

# FACT SHEET #6

# LIFESTYLE MASTERY AND RESILIENCE

*"To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep the mind strong and clear" -Buddha*

## WHAT IS LIFESTYLE MASTERY?

Lifestyle mastery is learning to balance (and master) many of the different stressors that we encounter through life, all the while keeping our minds and bodies healthy, in addition to maintaining healthy relationships and support networks. The four foundations of lifestyle factors are nutrition, sleep, physical activity and positive relationships. Our wellbeing starts with looking at these four foundations and learning where we can improve in order to develop and maintain our levels of resilience.



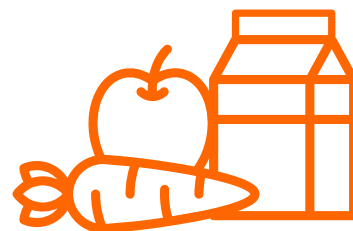
One of the most powerful buffers to stress and responding with resiliency is having a solid foundation of physical, psychological and social fitness. Decades of research has shown that good nutrition, sufficient sleep, physical activity and strong social supports enhances resilience by protecting people against the negative effects of stress. These have been identified as improving attention, planning, decision making and memory, all of which are important for effectively managing stress and being resilient.

## NUTRITION

These days, most of us know about healthy eating. Unfortunately, it is often when we are most under pressure that we invest the least time and energy into healthy eating.

From a stress mastery perspective, we want foods that promote a strong and healthy mind and body so we can face the challenges that come our way from a solid foundation.

Foods that regulate our stress levels and keep our body stable (in regard to highs and lows) are the foods most suited to help enhance our resilience!



### Nutrition can additionally help you:

- Reduce the risk of some diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke and even some cancers!
- Reduce high blood pressure
- Lower high cholesterol
- Improve your well-being
- Improve your ability to fight off illness
- Improve your ability to recover from illness or injury
- Increase your energy level

# SLEEP

Most of us have heard that getting between **7-8 hours of sleep** is important. A well-established predictor of resilience is consistently getting enough sleep. Lack of sleep has been shown to be the foundation for negative thinking, emotional vulnerability, inability to engage in complex and creative decision making, low physical and psychological energy and poor concentration - all the qualities we need to deal with adversity and the demands of a busy life!



## Examples of disrupted sleeping patterns:

- Difficulty in getting to sleep
- Poor quality sleep
- Less sleep
- Frequently waking during the night
- Waking very early in the morning and being unable to get back to sleep

Some of the consequences of inadequate sleep can be...

From one night	Long-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased stress</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Tiredness during the day</li> <li>• Aches and pains in muscles and bones</li> <li>• Weakened immune system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened risk factor for diabetes</li> <li>• Increased risk for breast cancer</li> <li>• High blood pressure</li> <li>• Decreased immune function</li> <li>• Major depression</li> <li>• Obesity</li> </ul>

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Being physically active enhances resilience by protecting people against the negative effects of stress. People who regularly engage in physical activities will find great improvement in their overall wellbeing. Some of the effects of physical exercise are:



A healthier body	A healthier state of mind
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces risk of a heart attack</li> <li>• Manage your weight</li> <li>• Decreases blood cholesterol level</li> <li>• Lowers the risk of Type II Diabetes</li> <li>• Lowers the risk of some cancers</li> <li>• Lowers blood pressure</li> <li>• Increases strength in bones, muscles and joints</li> <li>• Lowers the risk of developing osteoporosis</li> <li>• Lowers your risk of falls</li> <li>• Increases recovery rates (recovery from injury)</li> <li>• Increases in energy and mood</li> <li>• Increases in relaxation</li> <li>• Improvement of sleep quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces worry</li> <li>• Reduces feelings of sadness</li> <li>• Blocks negative thoughts and distract from daily worries</li> <li>• Improves attention</li> <li>• Exercising creates opportunity for increased social contact</li> <li>• Improves ability to plan</li> <li>• Improves decision making</li> <li>• Improves memory</li> <li>• Empowers people to better shoulder stress</li> </ul>

**Physical activity does this because it boosts levels of endorphins, dopamine and serotonin (3 of our 'happiness' hormones); and suppresses the release of cortisol (our stress hormone).**

# POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Humans are intrinsically social species; we are “hard-wired” with the desire and need to connect.

Research has shown that the stronger, trusted and healthier our relationships are, the more resilient an individual can be. Research says this is because:



***An effective way to enhance resilience is to invest in developing trusted, positive relationships.***

## Backing and support from others is powerful because it:

- Increases our feelings of self-confidence
- Increases feelings of pleasure and joy
- Provides a safety-net as we face setbacks or fail along the way
- Bolsters our belief that we can overcome obstacles.
- Encourages personal growth
- Enables the ability to collaborate and work more effectively

## Individuals with strong social connections have been known to:

- More actively problem solve
- More actively focus on solutions
- Have a reduced reaction to stress
- Have increased courage to persist in facing challenges
- Add more meaning to their lives

**Interestingly, the chemicals released during positive social connection reduces feelings of anxiety and fear!**

**This of course helps mobilise us into positive and proactive action in response to difficulties we encounter!**

## THIS IS ALL GREAT, BUT HOW DO I START IMPLEMENTING THIS?

*To start implementing the BIG 4 Lifestyle factors, please refer to our “Lifestyle Mastery” Tip Sheets. These will equip you with the skills to help bolster your resilience, all the while setting a great foundation for your overall wellbeing!*

If you or someone you know needs help contact **TIACS** on 0488 846 988 or your organisation’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP), your GP or call: **LifeLine** on 13 11 14, **Kids Helpline** on 1800 551 800, **MensLine Australia** on 1300 789 978 or the **Suicide Call Back Service** on 1300 659 467.