



Session 18: Stress and Time Management

Make Time to Manage Stress

Stress is part of everyone's life. Stress means different things to different people, and what causes stress for one person may not cause stress for another person.

Stress is not always bad. For example, very positive events like weddings, birth of a grandchild, and starting or ending a job can create stress.

Some stress can help make your life interesting and exciting, but too much stress or stress that continues for too long can have a very negative effect on your body and your mind.

If not managed properly, stress can lead to illness, such as heart disease, increased blood glucose levels, increased anxiety, or bouts of depression and mood swings.

Stress comes in many forms and these may include:

- physical stressors (fever, pain, illness)
- environment stressors (weather, noise, housing concerns, traffic)
- social and emotional stressors (financial concerns, job and family demands, having to make a big decision, guilt, loss)

Please take a moment and think about stress and how it affects your life.

1. How often do you feel stressed?

Often

Sometimes

Seldom

2. How do you know you are stressed? Describe your experience.

3. List some of the things that are making you feel stressed right now.

4. What are some ways you deal with the stress in your life?

5. Which of these ways of dealing with stress do you think are negative or unhealthy?

6. Which of these ways of dealing with stress do you think are positive or healthy?

High levels of stress can be a barrier to making healthy changes in your exercise and eating behaviors. Stress can cause people to:

- lose motivation to exercise
- become very inactive and withdrawn
- increase sedentary behaviors such as spending a lot of time watching television, playing on the computer, or sleeping
- eat or drink too much

Take charge of your response to stress. The best approach is to prevent stress whenever you can.

Ways to prevent or reduce stress:

- **Practice saying**
 - **"No."** Try to say "Yes" only when it is important to **you**.
- **Share some of your work or responsibilities with others.**
- **Set goals you can reach.**
- **Take charge of your time.**
 - Make schedules with the real world in mind.
 - Get organized.
- **Use problem solving:**
 - Describe the problem in detail.
 - Brainstorm your options.
 - Pick one option to try.
 - Make an action plan.
 - Try it. See how it goes.

- **Plan ahead.**
 - Think about the kind of situations that are stressful for you.
 - Plan for how to handle them or work around them.
- **Keep things in perspective.**
 - Think of all the good things in your life.
 - Maintain a positive attitude.
- **Reach out to people.**
- **Focus on wellness.**
 - Eat a healthy diet.
 - Get adequate sleep.
 - Practice relaxation techniques, meditation, and/or prayer
 - Improve your spiritual health. Many people find spirituality through religion. Others find it in art, music or connecting with nature.
 - Laughter, lots of laughter!
- **Be physically active.**



Even if you do all you can to **prevent or reduce** stress, you will still experience stress. Having healthy ways to respond to stress is very important.

Healthy Responses to stress:

- Catch yourself feeling stressed as early as you can.
- Take a 10-minute "time out."
 - Move those muscles!
 - Pamper yourself. Just take 10 minutes for **YOURSELF**. For example, take a bath, call a friend, read the funnies, or manicure your nails.
 - Try a relaxation technique like meditation, prayer, yoga, muscle relaxation, or a breathing exercise.
- Can you think of other healthy responses to stress? Write them down.



Make Time to Relax

There are several relaxation techniques that help reduce stress. These techniques bring on what is called the “relaxation response” where your body enters a state of calmness.

Using these relaxation techniques can help reduce stress and tension, lower blood pressure and blood glucose, relieve tension and migraine headaches, and improve sleep patterns. All these benefits could help improve your overall health. Feeling relaxed and in control of your life can help you be more effective in time management, problem solving barriers to exercise, and making healthier food choices. It is not uncommon that when we feel stressed we decrease our activity and make poor food choices/overeat. Learning to deal with stress in a positive manner can help you to greatly improve your health!

Good breathing habits can quiet your mind and relax your body. Good breathing is “belly breathing.” The breaths are slow and deep and fill the abdomen, not the chest. This is how newborn babies and sleeping adults breathe.

To learn belly breathing:

1. Lie down or sit comfortably. Bend your knees, with your feet on the floor about eight inches apart. Make sure your spine is straight.
2. Now put one hand on your belly. Put the other hand on your chest. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Gently press down on your belly as you breathe out through your nose. Let your belly push your hand back up as you breathe in. Let your chest move just a little. It should follow the movement of your belly.

Practice belly breathing when you notice yourself getting tense. You can do it sitting down or standing still. Try it in rush hour traffic or while waiting in line.



Make Time to Sleep

Sleep is important to feel your best, yet one in three Americans suffers from sleep deprivation. Since you spend approximately one-third of your life sleeping, you should know a little bit about it.

Getting Enough ZZZs: How much is enough?

Not everyone needs the same amount of sleep. The range is 5-10 hours per night with the average of 7.5 - 8 hours. Averaging less than four hours or greater than nine hours of sleep per night is associated with higher mortality.

- How do you feel when you have adequate sleep?
- How do you feel when you have too little sleep?
- How do you feel when you get too much sleep?

Sleep on this: The benefits of adequate sleep

- According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), insufficient sleep is associated with the onset of many chronic conditions – such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression. Not getting enough sleep may also complicate their management and outcome. Sufficient sleep is increasingly being recognized as an essential aspect of chronic disease prevention and health promotion.
(www.cdc.gov/features/sleep)
- Adequate sleep helps with weight management. Sleep helps to regulate several hormones that research has linked to alterations in metabolism, increased appetite, and weight gain.
- Research suggests that people who engage in regular physical activity fall asleep faster, sleep for a longer time, and spend less time awake during the night.

Adequate sleep is a major element of coping with stress. People are better able to deal with stressors during the day if they have enough sleep. This makes it easier to make healthy behavior changes.

Sleep Stealers

The following can have a negative impact on sleep:

- stress, depression
- alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, eating a large/high fat meal
- exercising too close to bedtime
- going to bed and getting up at differing times, shift work, jet lag
- bed partner with sleep problems
- bedroom that's too hot/ too cold/ too noisy/ too bright
- arthritis, hormonal shifts (e.g. menopause), asthma, sleep apnea, pain
- some medications

Here are some tips for how you can improve your sleep

- Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy.
- If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, then get out of the bed. Find something else to do that will make you feel relaxed. If you can, do this in another room.
- Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed.
- Get up at the same time every morning.
- Avoid taking naps if you can. If you nap, keep it short (less than one hour). Generally, it is best to avoid napping after 3 p.m.
- Keep a regular schedule.
- Do not have any caffeine after lunch.
- Limit or avoid alcohol and nicotine within six hours of your bedtime.
- Do not go to bed hungry or overly full.
- Avoid vigorous physical activity within six hours of your bedtime.
- Avoid sleeping pills, or use them cautiously.
- Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and a little bit cool.



Make Time to Laugh

A growing number of healthcare professionals are saying that a laugh a day may help keep the doctor away! Humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects. A good laugh can help:

- ☺ **Reduce stress**
- ☺ **Boost immune system**
- ☺ **Lower blood pressure**
- ☺ **Protect the heart**
- ☺ **Elevate mood**

Laughing out loud for 10-15 minutes a day burns 10-40 calories, depending on a person's body weight. This translates to laughing away about four pounds a year! Not enough to give up your regular physical activity, but every little bit helps! (Buchowski M, Majchrzak K, Blomquist K, Chen K, Byrne D, Bachorowski J: Energy expenditure of genuine laughter. *International Journal of Obesity* 31:131-137, 2007)

Laughing has also been shown to reduce blood sugar levels in people with Type 2 Diabetes. One study done in Japan found that diabetics who watched a live comedy show had a lower sugar rise two hours later than when those individuals ate the same meal and heard a boring lecture. The authors conclude that laughter may affect the interplay between the brain and hormones, and humor might also act on the endocrine system to suppress blood sugar levels. (Hayashi K, Hayashi T, Shizuko I, Kawai K: Laughter lowered the increase in postprandial blood glucose. *Diabetes Care* 26:1651-1652, 2003)

"Laughter is internal jogging."

Norman Cousins

"Without humor one's thought processes are likely to become stuck and narrowly focused leading to increased distress."

Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor

"By the time a child reaches nursery school, he or she will laugh about 300 times a day.

Adults laugh an average of 17 times a day."

"Science of Laughter" Discovery Health Website

A Sneak Peak at What's Ahead (The Next Session)



To do:

The Basics:

- Keep track of your weight.
 - Weigh yourself at home daily or at least once a week at the same time of day.
 - Record your weight in the Keeping Track book.
- Keep track of what you eat and drink using the Keeping Track book.
- Keep track of your physical activity in the Keeping Track book.
- Be physically active for at least 150 minutes per week.

Challenge Yourself:

- Practice relaxation techniques at home and/or at your worksite. Find what works best for you.
- Find your perfect sleep number. Monitor your sleep hours and evaluate how you feel. Feel free to track this in your diary if you like. Determine the number of hours where you feel the best. The bottom line is: aim to sleep that amount every night.

Additional Notes:
