

Managing risks

Safety and security in human rights work

Personal toolbox on well-being and stress management

Self-care has no universal formula. Each individual must discover their own coping strategies, which may change over time. For Human Rights Defenders, self-care begins with identifying needs and acknowledging that while they provide support to others, they also need to receive it in a way that balances individual and collective well-being. Here are some tips which could be applied:

1 Recognize and respond to stress

Identify stress signals

Notice signs like difficulty concentrating, headaches, muscle tension, or irritability. Acknowledge these signs of stress and consider sharing them with someone.

Take immediate action

Use strategies like deep breathing, stretching, walking, writing down thoughts, or practicing mindfulness to relax and counter stress.

2 Prioritize self-care

Daily routine

Make self-care a priority. Incorporate exercise, healthy eating, or other activities that are good for your body and mind, and prioritize sufficient sleep to help build resilience in stressful times.

Relaxation practices

Try yoga, meditation, or other calming activities to build resilience to stress.

3 Create supportive routines

Structured time

Schedule your daily self-care activities, such as mindfulness exercises, journaling, or dedicated quiet time, to make establishing a routine easier.

Task management

Block time to plan your schedule, allowing you to prioritize and organize personal or work-related tasks to reduce chances of getting overwhelmed.

4 Seek support

Reach out

Talk to trusted friends, family, or use other resources for guidance on stressful challenges like caregiving, work, or finances.

Professional help

Consult a health professional if stress impacts your well-being, relationships, or work, or if it leads to harmful behaviours.

5 Set healthy boundaries

Work-Life balance

Separate personal and professional time as much as possible. Avoid checking emails or taking work calls outside of business hours to encourage rest and prevent burnout.

6 Delegate effectively

Share responsibilities

Learn to delegate tasks to reduce your workload. Trust your team to handle responsibilities; creating space for meaningful work and recovery.

While managing stress is a shared responsibility between the organization and the individual, this personal toolbox acknowledges that proactive measures are key to well-being. Since everyone experiences stress individually, fostering personal accountability helps to identify stressors, mitigate their impact, and build resilience, even within supportive organizational environments.