



Working Mums: Managing Mental Health





It's normal to feel overwhelmed as a mum at times. Research has shown that first-time mothers especially have a tendency to show lower levels of maternal confidence and higher levels of stress. While each mother's transition into motherhood may differ, a lot of the stressors and strains that most mums experience are likely to be the same. These stressors have only been amplified during the pandemic, where many mothers have had to juggle having their children at home, working from home, and decreased social support.

Common causes of stress for new mums

Becoming a mum for many women may be a challenge in itself, but for 'working mums to be' or for 'new mums who are returning to work for the first time (following maternity leave)' – the level of stress and worry is likely to be amplified. **The challenges of juggling work and family life, particularly as the core caregiver, means that for most working mums, they may seldom find time to de-stress.**

Time Demands

The new commitments and responsibilities that come with caring for a new member of the family will undoubtedly take up time, as well as physical and emotional energy. For a lot of mums, this may mean **there is little opportunity to escape from stress.**



Role Transition

Transitions mean change and uncertainty. For most people, not knowing what to expect can be uncomfortable and will naturally generate additional stress and worry. For working mums to be, the prospect of taking a pause in their career could be a welcomed change, and some mothers may choose to leave the workforce permanently. However, for others, **taking a break from their career could be unsettling, and eventually returning to work from maternity leave could bring with it a lot of mixed feelings and anxiety.**



Being a Mum during a Pandemic

There have been many reports about the stressors and strains of parenting during the pandemic, and evidence that working mums in particular are suffering greater anxiety and depression than before Covid-19. Since women are the primary caregiver in many households, **many mums are bearing the brunt of juggling their roles between caring for their family and working from home.** Social restriction measures have also meant that **a lot of mums are left feeling isolated and lacking support.**

Learn more about stress here: www.mind.org.hk/mental-health-a-to-z/stress/about/

Given the impact that stress can have towards both our physical and mental health, it's in our best interest to take care of ourselves by effectively managing stress. In the first instance, acknowledging that you may be struggling and reminding yourself that you are not alone can help. **Remember - stress is a normal, natural reaction, especially as a mum.**

Tips to cope with the stressors of being a mum

Know what your triggers are and what helps you to de-stress

Learning what triggers you to feel stressed can enable you to prepare and/or prevent you from feeling overwhelmed, and being aware of what helps you to relax can assist you in putting together a 'coping plan'. Start by listing some activities you can easily do that you know will help to relax you (this could include talking to a friend on the phone, or making yourself a cup of coffee or tea).

Understandably it can be hard to find the opportunity to de-stress if you have a mountain of chores or a crying baby to attend to, but **prioritising time to do a quick check in with yourself** (e.g. attending to how you feel emotionally and physically every day) as soon as you get the chance to, can help you to identify warning signs, and prompt you to enlist help from friends or family.



Make time for yourself

Self-care shouldn't be overlooked. Taking time out for yourself is sometimes perceived as selfish and can generate feelings of guilt, but looking after yourself is crucial both for your own wellbeing and that of your family. It may be challenging to find the time to engage in something you enjoy, but even scheduling in a small activity that you can find pleasure and value in at the end of a long day, can provide you with something to look forward to, and may help you to get through the day.



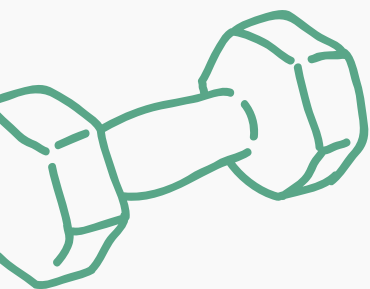
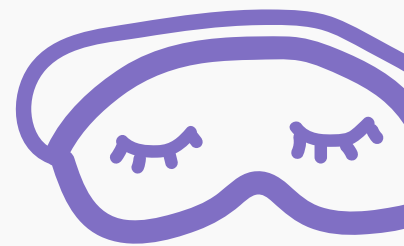


Expect to experience different emotions

A never ending list of chores, a constant sense of feeling busy and a lack of sleep for a lot of mums, is a recipe for stress! This will likely leave you feeling overwhelmed with a whole host of emotions. But **take comfort in knowing that it is completely normal to experience a range of emotions, both good and bad.**

Sleep, Diet, Exercise

When the opportunity allows, get as much sleep as you can, wherever you can. Many mums have often shared collective advice of trying to sleep when your baby sleeps. Sleep deprivation can have detrimental impacts on both your physical and mental health, and can increase your susceptibility to stress and irritability.



Exercising and maintaining a balanced diet is also important, as moving your body, eating well and ensuring you stay hydrated will provide you with the energy you need, as well as ensuring that you aren't overlooking your physiological needs.

If you aren't at your best physically, then you won't be at your best emotionally, and this is likely to have a knock-on effect on your ability to perform (either at work or at home).



Make time to connect with the people that matter to you, and build on your relationships



As the demands and chores of home and work-life builds, understandably certain relationships in your life may take a back seat. Mums often feel most occupied when their children are young and require extra attention. Being a mum and attending to your child's needs may often leave you with little energy to spend with friends or family (or even your partner). Finding quality time to spend with the people that matter to you may therefore be challenging, but **any efforts towards maintaining meaningful connections can be crucial towards your own wellbeing, both in the short and long term.**

Talk about how you're feeling & reach out if you need help

Recognising and acknowledging how you are feeling can be a big step towards helping mums to reach out when they need help. A lot of people, including mums, often worry about opening up to others about how they are feeling and often assume that no one else is struggling or feeling the same way. Feeling stressed and overwhelmed is a perfectly normal and common experience of being a mum. For some people, asking for help feels bothersome and uncomfortable, but often we don't realise that there are likely to be people around us that are eager and willing to help out. And as **the act of helping others can also in itself be a way to boost wellbeing and confidence. Allowing someone the opportunity to help you out in some way may actually mean you are returning the favour.**





Find a support group

Joining a support group, either in person or online, can be a really helpful way for mums to connect with others mums who are in a similar situation. For many mums, devoting the majority of their time towards their families, means they forget or lack opportunities to invest time towards their social needs. Therefore **having the opportunity to meet and converse with other women who may be experiencing the same stress and strains as you, could help to normalise how you may be feeling as well as help you to feel less alone.** Another benefit of joining support groups is also the opportunity to meet new mums and possibly build new friendships.

Final words

There's no doubt that being a mum, especially a first-time mum, can bring with it a mixture of feelings and emotions. Every mother has likely experienced some degree of stress, self-doubt and anxiety at some point in their life. So remember, if you are experiencing stress or are feeling overwhelmed - **it's ok and you're not alone.** Aim to dedicate some time for yourself and enlist help if you need to.

Additional resources

Caritas youth and community services -
Hyacinth project for young mothers
Tel.: 3582 4471
Website:
ycs.caritas.org.hk/hyacinth/youngmother.html

Hong Kong Federation of Women Centre
Tel.: 2386 6255
Website: <https://www.womencentre.org.hk/En/>

Hong Kong Single Parent Association
Tel.: 2338 1301
Website: <https://www.hkspa.org.hk/>

Hong Kong Women Development
Association Limited
Tel.: 2660 8100
Website: <https://www.hkwda.org.hk/>

Mother's Choice
Tel.: 2313 5678
Website: <https://www.motherschoice.org/en/>

Pathfinders
Tel.: 5500 5486
Website: <https://www.pathfinders.org.hk/en/>

Reference

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ABOUT MIND HK

Mind HK, established as "Mind Mental Health Hong Kong Limited," is a **registered S88 charity (91/16471)** committed to **improving awareness and understanding of mental health in Hong Kong**. We collaborate with other local and international mental health charities and provide online support and training programmes, based on global best practice, to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem and equip them with the resources they need. Through collaborative research, Mind HK is leading the way in understanding mental health problems in the city and providing its population with the right support and resources.

MIND HK'S MISSION AND VISION

- To ensure **everyone in Hong Kong living with a mental health problem has the recognition, support and respect they need to make the best recovery possible**.
- To provide partnership, collaboration, training, innovation and best practice to facilitate the work of all those involved in improving mental health in Hong Kong.
- To lead, promote and support the destigmatisation and transformation of community mental health care so that Hong Kong can become a global leader in the field and a model for other Asian cities.
- To research and audit these strategies and share them internationally.

RELIABLE INFORMATION ON COVID-19

Centre for Health Protection:

<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html>

World Health Organisation (WHO):

www.who.int/

If you want to learn more about other mental health topics, please visit **our mental health A to Z**: www.mind.org.hk/mental-health-a-to-z/

If you like to learn more on **how to check in on others**, please visit: www.howokayareyou.com

USEFUL LINKS:

- [COVID-19 Mental Health Tips](#)
- [COVID-19 mental health relief scheme](#)
- [Seeking help in Hong Kong](#)



#HowOkayAreYou

#你有幾OK

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If you are experiencing strong levels of distress or trauma which are interfering with your life, remember that you do not have to face it alone, and that **help is available**.

For emergency support please contact:

- **Emergency hotline:** 999
- **The Samaritans 24-hour hotline (Multi-lingual):** (852) 2896 0000
- **Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only):** (852) 2389 2222
- **Suicide Prevention Services 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only):** (852) 2382 0000
- **More crisis support services can be found here:** mind.org.hk/find-help-now
- **More non-urgent support services can be found here:** mind.org.hk/community-directory/



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