your state).

A general problem-solving coping strategy is to:

1. Get clear on what the specific problem is. Write it down and get it specific.
2. Brainstorm solutions. Do not edit or disregard any possible solution as you go. List them all.
3. List the pros and cons of each possible solution.
4. Decide: Which solution is going to be the most achievable? Which is going to be the most effective, even if it is going to be a bit harder to achieve? Choose one solution to start applying.
5. What is the first step? When, Where, How, will you take that first step? (e.g., gather more information by calling an organisation or peer or internet research; organise your idea and make a time to talk to your manager).
6. If another barrier arises or the solution doesn't work, work through the next problem, or try one of your other solutions that you had brainstormed. Why didn't it work? Talk to peers: How was your communication style during your interaction? Were you too direct or aggressive? Or was this solution too unrealistic? Is this a pharmacy profession wide issue that you need to raise with an organisation? Is this workplace a good fit for you? Why/why not? What would you like to CHANGE AND/OR what do you need to ACCEPT?
7. If you are struggling to ACCEPT a current workplace situation, could that be because it is a situation that should not be accepted (e.g., bullying, unsafe dispensing situation)? Or is it because your expectations are too high for the pharmacy, your own practice? This can only be worked out over time by on-going reflection and discussion with trusted colleagues/peers, friends/family, or a health professional (e.g., GP, psychologist/counsellor).

My social support list

Area of life	My social supports
Pharmacy issues	Colleagues at work: _____ _____ Pharmacy peers: _____ _____ (Also pharmacy organisations – see PSS website for links)
Friendship/companionship	Friend to talk to about work: _____ Friend to talk to about non-work matters and spend time with: _____ Family member to talk with about work: _____ Family member to talk with about non-work matters/spend time with: _____ Social group (e.g., exercise group, spiritual group, creative group, book club) _____ _____
Financial/housing support (e.g., bank, accountant, landlord, Centrelink, family member, partner)	_____ _____ _____ _____
Health (physical and mental health)	Exercise/relaxation teacher: _____ GP: _____ Physical health professionals (e.g., physiotherapist): _____ Mental health professional: _____ Lifeline 13 11 14 ; Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636; Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
Supporters of my professional development (e.g., peers, mentor, PSA, Guild, SHPA, PPA, PDL other programs)	_____ _____ _____ _____
Supporters of personal life goals/values (e.g., partner, trusted family member or friend)	_____ _____ _____ _____