

A Guide to Enhancing your Mental Well-being

For Migrant Domestic Worker



Introduction

You came to Singapore to work and earn a living to support yourself and your loved ones.

During your employment here, you may feel overwhelmed by all the new things. You may also miss your loved ones. All these may result in you feeling stress.

Read on to learn more about stress, how to manage it and ways to seek help!



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1. What is stress?

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It is normal to experience stress sometimes. The events or situations that cause stress could be different across people as it is based on the way you see and react to the circumstances.



Did You know?



Some level of stress can be positive for your thoughts, emotions and behaviours. It can energise you to perform at your best. It motivates you to face challenges and finish your tasks.

However, too much stress becomes harmful. It can cause anxiety and health problems such as a weakened immune system and depression.

It is important that you identify signs of stress early and learn how to manage them.

2. What are the signs and symptoms of stress?

Look out for the following signs and symptoms of having too much stress:



Feeling alone, trapped, or hopeless.



Emotional disturbances or outbursts e.g. get frustrated, upset or angry easily; act without thinking about the results of your actions etc.



Having frequent mood swings e.g. change from feeling happy to sad suddenly.



Always feeling disturbed, or in a state of fear.



Talking or thinking about dying or ending your life.

If you have such signs and symptoms, you may be feeling overly stressed already and should seek help immediately to manage and overcome them early.



You can help your friends!

Do you know of any friends or someone around you with these signs and symptoms? You can help by providing emotional support or offering advice on stress management to her. Read on to find out more!

3. How can I manage my stress?

While stress is always present, we can learn to manage it well.

Let us look at some **common scenarios** faced by MDWs and see how best to handle them.

I am working in Singapore for the first time. I miss my family back in my hometown. My family is facing problems but I am not there with them.

Talk to your friends who may understand your situation better. You can also call home or write a letter to your loved ones. You could also share your feelings and thoughts with your employer. Your employer can then understand how you feel and support you in adjusting to the new working and living environment in Singapore.

My employer is very strict with me and I am unable to cope with so many different tasks.

Speak to your employer respectfully. Be open and honest with your employer and share about your challenges.

If you are facing problem doing a certain task, ask your employer for guidance and discuss with him or her on how you can cope with your work.

Do not keep any unhappiness to yourself as this may result in poorer relationship with your employer overtime.

What should I do if I need money urgently and do not have enough savings?

If you face financial difficulties, speak to your employer or any of the organisations listed below for advice. Do not borrow from unlicensed money lenders.

- Blessed Grace Social Services Ltd | www.bgss.org.sg | 8428 6377
- Adullam Life Counselling | www.adullam.org.sg | 6659 7844
- Arise2Care Community Services | www.arise2care.sg | 6909 0628
- Association of Muslim Professionals | www.amp.org.sg | 6416 3960
- One Hope Centre | www.onehopecentre.org | 6547 1011

During your rest day, you can also attend a course organised by AIDHA on money management. This course is specially designed for MDWs to learn how to set financial goals, save up, prevent and manage debts. Visit their website at www.aidha.org for the latest details.

Apart from the common scenarios, adopting healthy habits can also protect you from the harmful effects of stress. These are some tips to keep your stress under control.



a. Learn to Manage Negative Feelings

It is normal to have negative thoughts and feel negative emotions such as anger or helplessness. You may worry about the future, and think that bad things will happen.

Remain calm. Don't let your negative feelings stop you from dealing with the situations. Here are some tips to manage stress.



Take a break. Take some slow deep breaths before you do or say anything.



Use positive words such as 'I can', and 'I am able to' while thinking and talking.



Tell yourself that there are other solutions and ways of thinking to address the issue you are facing.



Remind yourself to be grateful for the important things in your life.



Start a diary to pen your thoughts or express your feelings.



Engage in activities you enjoy during your rest time, such as reading or listening to music.



b. Look after your health

Good eating habits and exercising regularly promote better health and a good sense of well-being. They can improve your mood, reduce negative feelings, and help brain health and memory.

Develop Good Eating Habits



Strive for healthy and balanced meals.
Do not skip meals.



Choose water instead of sweetened drinks.



Have more fruits & vegetables.

Food is the fuel for your body, and you need to pick the right kind of fuel for the body to perform at its best.

Be Active



Engage in sports activities (e.g. go for brisk walking or sign up for free workout) with your friends during your rest day.



Take the stairs (whenever possible).



Do some simple stretching exercise before you start the day or in between your rest time.

DIY Massage



You can also try simple massage on your own (gentle chops with the edge of your hands or tapping with fingers or cupped palms) at your neck area to help you relax before sleep.



c. Plan your work and rest schedule



Ensure that you have sufficient rest and sleep.

If your sleep is interrupted in the night due to your work requirements (i.e. taking care of elderly or infant), you could discuss with your employer to provide you with rest time during the day.



d. Maintain close communications with your family and your friends



If you are unable to cope with your work or adapt to a new environment, especially if it is your first-time working in Singapore, talk to your employer, friends, or employment agency. Share how you are feeling and seek advice from them.

4. Find out how Mimik overcame her stress.



Mimik (not her real name) was a first-time domestic worker in Singapore. Two weeks into her employment, she broke down in front of her employer. She could not control her emotions and would cry and shout when anyone moved or disrupted the order of the household items. Mimik was reluctant to speak with her employer when questioned about her behaviour.

Her employer called the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST) for assistance. It turned out that Mimik was stressed over her personal matters back home and was unable to adapt to her new environment.

FAST facilitated private counselling sessions with her and arranged for group counselling sessions together with Mimik's employer. The counselling sessions helped her settle down into her job and give her the confidence to continue with the employment.

There are many other MDWs who step forward to seek help when they are overly stressed with an issue. After seeking help, they are now able to work productively and provide for their family back home.

Remember, you are not alone. There are many people who care and want to help you.

5. Where can I seek help?

If you are feeling stressed or anxious,

- ✓ Calm down and talk to someone you trust.
- ✓ Seek help from your employer, employment agency or any of the NGOs or mental health organisations listed below.

X Do not subject yourself to self-harm or put yourself in dangerous situations.

Support Groups and Helplines Available

There are many organisations in Singapore that you can call if you need help with managing stress.

Non-Governmental Organisations:	Contact No:
The Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE) provides basic face-to-face counselling for both MDWs and their employers regarding employment-related matters.	1800 225 5233 (24 hours)
Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST) provides helpline and Befrienders Service to help MDWs who are in trouble or in distress.	1800 339 4357 (24 hours)
Mental Health Organisations:	Contact No:
Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) provides counselling services for people who are emotionally affected.	1800-283-7019 (toll-free)
Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) provides emotional support for those in distress.	1800 221 4444 (24 hours)
Singapore Counselling Centre provides a wide range of counselling and psychological services to enable you to mitigate stress and overcome the various issues of life.	6339 5411 (Counselling fees are chargeable)
Silver Ribbon provides counselling service to persons with mental health issues and their caregivers to understand why they are delaying or defaulting their treatment.	6386 1928

Here are other useful contacts for emergencies.

MOM HELPLINE FOR MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS (MDWs)

Ministry of Manpower – 1800 339 5505

For assistance and advice on well-being, salary, and other employment-related matters

OTHER EMERGENCIES

Police

999

Ambulance/ Fire

995

EMBASSIES AND HIGH COMMISSIONS

Bangladesh
6255 0075

Sri Lanka
6254 4595

Cambodia
6341 9785

India
9172 9803

Philippines
6737 3977

Myanmar
6735 1672

Indonesia
6737 7422
9295 3964

Thailand
6737 2475
8421 0105

6. List of courses and activities that you can sign up on your rest day to help you de-stress

List of Courses offered by AIDHA

Course Name	Course Objectives
Module 1: Manage Your Money & Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Learn how to save, budget, plan and stick to a budget. ✓ Build self-esteem and improve your presentation & communication skills. ✓ Improve relevant and practical IT skills on computer and phone.
Module 2: Plan Your Financial Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop an achievable long-term personal financial plan. ✓ Become a capable financial decision-maker. ✓ Learn how to invest savings in productive assets.
Module 3: Start Your Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Learn how to start and manage a business. ✓ Understand the business environment and develop a strategy for your business. ✓ Develop an achievable business plan
Improve Your English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Learn to communicate more effectively in English. ✓ Increase confidence in speaking and writing English.



Scan the QR Code or find out more and enrol for Aidha's courses here:

<https://www.aidha.org/contact-us/courses-overview/>

FREE courses

Introduction to Financial Education	This interactive workshop will help you understand the life-changing benefits of making better-informed financial decisions.
How to Open a Bank Account	Find out the benefits of opening a bank account in Singapore and pick up tips on what to look out for when opening one.
Understanding Debt	Debt, utang, hutang, അക്രമം, കടം. What is it and how to avoid it? Learn how to understand the true cost of debt in this course.
Building Your Resilience	Resilience is about being able to stay strong during difficult times. Learn how to manage challenging situations and remain strong in this course.
Dealing with Stress	In this interactive workshop, you will learn about how stress affects you and ways you can manage it, with other MDWs and a friendly Aidha mentor.
Debt Counselling Explained	Learn how to get to grips with your personal debt situation in our follow-up session to Understanding Debt (in partnership with AMP).



Scan the QR Code or find out more and register for Aidha's FREE courses here:

<https://www.aidha.org/courses/free-short-courses/>

List of Events and Workshops offered by Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST)

<p>Mental Resilience Facebook Live Stream Talkshow</p>	<p>Provides MDWs a safe platform to share on their issues. Engage in fun conversation and participate in the quizzes to win attractive prizes. The platform promotes the social support services and work life balance programmes that FAST has for MDWs.</p>
<p>Mental Resilience Workshops</p>	<p>FAST prioritises the holistic wellbeing of MDWs and aims to educate MDWs on resilience through interactive and engaging workshops.</p> <p>These workshops will touch on the areas of cognitive, emotional, mental, physical and spiritual aspects of MDWs to help them to stay strong in face of challenges.</p>



FAST activities are free for all MDWs! Scan the QR Code for more details and for other available courses at FAST's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/FAST.org.sg>.



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