

Lifestyle Coach Facilitation Guide: Core

Session 15: You Can Manage Stress

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Background and Preparation

Preparation Checklist

Materials

These are the materials you will use during Session 15.

- Session 15 handouts:
 - Session 15 Overview
 - How Do You Feel Stress?
 - Ways to Prevent Stress
 - When You Cannot Avoid Stress
 - Stress Related to This Program
 - Your Plan for Stress
 - To Do Next Week

- “Food and Activity Trackers” for Session 15

- Lifestyle Coach’s Log

- Name tags or tents from previous weeks, if still needed

- Flip chart or chalk board supplies

- Balance scale

Before you begin

- Choose a private place to weigh participants.
- Prepare Session 15 handouts to distribute at the start of the session.
- If still needed, prepare name tags or set up the classroom with name tents from the previous week.
- Have your Lifestyle Coach's Log ready for weigh-ins.

Lifestyle Coach Brief

Learning objectives

At the close of this session, the participants will be able to –

- Explain how to prevent stress or cope with unavoidable stress.
- Describe how this program can be a source of stress.
- Explain how to manage stressful situations.
- Create and follow an action plan for either preventing or coping with a stressful situation.

Session 15 overview

The discussion highlights ways to reduce or avoid stressful situations that might cause participants to lose focus on, or motivation toward, their goals. You will lead a group discussion about the effects of stress on the participants. Have participants give examples of the types of stress that cause problems for them. Together, look for ways to avoid the damaging effects of stress or to cope with stress that cannot be avoided.

Session 15 is divided into four parts.

Part 1: Weekly Progress and Review (10 minutes)

Part 2: Preventing Stress (20 minutes)

You will lead a discussion about how stress affects people and will ask participants to share their personal experiences with stress and how they cope with it. You will follow-up with some tips for ways to avoid stress.

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Part 3: Coping with Unavoidable Stress (20 minutes)

You will engage participants in a discussion about ways to cope with stress that we *cannot* avoid. Techniques for coping emphasize relaxation, physical activity, and various forms of personal enjoyment. Participants are asked to give examples of what helps, or will help, them cope, and they will create an action plan for avoiding stress.

Part 4: Wrap Up and To-Do List (10 minutes)

Key messages

- Everyone has pressures that influence the way they feel, think, and make decisions. Stress is the tension that develops in response to these pressures.
- Any change, good or bad, big or small, can cause stress, making stress a natural part of life.
- Stress can work against you and your goals toward a healthier lifestyle.
- Many people react to stress by changing their eating and activity habits.
- The best approach to avoiding the effects of stress is to prevent it whenever possible.

Classroom Presentation

Part 1: Weekly Progress and Review

Estimated time: 10 minutes

Weigh-In	Notes
<p>Weigh participants privately, and have them record their weight on their “How Am I Doing? Weight” chart.</p> <p>Record participants’ weight and physical activity in your Lifestyle Coach’s Log.</p> <p>Distribute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Session 15 handouts to insert into the Participant Notebooks.• Session 15 “Food and Activity Trackers.”• Session 13 “Food and Activity Trackers” with your notes. <p>Collect Session 14 “Food and Activity Trackers.”</p>	
Week in Review	Notes
<p>Ask: Were you able to stay within your fat gram budget and reach your goal for physical activity?</p> <p>Open responses.</p> <p>Offer assistance graphing physical activity and weight, if needed.</p> <p>Present: Last week, we looked at the roles of problem social cues and helpful social cues. You created an action plan for changing a problem social cue and adding a helpful one.</p> <p>Ask: Were you able to follow your action plans to change a problem social cue and add a helpful one? If you feel comfortable doing so, tell us about some of the situations you had to deal with.</p>	

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Open responses.

Address any questions or difficulties, and praise all progress.

This Week

Notes

Present: In this session, we are switching gears and focusing on how the stresses in life can work against us and our goals for a healthier lifestyle. This week we will –

- Talk about how to prevent stress and to cope with stress we cannot avoid.
- Look at the ways this program might be contributing to your stress and how to cope with that.
- Come up with an action plan for either preventing a stressful situation or coping with it.

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Part 2: Preventing Stress

Estimated time: 20 minutes

How Stress Affects Us

Notes

Present: Everyone has pressures, whether from other people or ourselves, that influence the way we feel, think, and make decisions. The tension that develops in response to these pressures is stress. Any change, good or bad, big or small, can cause stress, making stress a natural part of life.

Big changes or events in our life – getting married, having a serious illness, changing jobs – can cause stress. Even small events – losing our keys, having a birthday, having a flat tire, or needing to get errands done before picking up a child – can also cause stress.

Ask: What makes you feel stressed?

Open responses.



Refer participants to the “How Do You Feel Stress?” handout in the Participant Notebook.



Present: Take a moment to record the kinds of situations that make you feel stressed. Describe how they influence your feelings and your behavior.

Ask for volunteers to share what they recorded. What is it like for you when you get stressed?



Note to Lifestyle Coach

If the participants do not give examples, mention one or two situations that are typically stressful (such as being under a deadline at work, being faced with unexpected responsibilities: a sick child, car repairs). Ask how the participants feel or react to those situations. If they say that stress causes physical or emotional symptoms (e.g., headache, muscle tension), point out that those symptoms might affect their behavior with regard to eating and activity.

Continue with these questions:

- Do you get any physical symptoms such as headache, stomachache, or muscle tension?
- Do you change your behavior when you feel stressed?
- Do you eat more when you are stressed?
- Do you change the kinds of food you eat when you are stressed?
- Do you change how active you are or the kind of activities you do when you are stressed?

Present: Why are we talking about stress? Because many people react to stress by changing their eating and activity habits. Some people eat and drink too much as a way to deal with stress. Others may stop eating. Some people become inactive and withdrawn.

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Preventing Stress

Notes

Present: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and this is certainly true when it comes to stress. The best approach to avoiding the effects of stress is to prevent stress whenever you can.



Refer participants to the “Ways to Prevent Stress” handout in the Participant Notebook.

Review the strategies in the handout.

- **Practice saying “No.”**

When possible, say “No” when someone asks you to do something you do not want to do. Say “Yes” only when what others want you to do is important to you.

Saying “No” can be hard. In itself, saying “No” can cause stress, but that stress is usually short-lived. If you say “Yes,” you may have hours, weeks, or months of stress as you complete whatever you agreed to do.

- **Share some of your workload with others, both at home and at your job.**

Delegate what you can to someone else. For example, your spouse and children can help clean the house, mow the lawn, shop for food, prepare meals, and do laundry. A co-worker might be able to help with an overwhelming work project.

Sharing work does not mean you are being irresponsible. Giving responsibility to others, even if they are not as experienced as you, gives them a chance to learn, participate, and gain experience.

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Word of caution: Do not expect those helping you to be perfect. Criticizing those who are trying to help can create another source of stress. Instead, thank them for their efforts, and be patient as they gain skills.

- **Set goals you can reach.**

Sometimes we create our own stress by trying to be perfect. If we set reasonable goals, we are more likely to succeed. When we succeed, we are less likely to feel stressed. Remember, we talked about this when we discussed negative thoughts: if we try to be perfect, we probably will not succeed!

Periodically, take a good look at the demands you are placing on yourself. Ask yourself, “Am I expecting myself to do more than anyone could possibly do?”

- **Take charge of your time.**

Make schedules that are realistic. Do not schedule yourself to accomplish in 30 minutes what realistically will take an hour. Take a good look at your to-do list, eliminate what is not essential, and give yourself a realistic amount of time to accomplish the rest.

Get organized. Chaos is stressful and inefficient. Devote some time every day to getting organized, and you will save time and stress in the long run.

- **Use the steps for solving problems.**

If changing your eating and activity habits is causing stress, take action. Use the steps for solving a problem that we discussed in Session 9:

1. Describe the problem in detail. Discuss it with your family or friends if they are involved.
2. Brainstorm your options.
3. Pick one option that is likely to work and that you can do.
4. Make an action plan.
5. Try that plan, and see how it works.

Continue the problem-solving process until you find a solution. Sitting on problems can cause even more stress. Instead, solve those problems, and move on.

- **Plan ahead.**

Think about the kind of situations that are stressful for you. Those situations put you at high risk for eating unhealthfully or skipping activity. So plan ahead for how to handle these situations, or work around them.

For example, are the holidays especially stressful for you? If so, plan some ways to make your life easier during the holiday season. Maybe you could buy healthy frozen meals to have on hand for some particularly busy days. You might decide that parts of the house need not be decorated, and you could spend the saved time relaxing instead of fussing with decorations.

- **Keep things in perspective. Remember your purpose.**

Maintain a positive attitude. Think of all the good things in your life. Remember why you joined this program.

- **Reach out to people.**

Think about who you can turn to for support. Ask supportive people to help when you are overwhelmed or need someone to encourage you. We talked about this last week.

- **Be physically active.**

Many people find that being active helps them cope with stress, makes them feel more relaxed, and helps them manage stressful situations more smoothly.

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Part 3: Coping with Unavoidable Stress

Estimated time: 20 minutes

Unavoidable Stress

Notes

Present: What about the times when we cannot avoid stress?

Ask participants for examples of stress they cannot avoid and how they deal with it.



Refer participants to the “When You Cannot Avoid Stress” handout in the Participant Notebook.

First, notice that you feel stressed as early as you can.

We talked before about action or behavior chains, and the importance of breaking them as early as possible. The same is true of stress. If you recognize the signs of stress early, you may avoid some of the harmful consequences such as overeating or being inactive.

Ways to Cope

Notes

Do you know of any signs that indicate you are getting stressed or are already stressed?

Take a 10 minute time-out. Develop a new habit of responding to stress with a time-out. Stop what you are doing, and take a few minutes for yourself. Do whatever you find helpful that does not involve food.

Here are some possibilities:

- **Move those muscles.**

Research shows that being active relieves tension, reduces anxiety, and counters depression. So when you notice yourself feeling stressed, make yourself go out for a 10–15 minute brisk walk, or get on your exercise bike and pedal for 10 minutes. The distraction and breathing can make you feel better.

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- **Pamper yourself.**

Take a bath. Manicure your nails. Massage your feet. Read a magazine. Read the funnies. But do not eat.

Just take 10 minutes for yourself.

- **Breathe.**

Most of us tend to hold our breath when we are stressed, which creates more tension in the body and mind. So when you catch yourself feeling stressed, try this:

- Take a full, deep breath.
- Count to five.
- Let your breath out slowly.
- Let the muscles in your face, arms, legs, and body go completely loose.

Stress Caused by This Program

Notes

Present: We understand that this program itself and the lifestyle changes we are working toward may cause stress. Changing your behavior and helping your family make related changes can create pressure and tension.



Refer participants to the “Stress Related to This Program” handout in the Participant Notebook.

Present: This handout lists some ways that this program may cause stress, and gives you some suggestions for how to manage it.

Go through the handout with participants.



Note to Lifestyle Coach

Some sources of stress may not be pertinent to every participant. For example, some participants' families may enjoy low-fat foods. Be careful that the discussion related to this handout does not cause participants to have a negative view of this program. The purpose of the handout is to help participants cope if they encounter stresses such as those described in the handout.



Refer participants to “Your Plan for Stress” handout in the Participant Notebook.



Ask participants to write their answers to the first question on the handout.

Present: Now, pick one of the sources you named on the handout, and make an action plan for either preventing or coping with that source of stress. Record your plan in the space provided.

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Part 4: Wrap Up and To-Do List

Estimated time: 10 minutes

To Do Next Week

Notes

Present: For next week, work on your plan for preventing or coping with the stressful situations you described on the last handout.



Refer participants to the “To Do Next Week” handout in the Participant Notebook.

During the next week, do the following:

- Keep track of your weight, eating, and activity.
- Follow your action plan to reduce stress. During the week, answer the questions on the handout: Did your plan work? If not, what went wrong?

Closing

Notes

Summarize the key points:

- Stress is the result of various pressures in our lives, and it affects everyone.
- Stress can sabotage the work you do in this program.
- When possible, work to prevent stress rather than cope with it.
- Practice preventing and avoiding stress using the tools we gave you.
- This program can cause stress. Use your action plan to practice coping with program-related stress.
- You can manage the stress!

Close: Next week is the last session of the core phase of the program. Do your best to avoid stressful situations. Use the tools we gave you to manage stress.

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Ask participants whether they have any questions before closing the session.

Make any announcements about time or location changes, contact information, and any other relevant issues.

After the session:

- Write notes in the participants' "Food and Activity Trackers" from Session 14. Comment on their successes, and recommend changes when necessary.
- Write the physical activity minutes recorded in the participants' "Food and Activity Trackers" in the Lifestyle Coach's Log.
- Use the Notes and Homework page at the end of this guide to write notes about the session.

