

### Taking a Closer Look at 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 it for another.

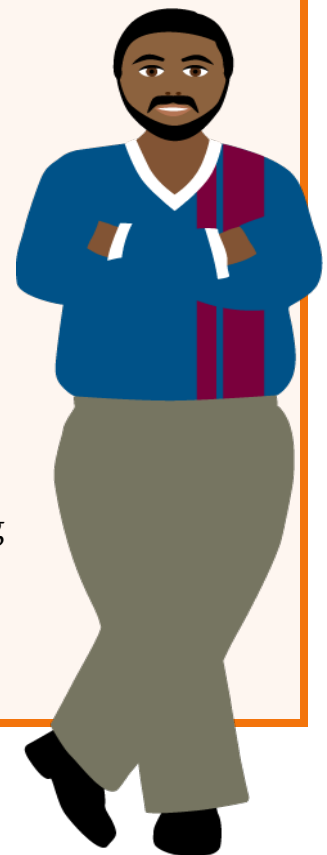
If not managed properly, stress can lead to illness, increased blood glucose levels, increased anxiety, or depression and mood swings.

Forms of stress may include:

- **Physical stressors:** fever, pain, illness
- **Environmental stressors:** weather, noise, housing concerns, traffic
- **Social and emotional stressors:** concerns over money, job and family demands, having to make a big decision, guilt, loss, and lifestyle change

High levels of stress can be a barrier to making healthy lifestyle changes. Stress can cause people to:

- Lose interest in physical activity
- Become very inactive and withdrawn from daily activities
- Increase inactive behaviors such as excessive TV watching, playing on the computer, or sleeping
- Eat or drink too much



## **Stress and You**

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 what happens.**

**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?**

## **Take Charge of Your Response to Stress**

Here are some tips for how to respond to stressful situations.

- ☑ **Practice saying “No.”** Try to say “yes” only when something is important to you.
- ☑ **Share some of your work or responsibilities with others.** Ask a co-worker to help you with a project, or ask a friend or family member to help out with a household task.
- ☑ **Take charge of your time.** Organize your time, and make schedules that are practical.
- ☑ **Make a “To-Do” list** at the beginning of each day and label items: “A” (most important), “B” (important, but can be put off for a while), or “C” (not time-sensitive, can be put off).
- ☑ **Combine errands.** Go to the drug store and post office in one trip. Double recipes when you cook, and freeze the other half to enjoy later.
- ☑ **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. Don’t put important things off – plan for how you can address them.
- ☑ **Keep things in perspective.** Think of all the good things in your life, and try to maintain a positive attitude.
- ☑ **Reach out to people.** Find comfort and support in others.
- ☑ **Focus on wellness.** Eat healthy food, get enough sleep, practice relaxation techniques (such as meditation or prayer), be physically active, and laugh often.
- ☑ **Find healthy ways to respond to stress.** Learn to identify stress as early as possible. Take a 10 minute “time out” to pamper yourself, be active, or try a relaxation technique.

## **Strategies for Saving Time with Physical Activity**

Consider these “time savers” that you could add to your physical activity routine.

### **Save time getting motivated to do physical activity:**

- ✓ Set an alarm; when the alarm goes off, go!
- ✓ Have a friend or family member meet you at a regular time.
- ✓ Ask a friend or family member to call you to remind you.
- ✓ Join a walking club, gym, aerobics class, etc.
- ✓ Other ideas:

### **Save time getting ready:**

- ✓ Keep your exercise shoes and clothes in the car or at your office.
- ✓ Set out your exercise gear the night before.
- ✓ Choose a place to get physical activity that is close to your home or work.
- ✓ Other ideas:

### **Save time by combining physical activity with other tasks or opportunities:**

- ✓ Use a 10-minute break during the day to take a brisk walk.
- ✓ Ride an exercise bike while you watch the news or listen to the radio.
- ✓ Walk and talk with friends or family members.
- ✓ Walk, run, or bike in a community event that benefits a good cause.
- ✓ Walk or bike to work, or to the store for errands.
- ✓ Take your child for a brisk walk in a stroller.
- ✓ Take up an active hobby (dancing, swimming, hiking, etc.).
- ✓ Mow the lawn or shovel snow for an elderly neighbor.
- ✓ Other ideas:

### **Save time after being physically active:**

- ✓ Be physically active right before the time when you would be showering anyway (such as first thing in the morning or in the evening).
- ✓ Other ideas:

# Make Time to Relax

## Relaxation Technique: Belly Breathing

Follow these steps to practice proper belly breathing.

### Practice 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.
- 3.** Gently press down on your belly as you breathe out your nose. Let your belly push your hand back as you breathe in. Let your chest move just a little, as it should follow the movement of your belly.

Use belly breathing when you notice yourself getting tense. Once you have learned the technique, you can do it while sitting or standing. Try it while you are stuck in rush hour traffic or waiting in line at the grocery store – you will be surprised what a difference it can make!

## **Make Time to Sleep**

### **Getting Enough ZZZs: How much is enough?**

On average, people need 7 ½ - 8 hours of sleep, yet the range for how many hours different people need is 5 - 10 hours per night. People who sleep less than 4 hours or more than 9 hours per night tend to have a higher risk of disease and death.

#### ***Sleep on this:* the benefits of getting enough sleep**

- **Getting enough sleep is recognized as an essential part of chronic disease prevention and health promotion.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), not getting enough sleep is associated with the onset of many chronic conditions, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression. Not getting enough sleep may make these conditions difficult to manage, and might actually make them worse.
- **Getting enough sleep helps with weight management.** Sleep helps to regulate several hormones associated with metabolism, 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 had enough sleep. Being well-rested can make it easier to build healthy behavior changes.**

## **Sleep Savers vs. Sleep Stealers**

**DO the following  
to IMPROVE  
SLEEP**

- Go to bed when you are sleepy, not before.

Get out of bed if you are not asleep after 20 minutes. Find something else to do that will make you feel relaxed; once you are relaxed go back to bed.

Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed, such as reading, a warm bath, or soothing music.

Keep a regular schedule of getting up and going to bed at approximately the same time every day.

Avoid caffeine after lunch.

Limit or avoid alcohol and nicotine within six hours of your bedtime.

Go to bed when you are not 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.

**Be aware of the  
following SLEEP  
STEALERS**

- Stress and depression

A bed partner with sleep problems, such as insomnia, sleep apnea, or loud snoring

Arthritis, hormonal shifts (e.g., menopause), asthma, sleep apnea, pain

Some medications

## **Make Time to Laugh**

### **A good laugh can help:**

- ✓ Reduce stress
- ✓ Boost immune system
- ✓ Lower blood pressure
- ✓ Lower blood glucose levels in people with type 2 diabetes
- ✓ Protect the heart
- ✓ Elevate mood

### **In addition, laughing can even help you lose weight!**

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, and every bit counts!



### **Ways to add laughter to your day:**

- Call or visit a friend, family member, or co-worker who can make you laugh
- Find a funny movie, sitcom, or comedian on TV
- Invite friends over to play a silly game
- Ask a child to tell you a funny story or joke – if they start laughing, chances are you will too
- Go to a comedy club
- Try laughing yoga



## To-Do: How Do I Spend My Time?

Complete this worksheet at home to determine how you are spending your time, and as a guide for how you can better manage your priorities.

How I spent my time:	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Sleep</b>							
<b>Work</b> (include commute)							
<b>Physical activity</b>							
<b>Food-related</b> (include shopping, meal planning and preparation, packing lunch, eating, time at restaurants, self-monitoring)							
<b>Household tasks</b> (include yard work, home and car maintenance, shopping other than grocery, laundry, bills, kids' activities)							
<b>Personal care</b> (include showering, dressing, grooming)							
<b>Social time with family and friends</b>							
<b>Sedentary activity</b> (include TV, reading, movies, computer)							
<b>Community</b> (include church, volunteer work)							
<b>Other:</b>							
<b>TOTAL HOURS (24):</b>							

## **To-Do: What Will You Do With Your Extra Time?**

During the next month, I want to find more time to spend on:

During the next month, I will save time by:

*Save time in general:*

*Save time in my eating and physical activity:*

Roadblocks that might come up:

How I will handle them: