Definition
The term nervous breakdown is commonly used but what does it actually mean? It is a generalisation that refers to what happens when someone becomes mentally or emotionally unable to function as he or she normally would. A nervous breakdown is best described when a person feels overwhelmed by the stressful events, situations or circumstances that occur in life.

Stress
Stress is a state of physical, emotional and psychological arousal or tension resulting from an unexpected or extreme event (ESV, 2007). Some stressors lead to more stress and even greater stress reactions without a form of relief; this is cumulative stress.

Cumulative stress can result in the following: eating and drinking more to unwind, inadequate sleep, longer working hours and conflict with family, friends or colleagues. Overall this has negative consequences on general well-being, which creates a vulnerability to further stressors.

Often the stress we experience is a natural response, which means it is inevitable. Stress is a response to real life, but the filter between what’s really going on and the meaning you assign to it can, in fact, be part of the problem. In other words, putting your challenges into the right perspective and remaining positive is a key element of coping with stress. There are ways to get there, but when they don’t work there are professionals who can help.

Depression
Nervous breakdowns are commonly linked with depression.

It can be caused by a range of factors (genetic and biological) but can also be triggered by life events (for example, job loss, relationship breakdown or the death of a family member or friend).

Here are some warning signs:

- Loss of interest or pleasure in normal activities
- Feeling constant fatigue
- A lack of motivation to do things
- General sense of hopelessness
- Relationship problems
- Health issues

These problems vary in terms of length, severity and outcome.
Nathaniel Hawthorne likened happiness to a butterfly, “which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.” Poetic but probably wrong according to recent psychological research. A study earlier this year found that people who made a conscious effort to improve their mood while listening to upbeat music felt happier afterwards than those who just listened passively (Research Digest, 2013).

**Seeking Help**

If you, or someone you know, feels overwhelmed or is experiencing the beginning of a nervous breakdown, keep in mind that help is available. Seeking out assistance can lead to less stress and positive outcomes. Here are some basic things that can help:

- Talk about what’s going on. Family and friends may be concerned. The situation has the potential to become worse if you’re closed off and don’t want to communicate.

- Before you get to the crisis point, work at getting your routines back, eating regularly, and improving your sleep. While the problem may still exist, it may prevent you from having a mental or emotional crisis.

- Seek professional assistance. Your EAP service (Instep) is a good starting point, as it is staffed by professionals who can provide a free and confidential service.

- See your GP. A significant part of a GP’s work these days is concerned with assisting their patients to deal with mental health issues.

- Call a help-line. If you find yourself overwhelmed and unable to talk with those close with you, at least contact someone who can point you in the right direction - Your EAP – 0800 284 678 for Instep - Lifeline – 0800543354 - Depression Helpline – 0800111757 - Emergency Services – 111

**LOOK FOR THE UPLIFTING**

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For assistance, phone 0800 284 678
www.insteplimited.com