

Well-Being, Stress, and Trauma Diagnosing and Treating



Hello from Quint Studer

Dear Healthcare Leader:

The work we do is deeply meaningful, yet it has never been easy. For decades our industry has had to cope with continuous change. Now COVID is bringing even bigger challenges. We all need to be at our most resilient so we can care for the patients who count on us—even as we cope with routines, lives, and futures that have been turned upside down.

That's why this tool kit is so important. It brings together some of the best stress management tools, tactics, techniques, and resources in the industry. When implemented properly and consistently, these best practices can help leaders and employees alike build the “resiliency muscles” to handle stress and even head off the long-term effects of trauma.

It's vital to diagnose before treating. That's why this tool kit starts out with two diagnostic tools I find helpful.

One tool allows individuals to diagnose themselves in private. As a general rule, healthcare professionals are reluctant to seek help. We need to create a safe environment where it's okay to talk about mental health and wellness. This tool can be a great conversation starter.

The second tool is meant to help you get a handle on how stress and trauma might be impacting your organization. The pandemic has been an earthquake and the aftershocks will continue for a while. There will be other big changes in the future. How we address and adapt to them will determine how well our organization is able to fulfill its mission.

Stress and trauma don't impact any two individuals or any two organizations in exactly the same way. That's why it's so crucial to get intentional about noticing, diagnosing, and treating. This Stress and Trauma [video](#) shares a fresh look at stress and trauma and tools to help measure an individual's well-being as well as an organization's. It also offers techniques on ways to help the workforce in the area of well-being.

A special thank-you goes to Mark Clement, president and CEO of TriHealth, a healthcare system based in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graciously allowed us the use of his organization's Stress Management & Support Leadership Tool Kit as we developed this project. You will see some of TriHealth's amazing tools beginning on page 48.

As a profession we focus on caring for others. Too often we are so focused on others (not to mention so busy) that we may not make self-care a priority. But we've all heard the analogy about putting on our oxygen mask first. We all have the responsibility to stay mentally and emotionally well, so we will have the inner resources to help patients heal.

Healthcare people are the most passionate and committed people in the world. I hope that this tool kit will be helpful to you, the healthcare professionals who work for you, and the patients, families, and community members whose lives you touch.



Quint Studer

Quint Studer Bio



Quint is a teacher at heart. In fact, he began his leadership journey working with special needs children, a job he loved and held for ten years. He entered the healthcare industry in 1984 as a community relations representative. He then went on to hold leadership positions at Mercy Health System in WI and Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago, IL, where their initiatives in patient care led to their winning *Hospital Magazine's* Great Comeback award. In 1996, he became president of Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, FL, leading that organization to the top 1 percent of hospitals nationwide in patient and employee satisfaction.

In 2000, he formed the Studer Group, a healthcare consulting firm, which was awarded the 2010 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. By the time the firm was sold in 2015, it had 250 employees and had helped more than a thousand healthcare organizations move toward higher performance. Through his work at Studer Group, he served as a role model for hundreds of CEOs and other administrative leaders around the country.

He spent decades working to make healthcare and education better. *Inc.* magazine named Studer its Master of Business, making him the only healthcare leader to have ever won this award. *Modern Healthcare* named him one of the 100 Most Powerful People in Healthcare for his work on institutional healthcare improvement. *Modern Healthcare*, along with its sister publication *Advertising Age*, also honored him with the first Healthcare Marketing Visionary IMPACT award in 2014. Around the same time *Becker's Hospital Review* recognized him as one of the 40 smartest people in healthcare.

He was also a member of the AUPHA Board of Directors during the late 2000s.

Quint is the author of twelve books. His first title, *BusinessWeek* bestseller *Hardwiring Excellence*, is one of the most read leadership books ever written for healthcare. More than a million and a half copies are in circulation and it's still one of the best-selling books in healthcare. His newest book, *The Calling: Why Healthcare Is So Special*, is aimed at helping healthcare professionals keep their sense of passion and purpose high. Two of his other books—*Results That Last* and *The Busy Leader's Handbook*—became *Wall Street Journal* bestsellers.

For more information on Quint, please visit www.quintstuder.com or www.studeri.org.

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INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

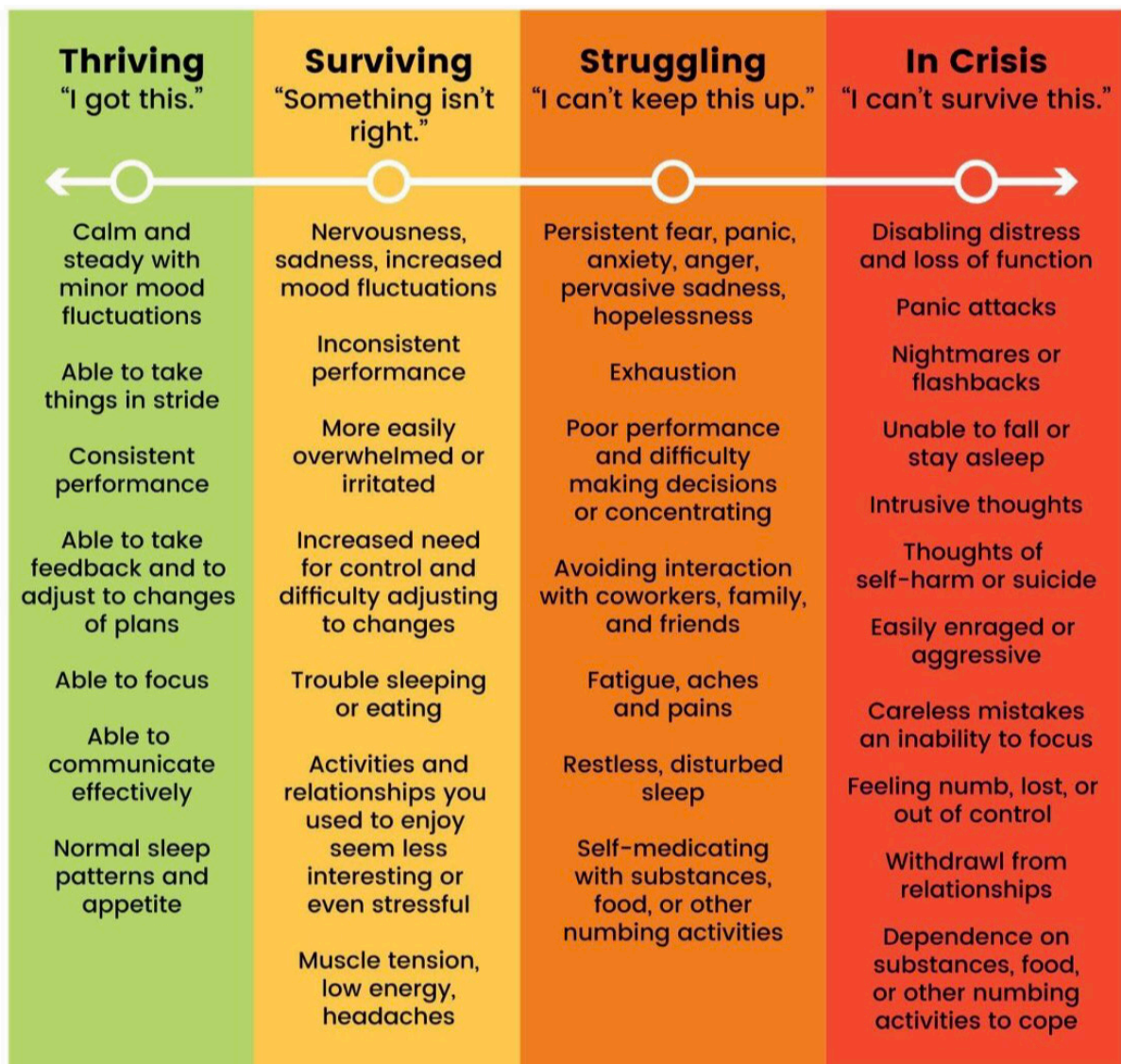
Where Do You Fall on This Spectrum?

One of the most important ways to improve employee wellbeing is to get people to take notice of how they are feeling, especially in times of great change or crisis. Not all stress or trauma impacts everyone the same way. This simple chart identifies specific symptoms individuals may be experiencing and helps them pinpoint whether they need assistance.

Leaders, be on the lookout for these red flags in yourself and your employees. Many healthcare professionals are private by nature and reluctant to seek help. It may be helpful to give this chart to employees and let them diagnose themselves. Self-diagnosis is often the key to recovery. Hopefully this will be a conversation starter.

Employees, please look at this chart and see where you fall on the spectrum that ranges from “Thriving” to “In Crisis.” The tools and tactics in the following pages may be able to help you manage stress and build resilience.

This is very important: If you ever find yourself becoming overwhelmed or drowning in despair, do not be afraid to ask for help. Remember, we all struggle at different times in our lives. It is those who care enough about themselves to seek the help they need who will find the strength, stamina, and resilience they need to go on to serve another day.



Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V. Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

How Are Stress and Trauma Impacting Your Organization?

When things are hectic, we may not realize all the ways our organization is impacted. This simple framework helps leaders look at the different parts of an organization so you can assess how a stressful crisis, trauma, or period of intense change may be impacting them. Do you notice serious issues in any of these categories? This diagnostic tool will help you determine where to allocate resources.

The external environment will always create change. COVID is the most recent source of upheaval but it certainly will not be the last. The sooner we address and adapt to these changes as an organization, the healthier and more engaged our workforce will be—and the better we'll be able to provide the level of care our patients deserve.

4 FRAME APPROACH



Adapted from Bolman and Deal

Building Resilience & Healthy Habits

Resiliency Resources Guide

GuidanceResources®



Resiliency Resources

Resiliency During Tough Times

Of the many factors that go into successful change, whether personal or business-related, the most important may be resiliency. Resilience is the measure of our ability to welcome challenges, overcome adversity and get back on track to achieving our goals. With that in mind, here is some information on resilience amid changing times.

What is resilience?

Resilience is more than coping; it's about confronting crises and difficult situations without getting overwhelmed by them. Resilient people are better able to handle life's stressors and to adapt to changing situations. Being resilient can help protect you from depression, stress and anxiety, too.

Some of the characteristics of resilient people include:

- Strong relationships
- Self-motivation
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Skills in communication and problem solving
- Self-awareness
- Emotional control

Resiliency in the Workplace

All business involves some inherent risk. Anyone in management understands that—or if they don't, they soon will. That's why resilience is such a useful tool in today's business world. Resilience means controlling your ego, not panicking in the face of a setback, and having the patience and ability to stay focused on long-term goals. Resilience can help you weather storms, remain steady and make rational decisions instead of being driven by emotion.

How can you cope with the regular changes inherent in business today?

There will always be periods of large growth, times of relative stability and times where the economy slows or recedes. To thrive, businesses must respond to these waves appropriately. While workplace upheaval can be stressful, there are things you can do to cope with this challenging environment:

Find a healthy balance. Your work is important, but it's unhealthy for you mentally, physically and socially if you live, breathe and sleep your job. Get off the rollercoaster and away from the stress and uncertainty by surrounding yourself with friends and family and finding positive outlets to spend your free time.

Be positive. There is only so much you can control. How you feel about your situation is one of those things. Look for the silver lining and practice positive self-affirmations—it can change your mood and outlook on life.

Look for the gray. Even though it may seem so, not everything is black and white or gain and loss. Search for the middle ground. It can be a far less stressful place.

How to Manage Anger and Stress

A new boss. A drop in headcount. A change in procedure... When facing change, it's fairly common for those in the workplace today to feel anger and stress. It's important, however, to remember that allowing such emotions to run you leads to mental, physical and social consequences.

If anger is getting the best of you, there are a number of steps you can take to manage it in a healthier way:

- **Relax and calm down.** Take deep breaths. Count to 10 and let the tension escape from your body. Try relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga and progressive muscle relaxation.

- **Remove yourself from the environment.** If a person or situation is causing you to feel extremely angry, or if you feel that you cannot talk about your emotions or express your anger positively, excuse yourself and walk away.
- **Identify the source.** What exactly is making you angry? When you recognize the cause, approach it in a positive, productive way.
- **Think before taking action.** Carefully consider the consequences of your response. Will you regret saying what is on your mind? Is there a better way to express your anger than the first impulse that came to you? Do not overreact. Avoid making assumptions or guesses; know the facts before you speak out about someone or something.
- **Assert yourself appropriately.** If you feel strongly about something, do not hold back from saying what is on your mind. Let the other person know what you want. Be clear and direct in your message.
- **Divert your attention.** If there is nothing you can do to change the situation, (e.g., you are stuck in a terrible traffic jam that is making you increasingly irritated), think of something else. Focus on a pleasant thought, an upcoming vacation or a happy memory.
- **Find humor in the situation.** When appropriate, learn to laugh at life and conflicts with others. Break the tension and defuse the situation with a smile, a joke or a funny (but not sarcastic) comment.
- **Be patient.** Try to be tolerant and empathetic of others. Attempt to understand their situations and behaviors.
- **Find a substitute outlet for anger.** Instead of acting on an aggressive urge, find a creative outlet for your energy. Start an exercise program. Take up a physically challenging new sport like kickboxing. Try a new hobby or artistic endeavor such as painting.
- **Get advice from others.** If you simply do not know how to deal with an angry feeling or situation, ask friends or family for suggestions on how they got through similar situations.

There are also a number of ways you can alleviate stress in your day-to-day life. Here are 10:

- **Get enough sleep.** If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
- **Schedule a realistic day.** If you can't avoid back-to-back appointments, try to at least give yourself a few moments for a breathing spell.
- **Do not rely on your memory.** Write down appointment times, assignment due dates, etc. As an old Chinese proverb states, "The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory."
- **Be prepared to wait.** A paperback, crossword puzzle or cell phone game can make a wait in a post-office line almost pleasant.
- **Procrastination is stressful.** Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
- **Relax your standards.** The world will not end if the grass does not get mowed this weekend or if the sheets have to be changed on Sunday instead of Saturday.
- **Learn to say 'no.'** Saying no to extra projects, social events and activities you do not have the time or energy for takes practice.
- **Eliminate destructive self-talk.** "I can't ..." or "I'm too inexperienced to ..." are negative thoughts that can increase stress levels.
- **Take time for yourself.** Develop a belief that everyone needs quiet time every day to relax and be alone.
- **Turn off your phone.** Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect.

Resilience in Stressful Times

Keep in mind that stress doesn't always get better on its own. You may have to actively work on it, especially if the stress you have been facing is prolonged or intense. The following stress management techniques may help:

- **Scale back:** While it may seem easier said than done, take a close look at your daily, weekly and monthly schedule and find meetings, activities, dinners or chores that you can cut back on or delegate to someone else. If news reports or social media posts are contributing to your stress, try turning off the TV and the Internet until you feel better able to deal.
- **Prepare:** If you are feeling edgy already, try to stay ahead of additional stress by preparing for meetings or trips, scheduling your time better, and setting realistic goals for tasks both big and small. Stress mounts when you run short on time, so build a cushion into your schedule for traffic jams or slow public transportation, for example.
- **Reach out:** Make or renew connections with others. Surrounding yourself with supportive family, friends, co-workers, or clergy and spiritual leaders can have a positive effect on your mental well-being and your ability to cope. Volunteer in your community.
- **Take up a hobby:** It may seem cliché, but an enjoyable pastime can calm your racing mind and heart rate. Try reading, gardening, crafts, tinkering with electronics, fishing, carpentry or music—things that you don't get competitive or more stressed out about.
- **Relax:** Physical activity, meditation, yoga, massage and other relaxation techniques can help you manage stress. It doesn't matter which technique you choose. What matters is refocusing your attention to something calming and increasing awareness of your body.
- **Get enough sleep:** Lack of sleep affects your immune system and your judgment and makes you more likely to snap over minor irritations. Most people need seven to eight hours a day.
- **Avoid alcohol and caffeine:** While momentarily calming, both can contribute to stress and anxiety.
- **Get professional help:** If your stress management efforts aren't helpful enough, see your doctor or contact your Employee Assistance Program. Chronic, uncontrolled stress can lead to a variety of potentially serious health problems, including depression and pain.

Fostering Resilience

How resilient are you? During a personal crisis, some people are more resilient than others. Resilience is more than coping; it's about confronting crises and difficult situations without getting overwhelmed by them. Resilient people are better able to handle life's stressors and adapt to changing situations. Being resilient can help protect you from depression, stress and anxiety, too.

Resilience can be strengthened and nurtured in adults and children by improving self-esteem, developing a strong system of social support and taking care of your physical and mental health.

Maintain Strong Connections With Family and Friends

Having strong, positive relationships with others provides a cushion of acceptance and support that can help you weather tough times.

Avoid Viewing Problems as Insurmountable

You have probably handled and survived difficult situations in the past. Learn from these experiences and be confident that you will get through a current crisis, too.

Accept That Change is Part of Living

The reality is that certain things cannot be controlled. What's important is how you respond to the situation. Accepting the change makes it easier to move forward with your life.

Keep a Long-term Perspective and Hopeful Outlook

Even though your feelings may be overwhelming at times, try to stay positive. Set goals for yourself so that you can feel productive and purposeful every day, and create longer-term goals so that you have a direction for your future.

Take Care of Your Physical and Mental Health

It's especially important when you are feeling stressed to continue to eat a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and regular exercise. Alcohol and caffeine can increase stress levels; avoid or reduce consumption.

Get Support and Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

If you need help dealing with a personal crisis, or would like additional resources and strategies for improving your resilience, contact your employee assistance program for confidential counseling and other services.

Identifying and Coping With Job-related Stress

If you, your co-workers or employees seem to be more hurried, strained, tense or nervous than in the past, there is a good chance the cause of the anxiety is work-related stress. A recent study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) states that 40 percent of workers thought their job was “extremely” or “very” stressful. In addition, 25 percent of respondents felt their job was the No. 1 source of stress in their lives and that they felt “often or very often burned out or stressed by their work.”

Stress causes a variety of physical and emotional changes in people. Managers (and employees) should be trained to recognize the common signs of stress and burnout in other people. If you are aware and conscious of these signs you can implement specific changes in day-to-day activities to minimize (or even eliminate) job-related stress from your workplace.

Causes of Work-related Stress

A conflict with a supervisor... feeling overwhelmed with tasks and responsibilities... a noisy air conditioning unit... a longer-than-normal commute... There are number of things, from seemingly minor to undeniably large, that can cause a person to feel stressed-out in the workplace.

Causes of stress will vary from person to person and not everyone will feel anxiety from the same stressors (causes of stress). For example, some people thrive in work environments where they have to meet fast-approaching deadlines each day, such as in the news industry. Other people would find working under these conditions to be extremely stressful.

Sources of work-related stress commonly cited by employees include:

- Long or difficult commutes to work
- Disagreements with co-workers or supervisors
- Having disagreeable or difficult co-workers
- Experiencing verbal abuse
- Feeling overworked
- Feeling unappreciated
- Having difficult deadlines to meet
- Feeling underpaid
- Job insecurity
- Having to take work home to complete
- Diminished benefits
- Feeling tasks are monotonous, repetitive or redundant
- Working long hours
- Fear of physical violence in the workplace

Signs of Stress

Stress can manifest itself in a multitude of different physical or emotional changes in a person.

Physical signs of stress include:

- Headaches and migraines
- Stomachaches and ulcers
- Back and muscle pain
- Grinding teeth
- Feeling lightheaded
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite
- Panic attacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Rashes, itching and hives
- Weight gain or loss
- A weakened immune system
- Increase in drinking, smoking or drug use (making it harder for the body to fight viruses and bacteria)

Emotional signs of stress include:

- Forgetfulness
- Excessive nervousness, anxiety and worry
- Increased anger and hostility
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Difficulty communicating
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Withdrawal from social interaction

Ways to Manage or Eliminate Stress

If you feel minor stress from your job or you are getting ulcers from the constant strain, there are things you can do to minimize the stress and anxiety your job is causing in your life. Here are some suggestions for coping with job-related stress:

- **Exercise before going to work:** Physical exertion is a great way to relieve or reduce stress, so try exercising a little before you go to the office. Put in some time on the treadmill or sign up for a morning spin class.
- **Take breaks during the workday:** If you have a job where you are at a desk all day get up and walk around for five minutes. Stretch your legs with a walk around your floor or building to clear your mind. Think about something besides work-related tasks while walking.
- **Smile:** It seems too easy, but simply having a smile on your face can help reduce stress levels. Think about how you interact with other people; do you not enjoy being greeted more by a smiling person than by somebody who is frowning or who looks mad? Give people a smile when you see them and watch your work environment slowly brighten up.
- **Avoid confrontational situations:** If there is a specific person you are having difficulty with at your job, try to avoid having interactions with them. Ask to work on a different team or on different tasks. Include other people in all conversations you have with the person so you do not feel isolated and alone with them.
- **Delegate tasks:** Many people try to do too much, even though they work in a “team” environment where many people are supposed to pull equal loads. Allow other people to do some of the tasks you enjoy less, so you can spend more of your time doing the work-related functions you enjoy.
- **Talk with your supervisor:** Employers do not want to have a burned out workforce. High job-related stress levels lead to high job turnover rates. Job turnover cost employers money. Your supervisor or HR department may have some suggestions for minimizing the stress you are feeling at work.
- **Take a vacation:** How long has it been since you were away from the office for more than a three-day weekend? There is a reason you get vacation days every year, and that is so you can take an actual vacation where you are not checking your e-mail or voicemail every two hours for messages. Go someplace, leave your work behind and spend time doing things for yourself, not for your employer.
- **Seek the assistance of a therapist or mental health counselor:** The stress and anxiety we feel can be minimized by our own efforts, but sometimes it is necessary to seek the assistance of a professional. They will have ideas and possible solutions you can use to reduce and eliminate work-related stress.

Resources

- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health www.cdc.gov/niosh/.

Tips for Coping With Stress

Stress is an inevitable part of our lives. We have all experienced it to some degree: during an argument with a parent or sibling; while speaking to a large group; while trying to finish a school project. Our experiences in an increasingly complex world constantly require us to adapt to changes and cope with stressors. Learning how to identify and manage stress can help prevent physical and psychological problems, increase your chances of future success and promote a longer, healthier life.

The way we think and respond to life's challenges promotes stress. For example, the more impatient, demanding, controlling or submissive we are, the more we are bound to experience stress. Stress can be a learned response to everyday life events.

Effects of Stress

To a certain degree, feeling stressed is a normal, healthy response to life's events and challenges. The ability to react under stress is crucial for human survival. Many experts define stress as the body's reaction to change. It is natural for our bodies to trigger a fight-or-flight response to potentially dangerous situations. A stressful stimulus promotes a chemical reaction that produces adrenaline and increases energy.

However, over time the body's continued response to regular stress can lead to an increase in blood pressure and heart rate, heightened anxiety and an overall strain on the system. Unrelieved tension builds up and may cause unhealthy symptoms.

Immediate physiological symptoms of stress include:

- Hyperventilation (rapid, shallow breathing)
- Profuse sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Increased urination
- Dizziness and lightheadedness
- Fatigue

Conditions linked to stress include:

- Musculoskeletal pain (e.g., backaches, neck pain)
- Migraines and headaches
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Gastrointestinal disorders (e.g., chronic heartburn, ulcers)
- Skin diseases
- Cardiovascular disorders (e.g., high blood pressure)
- Colitis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Diabetes
- Asthma

Behavioral symptoms of stress include:

- Irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Bad habits (e.g., biting your nails or grinding your teeth)
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to act due to fear or indecision
- Lack of concentration
- Substance abuse

Ways to Cope with Stress

Seek support. Do not wait until you reach your breaking point. If you begin to feel stressed, talk to your parents, your guidance counselor or your friends. They may be able to provide new ways that you can try to help alleviate stress. It is important to recognize and admit that you are feeling anxious and stressed. Pay attention to your body's physical signs of stress (e.g., headaches, stomach discomfort). If the stress becomes overwhelming, talk to your parents about getting some professional help.

- Try to identify the causes of stress. By recognizing the real reasons behind your tension, you can learn to feel more in control and change the source of the stress. If you are not sure why you feel stressed, retrace your steps: perhaps it stems from a forgotten event from yesterday or last night's disturbing dream.

Ask yourself these five questions:

1. What is the worst thing that can happen?
 2. Is there anything more I can do to improve the situation?
 3. How will this outcome affect my life in the long run?
 4. What can I learn from this?
 5. What advice would I give to someone else in this situation?
- Accept stress as an everyday part of life. Often the best way to cope is to "go with the flow", to accept those stressors that you can not currently change.
 - Laugh and learn. Instead of getting irritated, laugh at life's annoyances and learn from your mistakes. Humor is a powerful tool in helping build resilience, the ability to bounce back from negative events.
 - Nurture those relationships that matter. More interpersonal contact with the right people can help relieve stress. Open up to others about your problems, and accept help when it is offered. Spend less time with negative, stress-inducing friends or acquaintances.
 - Develop a timeline of short- and long-term goals. List challenging but realistic objectives for yourself. Analyze and update these goals over time. Avoid setting unrealistic expectations and too many lofty goals. Attempt challenges that are doable, and tackle the easiest first.
 - Focus on the positives. Recognize that for everything that may go wrong, there may be multiple things that go right. Be proud of your accomplishments, and celebrate your successes.
 - Break from routines at school and at home. Monotony also can cause stress. Remember you can change the script of your life.
 - Examine your thought patterns. Often it is our thoughts that determine whether we interpret a situation as stressful. Listen to your inner voice to discover thought patterns that may be contributing to your overall stress level. Write down responses to that inner voice so that you can access these responses the next time you feel stressed.

Personal Life Tips

- Get enough rest. Doctors recommend getting at least eight hours of sleep a night.
- Exercise regularly. Swimming, running, brisk walking, aerobic exercises and other repetitive fitness activities are especially beneficial.
- Engage in fulfilling activities. Take a little time each day for something you like to do: a hobby, a walk with the family dog, an hour with a good book, a fun outing with friends, etc.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and other stimulants. These common drugs actually can induce stress and anxiety. A simple step like switching to decaffeinated coffee can have a real effect on your stress level.
- Avoid alcohol, tranquilizers and recreational drugs. These may contribute to anxiety and depression and an increased sense of loss of control.

School Tips

- **Try to exercise during lunchtime or if you have a free period during the day:** Simple steps like taking the stairs or walking for 15 minutes after lunch can have a positive effect on your stress level (and on your waistline too!).
- **Tackle one task at a time if possible:** List your assignments in order of priority, and complete one at a time. Tackle the easiest ones first. This can make you feel more organized and in control, leading to a sense of greater accomplishment.
- **Do not procrastinate:** Putting important tasks off can lead to increased worry. It is more important to get started than it is to complete the assignment perfectly. You can always use the first attempt as a rough draft.
- **Get organized:** Rearrange your locker and assignment notebook for maximum efficiency. Make sure you have a quiet area at home where you can study without interruption. Create lists and schedules to help you meet deadlines.

Relaxation 101

Try these techniques to help you relax and reduce stress:

- **Breathing exercises:** Drawing slow, deep breaths from the diaphragm (the spot just under your ribcage) promotes a more efficient exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide than chest or shoulder breathing. Exhale slowly and evenly. If you are highly stressed, try this while lying on your back.
- **Yoga and stretching exercises:** These can relieve tension, make your body more limber and flexible and produce an overall calming effect.
- **Meditation and imagery techniques:** By sitting in a comfortable, quiet environment, closing your eyes and freeing your mind from its many concerns for even a few minutes each day, you can learn to achieve relaxation quickly. Try concentrating on an image that symbolizes your stress, such as a giant ball that slowly begins to shrink; alternatively, let your mind go blank. Do not fight stressful thoughts. Instead, think of these thoughts as floating in one ear and out the other and being replaced in your mind by calmer images.
- **Progressive muscle-relaxation techniques:** These involve systematically tensing, relaxing and visualizing each major muscle group. For example, make a fist and hold it tight for at least five seconds. Feel the tension in your hand and arm. Finally, relax your hand, and visualize the tension escaping your body. Do the same with your other hand, your neck, your face, limbs, etc.

Resources

- The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov
- National Institutes of Health (NIH): <http://health.nih.gov>
- Mental Health America: www.nmha.org
- What is post-traumatic stress disorder?

How well do you cope with stress?

Do you frequently feel frustrated and exhausted from too much responsibility and too little time? Do you have trouble sleeping or finding time to relax? You may be having difficulty handling the stress in your life. Take this quiz to find out how well you cope with stress.

1. I feel I have a supportive social network.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
2. I actively pursue a hobby.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
3. I participate in at least one social activity per month.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
4. I am within 10 pounds of my ideal body weight.
 Yes (15 points)
 No (0 points)
5. I practice some form of deep relaxation at least three times a week. (Deep relaxation includes meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, imagery and yoga.)
 Yes (15 points)
 No (0 points)
6. On an average, I exercise 30 minutes per day.
 No (0 points)
 One day a week (5 points)
 Two days a week (10 points)
 Three days a week (15 points)
 Four days a week (20 points)
 Five days a week (25 points)
 Six days a week (30 points)
 Seven days a week (35 points)
7. I eat two nutritionally balanced meals per day. (A nutritionally balanced meal is low in fat and high in vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products.)
 No (0 points)
 Once a week (5 points)
 Twice a week (10 points)
8. Every week, I do something that I really enjoy.
 Yes (5 points)
 No (0 points)
9. I have a place in my home which I use for relaxation and/or solitude.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
10. I practice time management techniques daily. (This includes planning ahead, keeping a calendar, prioritizing and setting deadlines.)
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
11. I smoke daily.
 Yes (0 points)
 No (30 points)
12. I can stop drinking after two alcoholic drinks.
 Yes (35 points)
 No (0 points)
13. I take medication (over the counter/prescribed) to fall asleep on a regular basis.
 Yes (0 points)
 No (35 points)
14. On an average, I bring my work home during the week.
 No (25 points)
 One day a week (20 points)
 Two days a week (15 points)
 Three days a week (10 points)
 Four days a week (5 points)
 Every day of the week (0 points)

Your Score

Add up your points to find out how well you cope with stress. To learn effective ways to reduce stress and improve your work-life balance using your employee assistance program, talk to the GuidanceResources representative at the ComPsych® table today, or call GuidanceResources at your toll-free number. Services are confidential and available at no cost to you.

145 points and above

Congratulations! You have an excellent score. You are able to handle stress in an effective and healthy manner.

101-144 points

You are able to cope with stress in an effective and healthy manner. Be sure to keep exercising, eating a healthy diet, relaxing and avoiding alcohol and tobacco.

51-100 points

You have adequate skills to cope with common stress. You can improve the way you handle stress with the following suggestions:

- Exercise for 30 minutes, at least three times per week.
- Take some time each week for an activity you enjoy such as pursuing a hobby, going for a walk, listening to music, reading a book or playing with a pet.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals full of vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Avoid using medication, alcohol or other substances to help you sleep or relax.
- Stop smoking cigarettes.
- If possible, leave your work at the office.

0-50 points

You may not be effectively coping with stress. Your employee assistance program is a good place to learn healthy strategies for managing stress, learning to prioritize and finding resources to help you balance your work, family and personal relationships.

In addition, you can improve the way you handle stress with these suggestions:

- Exercise for 30 minutes, at least three times per week.
- Carve out some time for yourself each week to do the things you like to do, such as pursuing a hobby, going for a walk, listening to music, reading a book or playing with a pet.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals full of vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Avoid using medication, alcohol or other substances to help you sleep or relax.
- Stop smoking cigarettes.
- If possible, leave your work at the office.



Tips to Relax and Reduce Stress

It is important to relieve your stress because it can lead to mild health problems such as insomnia and headaches. It can lower the body's immune system, increasing susceptibility to illness. It also may worsen or contribute to some more serious health conditions.

Some people are better at managing stress than others. Those people all cultivate the same habits:

Ten Habits of Effective Stress Managers

1. They know how to relax.
2. They eat well and exercise often.
3. They get enough sleep.
4. They don't worry about the unimportant stuff.
5. They don't get angry often.
6. They are organized and their life is not cluttered.
7. They manage time efficiently.
8. They have and make use of a strong social support system.
9. They live according to their values—their goals are aligned with what's important to them.
10. They have a good sense of humor.

None of us can escape the stress of daily living, but we can learn to manage it better and become better stress managers. Try the following tips to protect your physical and mental health from the strain of stress:

- **Try some deep breathing.** Take a slow deep breath—hold it for five seconds—then slowly exhale.
- **Learn and practice meditation.** Create peaceful mental images.
- **Take a mental health break.** Make some time each day to devote to yourself—sometimes even 10 to 30 minutes really can help.
- **Strive for balance in your life.** Make time for activities and people you enjoy.
- **Use your support system.** Share your feelings with a caring friend or family member.
- **Just say no.** Remember that it's OK to say no to requests that push you beyond your limits.
- **Take one thing at a time.** Focus on the task at hand and do it well.
- **Don't demand perfection.** Ease up on yourself and those around you.
- **Take care of yourself.** Be sure to exercise regularly, eat a well-balanced diet and get enough rest.
- **Plan ahead.** Factor in time for traffic or other delays so that you're more relaxed when you get to work or your appointments.
- **Develop a positive attitude.** Try to view negative situations in a positive way.
- **Remove the clutter in your life.** Clean your house, garage or workspace regularly.
- **Laughter is the best medicine.** Find what makes you laugh. When you're laughing, you don't have time to be stressed out. And, don't take yourself too seriously.
- **Curb Caffeine.** Stimulants such as tobacco and caffeine can rev up your nervous system, which increases stress.
- **Seek help.** At times, you may feel that your stress is difficult to cope with, or is interfering with your daily life. If the stress in your life becomes overwhelming, don't hesitate to seek professional help from your EAP.



How to Stay Motivated

Motivation is essential to setting and attaining goals. Research indicates that you can influence your own levels of motivation and self-control. To do so, you must figure out what you want, power through the challenges and start trying to be who you want to become.

Set Smart Goals

Having a roadmap for the future is a key element to well-being and success. Goals provide focus as well as a measuring tool for progress. They enhance productivity, bolster self-esteem and increase commitment so you are more likely to achieve whatever you set out to conquer. The simple fact is that when people have goals to guide them, they are happier and achieve more than they would without having them.

- Putting your goals in writing helps you to define them in detail. Be specific, use action verbs, have measurable outcomes and specify completion dates.
- Make a list of obstacles by thinking of everything that might stand in your way then decide what you can do about each obstacle. Shield yourself from distractions and temptations that may arise along the way.
- List the benefits of achieving your goal – list exactly what you hope to gain after achieving your goals.
- Identify subgoals. Be specific, defining exactly what you are going to do and when. Make sure each step is challenging but attainable.
- Get prepared and organized. When information is scattered about, you feel out of control and this undermines your motivation.
- Leave some room for mistakes and have backup strategies in place to attain your goals. Do not expect perfection.

Monitor, Feedback and Reward

Do not forget to chart your progress, whether it is with a high-tech online tracker or an old-fashioned fitness journal. Seeing incremental improvements can boost your motivation and help you make important changes in order to be successful.

Reward yourself for every successful step you take toward achieving your goal. Treat yourself to rewards that will motivate you to continue moving forward.

Enlist others for help if you need it and try to find someone with whom you share a common goal. Also, look for someone who has already achieved the goals you seek to reach and ask them for their insight on how to accomplish them.

Practice Makes Perfect

Do not give up easily. The closer you get to achieving your goals, the easier it gets. Self-control functions similar to a muscle becoming stronger with use. If you keep practicing self-control, you will eventually become better at it.



Learning to Accept Change

Learning to roll with change will lead to a happier and more fulfilling life. That doesn't mean ignoring feelings of sadness, anger, frustration or stress. These are normal responses to major life changes. But once you have acknowledged those feelings, it is important to move forward and focus your energy on what's possible.

The following are some simple, solid steps you can take to turn unexpected transitions into positive outcomes:

- **Reflect and refocus.** Take stock of your personal assets and express gratitude, such as, "I can deal with this. I still have my ability to think, my special talents, my skills and my aspirations. I'm grateful for relationships and for my family."
- **Ask yourself some important questions.** "How do I want to feel three months from now? What will it take to get there? What does my ideal week look like? What can I do to realize that? Who can help with that?"
- **Choose.** Decide what you want as the next chapter of your life. Simply choosing doesn't guarantee you'll get it, but the power of your intentions makes a huge difference.
- **Take action.** Start by visualizing how you want to feel or where you want to be three months from now. Work back from this goal until you find something small enough that you can do today, tomorrow or next week.



Why Mindfulness Matters

Stress is an inevitable part of our lives. We have all experienced it to some degree: during an argument with a partner; while speaking to a large group; while meeting a deadline at work. Our experiences in an increasingly complex world constantly require us to adapt to changes and cope with stressors. Learning how to identify and manage stress can help prevent physical and psychological problems, increase your chances of future success and promote a longer, healthier life.

Mindfulness, which is best described as the practice of being more aware in the present moment, is an effective way to respond to life's stresses. Examples of mindfulness include:

- Becoming aware of breath and feeling the stomach rise and fall with each breath
- Feeling the various physical sensations of an emotion
- Paying attention to all of the sounds in a room
- Noticing what happens in the body when there is stress
- Watching the thoughts that arise when there is boredom

It can be difficult to get your mind to slow down, but focusing on the now can help improve your physical, social and mental health. Practicing mindfulness can result in:

- Improved organizational skills
- An increase in self-esteem
- A sense of calmness, relaxation and self-acceptance
- A better quality of sleep
- A decrease in depression
- A decrease in overall anxiety and test anxiety
- A decline in negative emotions
- Fewer conduct and anger management problems



Depression Warning Signs

Depression is a treatable medical illness involving an imbalance of brain chemicals called neurotransmitters and neuropeptides. What are the symptoms?

- Prolonged sadness or unexplained crying spells
- Significant changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Irritability, anger, worry, agitation, anxiety
- Loss of energy, persistent lethargy, and others

If you are feeling depressed, don't wait. Get help from your Employee Assistance Program today.



Creating a Self-care Plan

To feel your best, it is important to take care of yourself, especially when your job demands so much from you emotionally. Maintaining emotional resilience requires eating well, exercising, keeping work and home life balanced and maintaining good relationships. But there are times when even these things can't prevent stress and anxiety from creeping in. That's why self-care is so important. Taking a small amount of time out of your busy schedule just for yourself is key to handling all your duties while getting the most out of life. Try these tips to give yourself the attention you need to be your best.

Deep Breathing. Deep breathing focuses on using the diaphragm (the spot just under your rib cage) to draw slow, deep breaths into the lungs and to release them slowly. Take a couple of minutes every hour to practice some deep breathing.

Stretching. Stretching exercises can relieve tension, make your body more flexible and produce a calming effect. Even just shrugging your shoulders, stretching your arms and rolling your neck a few times a day can have positive effects.

Meditation and Visualization. Meditation involves "quieting the mind" by blocking out sensory input and distraction, while visualization involves using the brain's creative capacity to create a stress-free experience, much like daydreaming. Try to carve out 15 minutes daily to quiet your mind and body.

Muscle Relaxation. Progressive muscle-relaxation techniques involve systematically tensing, relaxing and visualizing each major muscle group. It is best to practice these techniques when you have about 20 minutes and are able to find a quiet place where you can lie down without being disturbed.

Calming Thoughts. Our thought patterns often cause or contribute to the stress that we are feeling. The next time you encounter a stressful situation, take a moment to tune into your thoughts and feelings. Write these thoughts down and then write down a more positive replacement.



Tips for Increasing Energy

Often, people turn to caffeinated beverages and energy drinks to give them the boost they need to get through the day. However, many of these drinks can result in a short burst of energy followed by a rapid crash. These lifestyle strategies can help eliminate this rollercoaster effect while boosting energy throughout the day.

Get a Good Night's Sleep. Getting between seven and nine hours of sleep per night is optimal. Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.

Get Moving. A brief bout of exercise (as little as 10 minutes) can improve energy levels and a person's mood. Physical activity, even walking, is a great energy booster.

Eat a Healthy Breakfast. People who skip breakfast are essentially running on empty. Keep breakfast healthy by incorporating sources of lean protein, healthy fats and whole grains, such as whole-wheat toast with peanut butter and a banana.

Stay Hydrated. Even slight dehydration can leave a person feeling tired and lethargic. Keep a tall glass of water or a water bottle with you throughout the day.

Reduce Stress. Stress has a major impact on energy levels. Try to take 20 minutes for yourself every day just to relax.

Opt for Whole Grains, Limit Sugar. Eating whole grains provides a slow and steady release of fuel (carbohydrates) into the bloodstream, keeping energy levels consistent and balanced throughout the day.

Turn Coffee into a Protein Drink. Put skim or reduced-fat milk in coffee instead of creamer. The protein in milk helps sustain energy levels, as well as providing some bone-building calcium.

Choose Healthy Snacks. Have a couple of snacks throughout the day that combine protein, fiber and a little fat, such as an apple and string cheese or yogurt and nuts. This helps to sustain energy levels throughout the day.

Building Resilience & Healthy Habits

Wellness within your reach (Healthy habit development)

The Wellness within your reach presentation reviews the “5 Steps to Behavior Change”, explains how to create S.M.A.R.T. Goals, and offers dozens of practical and motivational tips.

Moderated PowerPoint presentation:

<https://www.brainshark.com/1/player/hmk?fb=0&r3f1=12285605094d494e4654370c100d1f0f06594e21501a5714090c1e4023761e161b0d0845610360225607140e5651214f0256001113091b72134157040e155c4f&custom=hotmwellnessinreachbcb>

Slide Deck:



Tools and Resources

Sticking to a wellness program can be easy when you have the right tools and resources.

- ✓ Understand the Steps to Behavior Change
- ✓ Know where you are in the Cycle of Behavior Change
- ✓ Be able to distinguish between a “quick fix” and a true lifestyle change
- ✓ Have a wellness game plan



Stages of Change

Transtheoretical Model of Change

- A model of behavior change that assesses an individual's readiness to act on a new, healthier behavior.
- It provides strategies, or processes to guide the individual through the **five stages of change**.
- Individuals cycle through the five stages based on their readiness to change.



The Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997)

5 Steps to Behavior Change

Step 1

Identify and understand the habits you need to change.

Step 2

Develop a plan for change.

Step 3

Put your plan into action and practice.

Step 4

Refine, reinforce, and maintain your plan.

Step 5

Problem solve and deal with any roadblocks and challenges.



The Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997)

The Cycle of Behavior Change



SUCCESS

Step 5:
Problem solve

Step 1:
Understand and identify

RELAPSE



Step 4:
Refine, reinforce,
and maintain

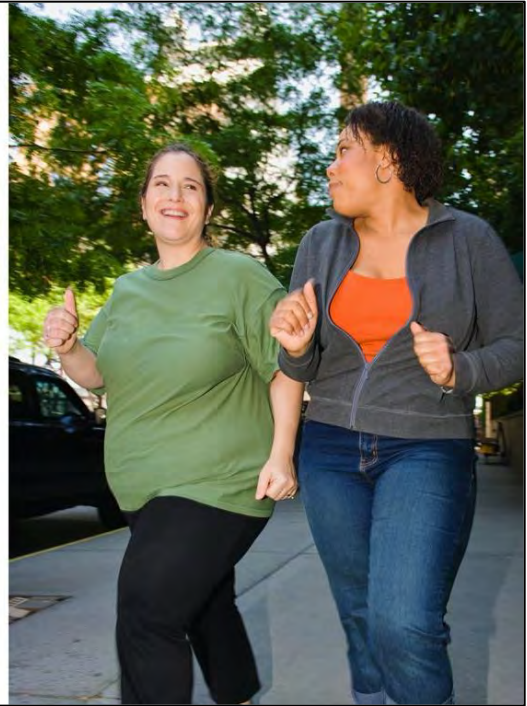
Step 2: Develop a plan

Step 3:
Take action and
practice

The Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997)

Lifestyle Change

- ✓ **Begin where you are** and progress toward achievable goals that work for you.
- ✓ The **ideal approach** to lifestyle change employs wellness strategies that you can live with and adapt throughout your life.
- ✓ Lifestyle change **is not achieved** through a quick-fix program.
- ✓ Lifestyle change **is not an “all or nothing”** approach.
- ✓ **Work** with your friends, family, and co-workers for support.



Create A Game Plan

Identify your current health needs

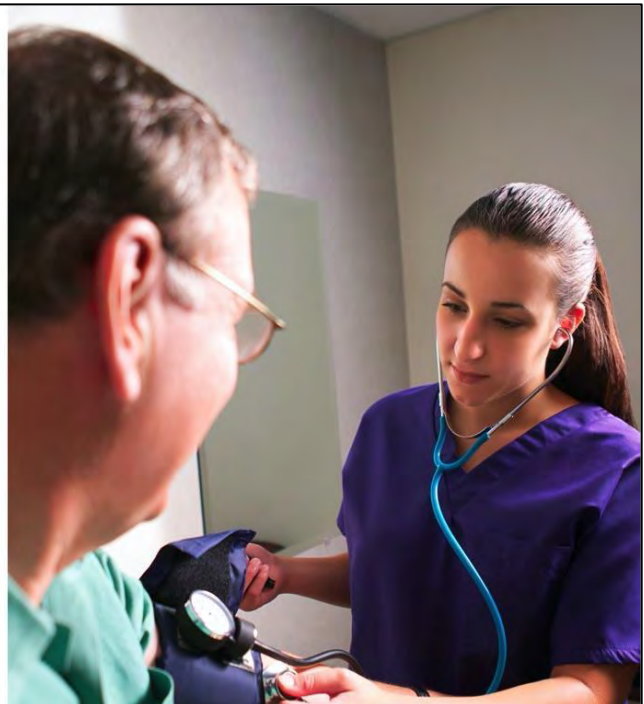
- ✓ Get your preventive exams
- ✓ Take a wellness profile

Set goals

- ✓ Utilize the S.M.A.R.T. principles
- ✓ Identify the resources needed to achieve goals
- ✓ Keep your goals in front of you

Measure progress

- ✓ Designate one day/week to evaluate progress
- ✓ Visually record your progress
- ✓ Make adjustments if necessary
- ✓ Evaluate how you feel



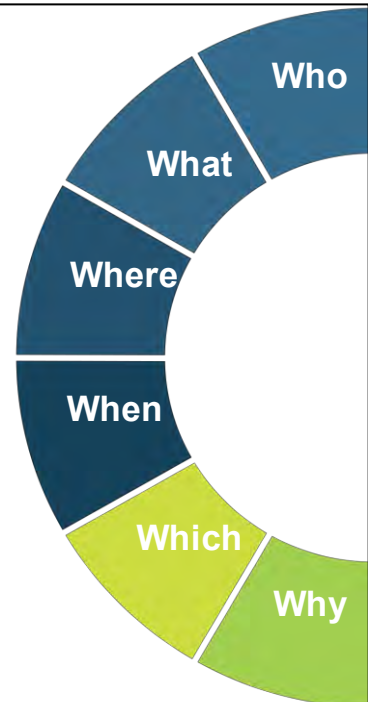
S.M.A.R.T. Goals



Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Make it specific: A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal, answer the following questions:

- ✓ **Who:** Who is involved?
- ✓ **What:** What do I want to accomplish?
- ✓ **Where:** Where will my plan take place?
- ✓ **When:** When will I accomplish my goal?
- ✓ **Which:** Identify any requirements and constraints
- ✓ **Why:** The specific reasons, purpose, and/or benefits of accomplishing the goal



Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals (cont.)

Measurable – When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the sense of accomplishment that encourages your continued effort.



Attainable – A goal needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it. You feel committed to achieving the goal. But if you set goals that are too far out of your reach, you probably won't commit to doing them. It's easy to get discouraged when you can't meet the goals you set.

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals (cont.)



Realistic – To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective which you feel is “do-able.” Think about what is realistic for you and where you are at the moment. You can then devise a plan to achieve the outcome you desire.



Tangible – A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the five senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing). When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and it becomes attainable.

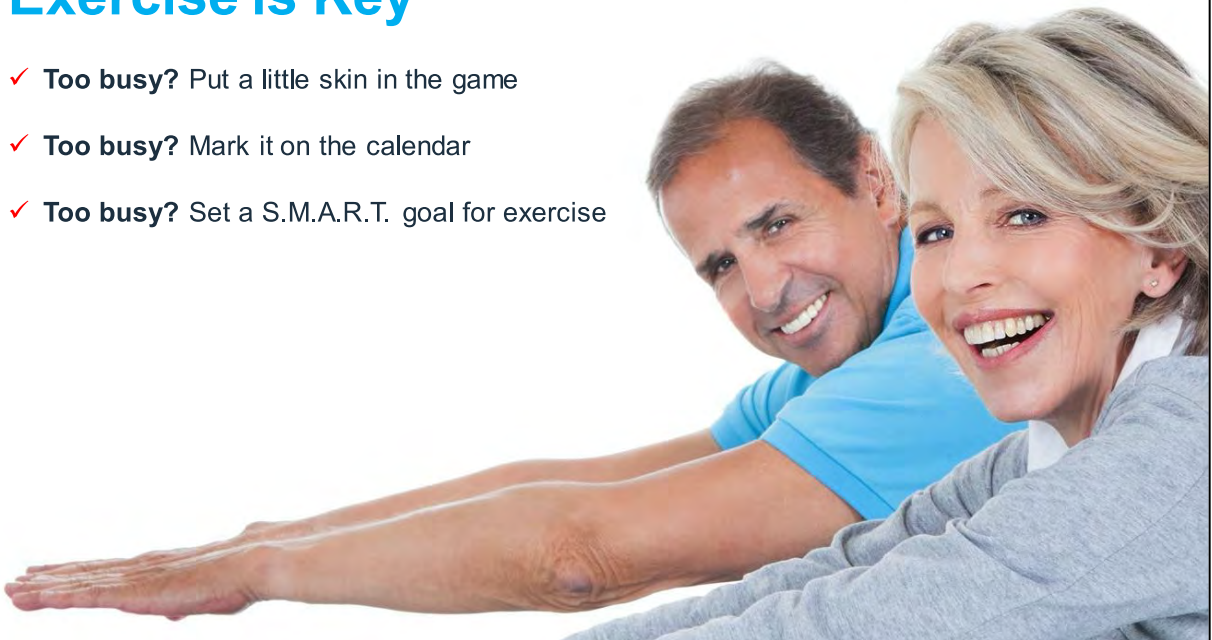
Overcoming Barriers

- ✓ **Make** time for exercise: It's key!
- ✓ **Allow** yourself to relax
- ✓ **Control** your mood and your food
- ✓ **Know** your nutrition
- ✓ **30 Days** of Wellness



Exercise is Key

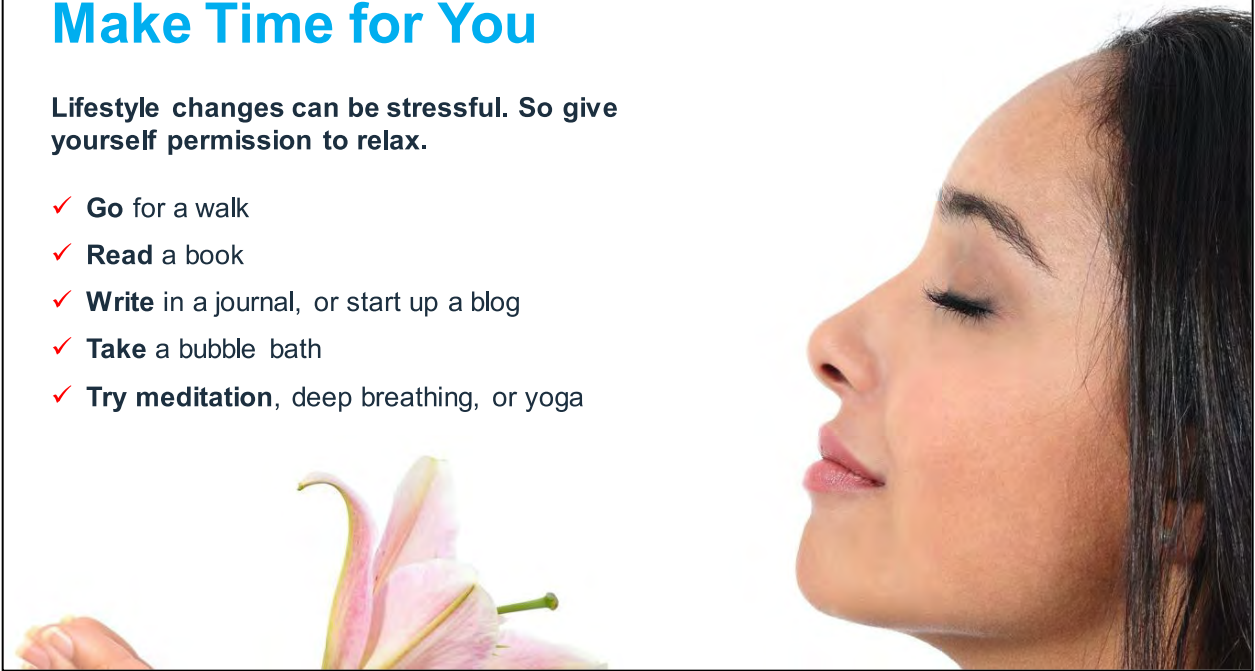
- ✓ **Too busy?** Put a little skin in the game
- ✓ **Too busy?** Mark it on the calendar
- ✓ **Too busy?** Set a S.M.A.R.T. goal for exercise



Make Time for You

Lifestyle changes can be stressful. So give yourself permission to relax.

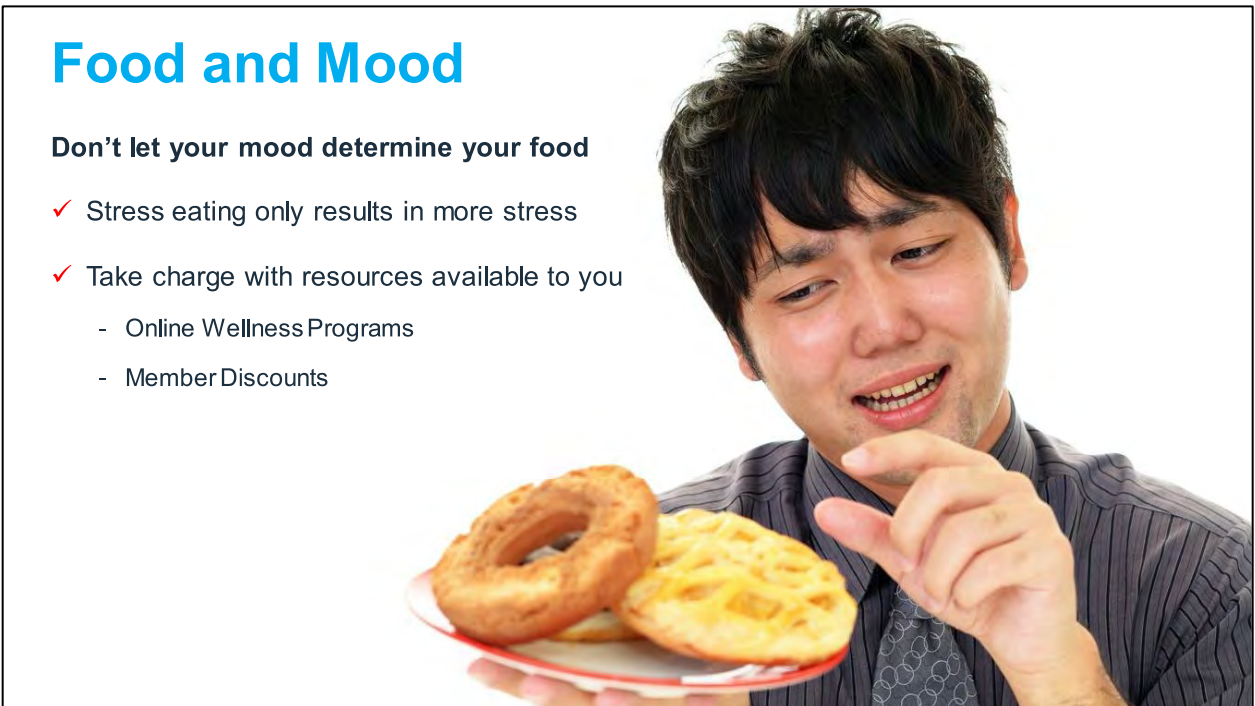
- ✓ **Go** for a walk
- ✓ **Read** a book
- ✓ **Write** in a journal, or start up a blog
- ✓ **Take** a bubble bath
- ✓ **Try meditation**, deep breathing, or yoga



Food and Mood

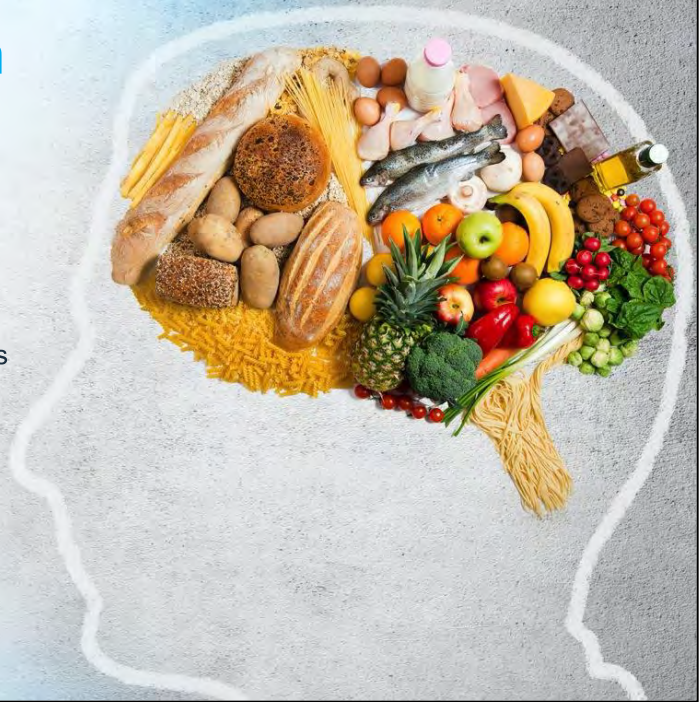
Don't let your mood determine your food

- ✓ Stress eating only results in more stress
- ✓ Take charge with resources available to you
 - Online Wellness Programs
 - Member Discounts



Nutritious Nutrition

- ✓ **Be** a mindful eater
- ✓ **Go** for quality not quantity
- ✓ **Focus** on whole foods and fiber
- ✓ **Eat** a rainbow of color
- ✓ **Sidestep** those high calorie beverages
- ✓ **Skipping** breakfast is not an option



30 DAYS OF WELLNESS

1. Keep it simple. You don't need a nutrition degree to eat healthy. Start with your next bite.	2. Eat a piece of fresh fruit with every meal. Stock up and plan ahead.	3. Make today a "No Desserts or Sweets Day." Do you think you can do it?	4. Try a new, higher fiber cereal for breakfast. Look for at least 5 grams of fiber per serving.	5. Strive to drink 10 cups of water today. Say "NO" to calorie-laden beverages.
6. Set a goal to go one week without eating deep-fried foods.	7. Go to your Member website or favorite cooking website and download a new recipe to try.	8. Save 100 calories and forego croutons on your salad.	9. Count to 10. Strive to eat 10 servings of fruits and vegetables today. Yes – 10!	10. Leave a bite or two of food on your plate to help cut back on portions.
11. Slow down and put your utensils down between every bite.	12. Read the label of everything you eat today that comes in a package.	13. Say "NO" to vending machines and junk food and eat fresh fruit for your snacks today.	14. Check your refrigerator regularly to keep your produce well-stocked.	15. Try whole wheat spaghetti with your favorite sauce. Serve with a mixed greens salad on the side.
16. Set a goal to pack your lunch with healthy foods all week and take along healthy snack options too.	17. Try a new fruit today. There are 100s of varieties from which to choose.	18. Try brown rice. There are many options – quick-cooking, long-cooking or balsamic variety.	19. Switch to Romaine lettuce, spinach or other greens instead of iceberg lettuce.	20. Share a new healthy recipe with a friend or co-worker today.
21. Switch all of your breads, rolls, wraps and pitas to 100% whole wheat or whole grain.	22. Try a lower-fat milk: If you drink 2%, try 1%. If you drink 1%, try fat-free. Kudos if you already drink fat-free milk!	23. How big are your portions? Measure your servings today and compare to the food label.	24. Make it plain. Take your tea without sugar, creamer or flavored syrup today.	25. Instead of crunching on chips or crackers, crunch on raw veggies today.
26. Look at the calories before you eat snacks and ask, "Can I afford this today?"	27. Try ground turkey in place of ground beef. It's a great substitute for burgers, meatballs or meatloaf.	28. Eat vegetarian today. Choose beans or soyfoods for your protein sources.	29. Save 100 calories and put mustard on your sandwich rather than mayonnaise.	30. Clean out your cupboards. Throw out the not-so-healthy foods and stock up on healthy choices.

Practice Makes Progress

- ✓ Build up your **lifestyle**, but don't burn out
- ✓ Apply the “**use it or lose it**” attitude
- ✓ The **choice** is yours



Refresh, Reinforce, Resilience

- ✓ **Refresh** your plan
- ✓ **Redefine** your goals
- ✓ **Resist** your old ways
- ✓ **Return** to healthy habits quickly
- ✓ **Reward** yourself
- ✓ **Resolve** the barriers
- ✓ **Rediscover** yourself



Group Exercises

Stress Management

What happens when we continue “burning the candle at both ends” until we reach physical and emotional exhaustion? Just like the candle itself, we risk burning ourselves out.

Burnout does not happen all at once. It might be a gradual acceptance of the pressures around you until everything is “too much” and you feel you can barely cope. If you are feeling this way, you are not alone. About 8.3 million American adults were reported to have experienced serious psychological distress in 2017 (“More Americans suffering from stress, anxiety, and depression, study finds,” 2018).

We may not be able to eliminate the stressors in our life, but we can improve our mental (and physical) wellbeing by changing how we react to stress.

Stress management group exercises are proven to be an effective way to reduce stress. In addition to being effective, group exercises are fairly easily to implement. Benefits of engaging in group exercises include a reduction in stress levels, improved ability to cope with and appropriately react to stress, and newfound empathy amongst coworkers.

Guidelines for five different stress management group exercises are provided on the pages to follow.

Exercise Name: Co-worker Support in Stressful Times

Time: 45 minutes for groups of approximately 10 team members

Materials: A piece of paper for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

This exercise works best with a team in which most have worked together for a while.

1. Ask everyone to write their name at the top of a piece of paper.
2. Then add the following two sentences to finish:
 - a. What I need my co-workers to do when I'm stressed is (finish the sentence)
 - b. What I need my co-workers NOT to do when I'm stressed is ... (finish the sentence)
3. The leader then collects the completed sentences and every member of the team is given a copy. Each member is then given the opportunity to say why these tactics are helpful.

Leader Discussion

Leaders can emphasize team members have different needs and we should not assume what we need or don't need is the same for others.

Source: Gail Page, Positive Pathways

Exercise Name: Favorite character

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: A piece of paper and a pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

1. Ask everyone to put the piece of paper behind their back
2. Ask everyone to either tear or draw their favorite Disney character
3. Give them two to three minutes to tear or draw their character
4. Have each person show the person next to them what they came up with

Exercise Name: Favorite character

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: A piece of paper and a pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

1. Ask everyone to put the piece of paper behind their back
2. Ask everyone to either tear or draw their favorite Disney character
3. Give them two to three minutes to tear or draw their character
4. Have each person show the person next to them what they came up with

Leader Discussion

Does it look like your character? Maybe not, but that was not the purpose of the exercise.

The purpose was to get you to think. Through this exercise, you opened up your creative, subconscious mind to attempt to depict the character you were thinking of.

Often times our best ideas don't come to us while we are at work. Why do you think that is?

While at work, we have so many tasks going on simultaneously that we bog our brains down. When our brains are so busy processing information, there isn't capacity left to think creatively. Don't let your brain get too busy to think.

Set aside specific time, on a regularly scheduled basis to practice mindfulness and access the creative, subconscious part of your brain. You can use this time to think through creative ways to solve a work or personal issue. The more provocative the thought, the closer you are to innovation. Ask yourself far-fetched "what if" questions, such as, "What if we generated revenue by turning the clubhouse into an Airbnb?".

Source: Duncan Wardle, Disney

Individual Exercises

Stress Assessment

Stress is a necessary part of our lives and can have both beneficial and negative effects. The stress response is primarily determined by our perception of an event, transition, or problem. Finding a balance in our lives and managing our stress can be a challenge. An important first step is recognizing the degree to which we are affected by the stress in our lives and then move toward strategies to make it better.

The follow series of self-assessment scales will help us determine the degree and type of stress we are experiencing and how well our stress coping skills are working.

Source: NYSUT Social Services

Symptoms of Stress

How frequently do you find yourself experiencing such problems as headaches, problems going to sleep or staying asleep, unexplained muscle pain, jaw pain, uncontrolled anger, and frustration? Using the table below, assess the frequency that you experience these common symptoms of stress.

Symptoms	Frequency of symptoms						
	Almost all day, every day	Once or twice daily	Every night or day	2-3 times per week	Once a week	Once a month	Never
Headaches							
Tense muscles, sore neck and back							
Fatigue							
Anxiety, worry, phobias							
Difficulty falling asleep							
Irritability							
Insomnia							
Bouts of anger/hostility							
Boredom, depression							
Eating too much or too little							
Diarrhea, cramps, gas, constipation							
Restlessness, itching, tics							

The more often you experience these symptoms of stress, the more likely stress is having a negative impact on your life. You may be so used to feeling a certain way that you assume this is normal. Look back over the Symptoms of Stress Table. Are there symptoms of stress that you would like to eliminate or change?

Perceived Stress Scale

A more precise measure of personal stress can be determined by using a variety of instruments that have been designed to help measure individual stress levels. The first of these is called the **Perceived Stress Scale**.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a classic stress assessment instrument. This tool, while originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for helping us understand how different situations affect our feelings and our perceived stress. The questions in this scale ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0 – never 1 - almost never 2 – sometimes 3 - fairly often 4 - very often

- _____ 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
- _____ 2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- _____ 3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?
- _____ 4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
- _____ 5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
- _____ 6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
- _____ 7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
- _____ 8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
- _____ 9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
- _____ 10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Figuring your PSS score:

You can determine your PSS score by following these directions:

First, reverse your scores for questions 4, 5, 7, & 8. On these 4 questions, change the scores like this: 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0.

Now add up your scores for each item to get a total. **My total score is _____.**

Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.

Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.

Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.

Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress.

The Perceived Stress Scale is interesting and important because your perception of what is happening in your life is most important. Consider the idea that 2 individuals could have the exact same events and experiences in their lives for the past month. Depending on their perception, total score could put one of those individuals in the low stress category and the total score could put the second person in the high stress category.

The Ardell Wellness Stress Test

Don Ardell developed a stress assessment that is unique in its holistic approach to stress. In chapter one, you learned about the importance of incorporating all dimensions of health in your understanding of stress. The Ardell Wellness Stress Test incorporates physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of health for a balanced assessment.

Rate your satisfaction with each of the following items by using this scale:

+ 3 = Ecstatic

-1 = Mildly disappointed

+ 2 = Very happy

- 2 = Very disappointed

+ 1 = Mildly happy

- 3 = Completely dismayed

0 = Indifferent

- _____ 1. Choice of career
- _____ 2. Present job/ business/ school
- _____ 3. Marital status
- _____ 4. Primary relationships
- _____ 5. Capacity to have fun
- _____ 6. Amount of fun experienced in last month
- _____ 7. Financial prospects
- _____ 8. Current income level
- _____ 9. Spirituality
- _____ 10. Level of self-esteem
- _____ 11. Prospects for having impact on those who know you and possibly others
- _____ 12. Sex life
- _____ 13. Body, how it looks and performs
- _____ 14. Home life
- _____ 15. Life skills and knowledge of issues and facts unrelated to your job or profession
- _____ 16. Learned stress management capacities
- _____ 17. Nutritional knowledge, attitudes, and choices
- _____ 18. Ability to recover from disappointment, hurts, setbacks, and tragedies

- _____ 19. Confidence that you currently are, or will in the future be, reasonably close to your highest potential.
- _____ 20. Achievement of a rounded or balanced quality in your life
- _____ 21. Sense that life for you is on an upward curve, getting better and fuller all the time
- _____ 22. Level of participation in issues and concerns beyond your immediate interests
- _____ 23. Choice whether to parent or not and with the consequences or results of that choice
- _____ 24. Role in some kind of network of friends, relatives, and/or others about whom you care deeply and who reciprocate that commitment to you.
- _____ 25. Emotional acceptance of the inescapable reality of aging

Total _____

Ardell Wellness Stress Test Interpretation

+ 51 to + 75 You are a self-actualized person, nearly immune from the ravages of stress. There are few, if any, challenges likely to untrack you from a sense of near total well-being.

+ 25 to + 50 You have mastered the wellness approach to life and have the capacity to deal creatively and efficiently with events and circumstances.

+ 1 to + 24 You are a wellness-oriented person, with an ability to prosper as a whole person, but you should give a bit more attention to optimal health concepts and skill building.

0 to - 24 You are a candidate for additional training in how to deal with stress. A sudden increase in potentially negative events and circumstances could cause a severe emotional setback.

- 25 to - 50 You are a candidate for counseling. You are either too pessimistic or have severe problems in dealing with stress.

- 51 to - 75 You are a candidate for major psychological care with virtually no capacity for coping with life's problems.

(Adapted from High Level Wellness: An Alternative to Doc, Drugs and Disease by Don Ardell)

Look back at the items in the Ardell Wellness Stress Test. Identify which items related more to physical health, to mental health, to emotional health, to spiritual health, and to social health. Do you see any patterns develop? For instance, are more areas of disappointment related to physical health than to social health? Remember, for holistic health we are seeking a balance in all dimensions of health.

Source: <http://faculty.weber.edu/molpin/healthclasses/1110/bookchapters/selfassessmentchapter.htm>

Stress Coping Resources Inventory:
A Self-Assessment

Instructions: People differ remarkably in their responses to potentially stressful events. For instance, about one in ten hostages comes out of captivity a mentally healthier person than when entering, while the others may face extreme emotional difficulty. What are the factors associated with coping success? The questions below relate to factors most closely associated with the capacity to cope successfully with stress. Circle the letter which lists the option that you choose. Answer each question as honestly as possible.

1. How frequently do you moderately exercise?
 - a. Daily or more often
 - b. Once or twice a week
 - c. Once or twice a month
 - d. Seldom

2. How often do you get a full, restful night of sleep?
 - a. Most every night
 - b. Four to five times a each week
 - c. Two to three times each week
 - d. Seldom

3. To what extent is your energy sufficient for our work and daily activities?
 - a. to a very great extent
 - b. to some extent
 - c. to little extent
 - d. to very little extent

4. How closely does your weight approach the ideal level?
 - a. My weight is at the ideal level
 - b. My weight is close to the idea level
 - c. My weight is not close to the ideal level
 - d. I am dangerously overweight (underweight)

5. To what extent do you eat a nutritious diet?
 - a. to a very great extent
 - b. to some extent
 - c. to little extent
 - d. to very little extent

6. Which of the following best describes your use of tobacco?
 - a. In no period of my life have I had the habit of smoking or chewing tobacco.
 - b. Early in my life for a short period I smoked or chewed tobacco
 - c. I stopped smoking or chewing tobacco over the past two years
 - d. I currently smoke or chew tobacco

7. Which of the following best describes your use of alcohol?
 - a. I do not abuse alcohol, and never have. (Abuse is defined as drinking more than two drinks within a short period such as an evening.)
 - b. Very occasionally I abuse alcohol.
 - c. I have a history of abusing alcohol, but am not presently abusing it.
 - d. I am presently abusing alcohol.

8. To what extent do you believe that you have a history of coping well with highly stressful situations?
 - a. to a very great extent
 - b. to a great extent
 - c. to a little extent
 - d. to a very little extent

9. How confident are you of being able to control your emotions in stressful situations?
 - a. I never let my emotions run away with me.
 - b. I seldom let my emotions run away with me.
 - c. I sometimes let my emotions run away with me.
 - d. I often let my emotions run away with me.

10. When things are not going well, how likely are you to view the situation as being temporary rather than permanent?
 - a. very likely
 - b. likely
 - c. unlikely
 - d. very unlikely

11. When something bad happens to you, how likely are you to exaggerate its importance?
 - a. very unlikely
 - b. unlikely
 - c. likely
 - d. very likely

12. When stressed by a complex situation, how likely are you to focus your attention on those aspects of the situation that you can manage?
 - a. very likely
 - b. likely
 - c. unlikely
 - d. very unlikely

13. When highly stressed, how capable are you of changing your thinking to calm down?
 - a. very capable
 - b. capable
 - c. incapable
 - d. very incapable

14. When confronted with a stressful situation, how likely are you to wait passively for events to develop rather than to take charge?
- very unlikely
 - unlikely
 - likely
 - very likely
15. Which of the following courses of action are you most likely to take when you have become thoroughly frustrated?
- identify an alternate goal and pursue it
 - pursue a relaxing activity
 - withdraw and feel sorry for yourself
 - vent your aggression on someone weaker than you
16. If you had worn an article of clothing one day and then found it to be flawed, how likely would you be to return it and ask for a refund?
- very likely
 - likely
 - unlikely
 - very unlikely
17. When an unexpected, negative event happens to you, how likely are you to actively seek information about the event and how to cope with it?
- very likely
 - likely
 - unlikely
 - very unlikely
18. How much decision-making power do you have in your family?
- more power than any other member of my family
 - as much power as any other member of my family
 - less power than most members of my family
 - less power than any other member of my family
19. How much decision-making power do you have in your working environment? (if not working outside the home at present, use your last job as a basis for answering this question.)
- more power than most members of my work team
 - as much power as any other member of my work team
 - less power than most members of my work team
 - less power than any other member of my work team
20. To what extent do you believe that events in your life are merely the result of luck, fate, or chance?
- to very little extent
 - to little extent
 - to some extent
 - to a great extent
21. What is your best guess as to the extent and quality of contact you had with your parent(s) shortly after birth?
- was given an above average amount of contact by happy parent(s)
 - was given an average amount of contact by happy parent(s)
 - was given an average amount of contact by unhappy (perhaps angry) parent(s)
 - was given a below average amount of contact by unhappy (perhaps angry) parent(s)

22. During your early childhood, to what extent was your mother both calm and generally permissive?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
23. How easily do you make friends in a strange situation?
- very easily
 - easily
 - uneasily
 - very uneasily
24. When highly stressed, how likely are you to ask friends or relatives for help?
- very likely
 - likely
 - unlikely
 - very unlikely
25. In comparison with other people, how likely are you to see others as threatening, uncooperative, or exploitative?
- highly unlikely
 - unlikely
 - likely
 - highly likely
26. How often are you confused about the intentions of others toward you?
- very infrequently
 - infrequently
 - frequently
 - very frequently
27. To what extent are you aware of practical, healthy ways of relaxing?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
28. How frequently do you pursue some highly relaxing practice?
- daily or more often
 - once or twice a week
 - once or twice a month
 - seldom
29. How often do you engage in a spiritual practice such as prayer, mediation, or inspirational reading to enrich your interior life?
- daily or more often
 - once or twice a week
 - once or twice a month
 - seldom

30. How connected do you feel to your conception of a higher power or to a worthy cause?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
31. To what extent do you believe your life has purpose?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
32. How much contact do you have with what you would consider a spiritual community?
- very much
 - much
 - very little
 - none

Scoring Legend

Please note that the scoring legend has been derived rationally, not empirically. Nevertheless, you might find it interesting to compute your score for each of the scales below using the following legend: 'a' = 4; 'b' = 3; 'c' = 2; 'd' = 1.

- Wellness Scale (sum of scores for questions 1-7 divided by 7) _____
- Thought Control Scale (sum of scores for questions 8-13, divided by 6) _____
- Active Coping Scale (sum of scores for questions 14-20, divided by 7) _____
- Social Ease Scale (sum of scores for questions 21-26, divided by 6) _____
- Tension reduction Scale (sum of scores for questions 27-28, divided by 2) _____
- Spiritual Practice Scale (sum of scores for questions 29-32 divided by 4) _____
- Overall Score (sum of the scale scores above, divided by 6) _____

Interpreting Your Score. A perfect score on each scale would be 4. With this in mind, we might construct the following interpretive key:

- An overall score of 3.5+ suggests you may be a superior stresscoper.
- An overall score of 2.5-3.4 suggests you may be an above average stresscoper.
- An overall score of 1.5-2.4 suggests you may be an average stresscoper.
- An overall score of less than 1.5 suggests you may be a below average stresscoper.

Source: *'Write Your Own Prescription for Stress'*
 Kenneth B. Matheny, Ph.D., ABPP and Christopher J. McCarthy, Ph.D. ~ 2000

Other On-Demand Resources

Coping with COVID-19 video series

Coping with Uncertainty About COVID-19

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/361653968327770625>

Navigating Your Work From Home Transition

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5661341796463206413>

Why Can't I Stop Eating? How Emotions Impact Our Eating During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7310056184047236363>

Managing Worry & Anxiety Amid COVID-19

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5849777199011950859>

Tools to Handle COVID-19-Related Stress

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1720001629480681227>

Self-Isolating Together During the Pandemic

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7460106535889954059>

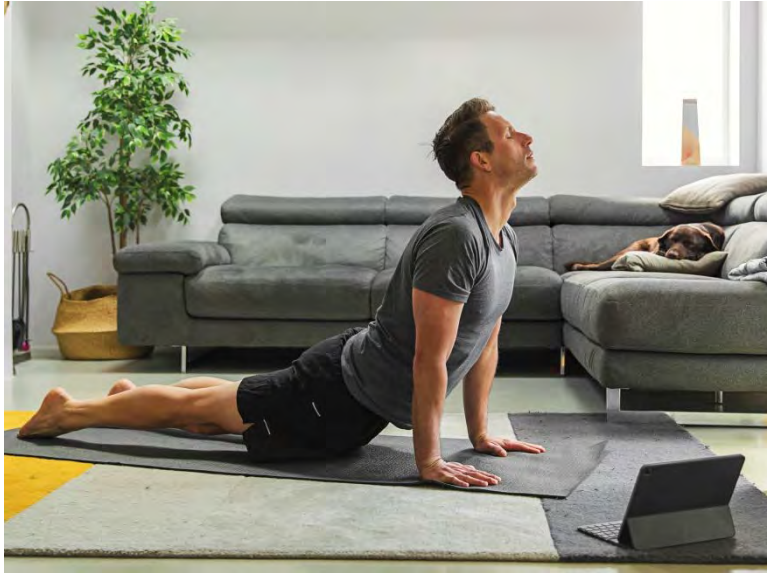
Being an Effective Manager During COVID-19

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1835434957234423819>

Source: CompPsych (EAP)



Stress Management & Support Leadership Toolkit



TriHealth Resources & Programs to Help Your Team Thrive through Stressful Times

Meditation Series

Eight sessions to improved focus,
less stress and enhanced well-being



Despite common misconceptions, meditation does not require someone to clear the mind of all thought, nor does it demand years of practice to gain any benefit. In reality, anyone can learn to meditate, and many people report experiencing a benefit with just one session. However, the best way to understand the lasting benefits of meditation is through continued practice.

The **TriHealth Meditation Series** introduces participants to a variety of meditation practices. Each session reviews a specific type of meditation, its use and associated benefits, followed by a guided meditation practice led by a TriHealth Wellness Coach:

[Session 1: Mindfulness Meditation](#)

[Session 2: Body Scan](#)

[Session 3: Guided Imagery](#)

[Session 4: Focused Attention](#)

[Session 5: Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)

[Session 6: Relax Under Pressure](#)

[Session 7: Visualization](#)

[Session 8: Breath Awareness Meditation](#)

Each recorded WebEx presentation lasts approximately 20 to 30 minutes. For additional information on meditation practices and other stress-reducing programs.

Benefits of Meditation

- Decreases Stress
- Promotes Clarity
- Increases Happiness
- Boosts Efficiency
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Heightens Problem-Solving Abilities
- Reduces Anxiety
- Circumvents Burnout
- Improves Focus
- Reduces Pain
- Promotes Relaxation
- Enhances Overall Well-being

Mindfulness Apps



TEN
PERCENT
HAPPIER

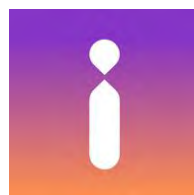
Ten Percent Happier is a Mindful Meditation App that allows you to listen to courses, podcasts, or books through the app to aid in sleep, stress, anxiety and meditation. Downloading the app gives you the freedom to listen to these options anywhere you are.



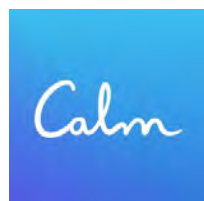
Sattva draws meditations from ancient vedic principles. In addition to 6-minute guided meditations to app features sacred sounds, chants, mantras and music by Sanskrit scholars.



Headspace is a mobile app that includes guided meditation, animations, articles and videos with the mission of improving health



Inscape is a meditation studio in NYC that provides an extension of their zen room where teachers guide you through mindfulness practice through the app. The meditations, music, and breathing exercises are available as recommendations based on your goals, time of day and familiarity with meditating.



Calm is an application both available on a computer and mobile app. Calm focuses on making the world happier and healthier with over 50 million downloads. Choices from Meditation, Sleep, Music, body, masterclass and scenes you are sure to find the right fit for your body.



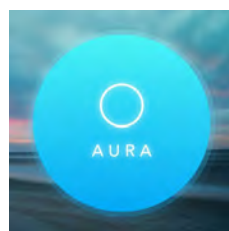
Smiling Mind was developed by a psychologist to encourage mindfulness practice as a pillar of wellness, similar to daily exercise, good sleep and healthy eating. The app features a 10-minute daily meditation broken down into age categories (7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-18 and adults). There are also specific programs for group use.



Many of the most experienced mindfulness teachers are on this app. It allows you to pick and choose depending on how long you have to practice and what style you would like. Just set a timer and sit without guidance.



Simple Habit features five minute meditations from top mindfulness experts at google to former monks. You can also find coaching, motivational guides and bedtime stories on this app along with classic guided meditations.



Fans of Aura like it for its daily meditations, life coaching, nature sounds and stories based on the mood you select when opening the app. You can also track your moods for reviewing patterns.



Buddhify offers over 200 meditations to help with anxiety, stress, sleep, pain and tough emotions. With several different teachers, you are sure to find the voice and style that resonates with you.



Stress Management & Support Leadership Toolkit

Stress Management Group Exercises

Breathe!

Time: 30 seconds

Materials: None

Group Exercise Instructions

Start each Huddle or Team Meeting with this quick but effective stress reducer. Ask all team members to stand very straight, close their eyes, inhale deeply through the nose and raise their arms above their head. Then slowly exhale and lower their arms. Repeat this cycle for 30 seconds.

Leader Discussion

Emphasize that when we feel stressed, our breathing often becomes shallow and quick. If we take just 30 seconds to slow down and focus on taking deep full breaths, we can impact our stress level.

Trigger Points

Time: 45 minutes for groups of approximately 10 team members

Materials: A piece of paper and pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

- Ask each team member to write down 3 priority stressors they find difficult to manage.
- Ask them not to write their name on list.
- Collect the lists, shuffle then distribute them.
- Ask each team member to read the list they received and share how they would manage the stressful situations.

Leader Discussion

Emphasize that we all have different ways to manage our stressors. We can learn new stress management skills from each other through this discussion.

Ashok NaraYanan



Stress Management & Support Leadership Toolkit

Stress Management Group Exercises

Co-Worker Support in Stressful Times

Time: 45 minutes for groups of approximately 10 team members

Materials: A piece of paper and pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

This exercise works best with a team in which most have worked together for a while.

Ask everyone to write their name at the top of a piece of paper.

Then add the following two sentences to finish.

1. What I need my co-workers to do when I'm stressed is ... (finish the sentence)
2. What I need my co-workers NOT to do when I'm stressed is ... (finish the sentence)

The leader then collects the completed sentences and every member of the team is given a copy.

Each member is then given the opportunity to say why these tactics are helpful.

Leader Discussion

Leaders can emphasize team members have different needs and we should not assume what we need or don't need is the same for others.

Gail Page, Positive Pathways

Negative Event Flip

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Flipchart Paper

Group Exercise Instructions

- Divide your team into two groups and distribute two flipchart papers to each group
- Ask each group to write down 3 sentences that describe a negative, stressful situation. For example, "My car broke down this morning on my way to work."
- Ask the groups to stick their flipcharts to the wall.
- Ask the groups to list as many positive points as possible about the negative situations on both flipcharts (theirs and the other group's) on separate flipcharts.
- Each group should work on its own.

Leader Discussion

Emphasize how changing perspective has an impact on how we experience stressful events. We can learn something from all situations, even negative ones, and the learning experience can alleviate our stress related to that event.

Skills Converged



Virtual Fitness Channel

TriHealth Corporate Health's online YouTube Fitness Channel allows employees to participate in a variety of live and previously recorded group fitness classes outside of a fitness studio. These can be done in an office setting or from the comfort of your home. All that is required is a computer or mobile device with access to the internet.

Class Specifics

All online group fitness classes are taught by degreed, certified health and fitness professionals from the TriHealth team. Our current video library consists of the following options:

- Cardio, strength, core and flexibility formats
- Classes ranging from 10-45 minutes in length
- Classes suitable for all levels of fitness from beginner to expert
- Classes requiring little to no equipment
- Tutorials on how to perform specific exercises
- One-on-one discussions with TriHealth team members

YouTube Channel Link

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHp4b63AlzKoTNCyfecz1Xg/playlists?view_as=subscriber

1. Type the address above into your internet browser
2. Save the address in your favorites
3. If interested, you can become a subscriber of the channel by clicking on the red "Subscribe" box

Disclaimer: TriHealth Corporate Health strongly recommends that you consult with your physician before beginning any exercise program. You should be in good physical condition and able to participate in the exercise.



Virtual Presentations

Workplace Wellbeing & Fitness



In addition to our existing programs, we have expanded our virtual presentation offerings to help meet the need for enhanced remote options. Each of the 30-40 minute, recorded WebEx presentations can be accessed by clicking the topic link.

- **Create Healthy Habits**

This presentation provides the foundation of building powerful habit goals to create new healthy habits that stick. Each participant also has the opportunity to create a personalized habit goal and action plan.

- **Reduce Stress and Build Resiliency**

This presentation offers both short- and long-term strategies to cope with stress and adapt quickly to our ever-changing environments.

- **Healthy Sleep, Healthy Mind, Healthy You**

This presentation reviews the health benefits of quality sleep, the consequences of inadequate sleep, and a variety of strategies to help participants get the sleep they need.

- **Reducing Muscle Tension in Times of Stress**

This presentation covers the different causes of muscle tension and how stress impacts musculoskeletal pain. It also covers a variety of strategies, other than stretching, to counteract and relieve muscle tension and pain. A recorded session for this WebEx presentation is not yet available; however, a session can be arranged for any size group. Call 513 891 1622 to schedule.

- **TriHealth Meditation Series**

This series walks participants through different types of meditations as well as guides them in actual meditation sessions to help discover what techniques or exercises work best for the individual.