COPING WITH STRESS AT WORK
BACKGROUND
Did you know that your job is a likely source of stress? This is true for almost everyone at some point in time but, we are not powerless and we can learn to manage it well. Effectively coping with job stress can benefit both your professional and personal life. Everyone who has ever held a job has, at some point, felt the pressure of work-related stress. Any job can have stressful elements, even if you love what you do. In the short-term, you may experience pressure to meet a deadline or to fulfill a challenging obligation. But when work stress becomes chronic, it can be overwhelming and harmful to both physical and emotional health. Unfortunately, such long-term stress is all too common.

EFFECTS OF UNCONTROLLED STRESS
Work-related stress does not just disappear when you head home for the day. When stress persists, it can take a toll on one’s health and well-being. A stressful work environment can contribute to problems such as headaches, depression, insomnia, obesity, heart disease, anxiety, high blood pressure, weakened immune system, and difficulties in concentrating.
TAKING STEPS TO MANAGE STRESS
People who often experience excessive stress deal with it in unhealthy ways, such as overeating, eating unhealthy foods, smoking cigarettes, or abusing alcohol and drugs. However, some of the helpful ways to manage stress are as follows;

1. **Develop healthy responses**- As opposed to attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do your best to make healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Also, make time for hobbies and favorite activities. Whether it is reading a novel, going to concerts or playing games with family or friends. Make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure

2. **Build healthy habits**- Getting enough good quality sleep is just as important for effective stress management. Build healthy habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities such as computer and television use at night.
3. **Establish boundaries**- In today’s digital world, it is easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check emails from home in the evening or answering the phone during dinner.

4. **Take time to recharge**- This includes taking a few minutes off one’s laptop, making use of short health breaks to replenish and return to a pre-stress level of functioning. Further, do not let your vacation days go to waste, when possible, take time off to relax and unwind so you can come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best.

5. **Talk to your supervisor**- Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor, not to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with effective ways of managing the stressors you have identified so you can perform at your best on the job.

6. **Get some support**- Accepting help from trusted colleagues, friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress.

While stress caused by your workload, approaching deadlines or even your work environment is common, the steps above are a great way to make sure your tank never hits. You are probably not the only one feeling pressure or stress and so do not worry about seeming inefficient if you take a couple minutes or days off (annual leave) to recharge!