

Feeling stressed? Overwhelmed?

Dear Campleader,

Leading a workcamp can be stressful, so it's important to take care of your own mental health as well as that of your team. Below you will find some tips and a checklist to help you manage stress when feeling overwhelmed.

Remember: you can always contact your organisation for advice and support!



Problem focused tips

- Look for information to reassess the situation and identify solutions
- Try to change the situation or reduce the source of stress
- Be aware of reactions like “fight or flight”, emotional outbursts, or (self-)destructive behaviours – common but not always helpful



Emotion focused tips

- Focus on what you can control in the moment
- Try to change how you react to the situation, even if you can't change it
- Be aware of self-protection mechanisms such as: withdrawing or isolating yourself, avoiding communication, shutting down emotionally

Expectations and Fears

Much stress can be avoided when clearing up expectations before and during the camp:

- Talk to the local partner about their expectations for the group of volunteers they will be hosting.
- On the first day, collect volunteers' expectations and fears, as well as what they need in order to feel good.
- Create an open space for reflection and evaluation after the first few days of the workcamp.

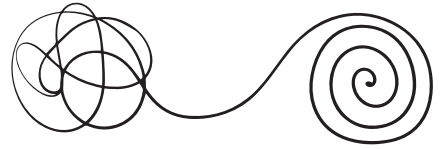
Participants

- Participants can require a lot of energy and attention, remember: **You are nobody's parent!** Everybody is participating to have a good time, but so are you!
- Speaking the participant's native language can help. If no one in the workcamp speaks it, you can ask the sending organization to set up a call with the participant.



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Checklist for stressful situations



- ☐ **Step Back & Regulate** 🟡
Naming the stressor helps you understand and manage it

Create space between yourself and the source of stress. Even 10–15 minutes can make a difference. Try: walking in nature, deep breathing, yoga or meditation, a short nap, light exercise, journalling your thoughts, simply sitting quietly alone.

- ☐ **Check in with Yourself** 🧠
Vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness

Take a moment to pause and reflect: *What exactly is stressing me right now?*
Is it: A situation that's already over? A specific person or dynamic? Unmet expectations (mine or others')? Something personal I brought with me from home?

- ☐ **Talk It Out** 🗣️
Recharge your body and mind so you can lead effectively.

Don't carry the load alone. Share your thoughts with a friend, co-camplader, or local partner. It can help you gain another perspective

- ☐ **Rethink Expectations & Priorities** 🚫
Leadership doesn't mean doing everything yourself.

Now take a fresh look at your to-do list: Are your goals still realistic? Are you trying to do too much? Can you delegate more responsibilities to your co-camplader or volunteers? Try to classify all tasks into 4 buckets: *Do, Delay, Delegate, Drop*, so-called 4D technique.

- ☐ **Open a Group Dialogue** 🤝
Avoid blame – aim for understanding and teamwork.

Time to tell the whole group how you are feeling and ask them for help.

1. Share your experience:

- *I would like to share how I feel with you, is that okay?*
- *My expectations of this workcamp were ..., then this happened ... now I feel ...*

2. Invite their perspective:

- *How did you experience the situation?*
- *What were your expectations about this workcamp ... what would you need to feel more comfortable/make it better moving on?*

3. Try to find a concrete solution that works:

- dividing tasks more equally (participants can help you!)
- rearrange cooking and cleaning teams
- re-manage work: less work, starting later/earlier in the day, get different tools

4. Plan regular check-ups with the group, even short 5-minute ones.