

Session 1 –

Stress Management

Assessing the Problem, Planning for Change

Keep Your Mind Tuned-Up

To keep your mind working well, there are times when you need to take a break to refresh your brain and your body. Conscious breathing is one way to connect your body and mind. It not only refreshes your mind and increases your sense of well-being; it can improve the body's functioning. It doesn't need to take long. One minute several times a day can actually do the trick – and the more you practice, the easier and more effective it becomes.

The “4 r's” can help to get back on track.

RECOGNIZE – As soon as possible.... Notice when you feel stressed, angry, tired or your mood has changed. Notice when your body is tense, your heart pounds, or you're in a highly emotional situation. Notice when your brain is giving you negative, unhelpful messages.

RETREAT - Stop what you are doing. If possible, go to a place where you are not distracted. If not, find a moment to pause, close your eyes, and take a mental 'time out'.

RELAX – Use the deep breathing or progressive relaxation described below. Once you've done that, consider adding some helpful 'self-talk'.

RETURN – Go back to what you were doing. See if it makes a small difference. If not, repeat the relaxation exercise, taking a bit more time.

Here are some mind-refreshing techniques to **RELAX**:

- **Deep Breathing – signals the body it is safe to relax when we get angry or worried**
 - Exhale completely through your mouth
 - Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, filling up your lungs
 - Then exhale completely again through your mouth
 - On each exhale, focus only on your breath. You can add a word or sound of your choice to help you to focus.
 - Your breath should be coming from your belly, not your chest. To check this, put a hand on your belly and chest. Only the hand on your belly should move.
 - Repeat several times. Practice to get better at it!

- **4-7-8 Breathing – can even help you to get back to sleep**
 - Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, filling up your lungs
 - Then exhale completely again through your mouth
 - Create a rhythm by breathing. To a count to 4, breathe in through the nose.
 - To a count of 7, pause and hold the breath.
 - To a count of 8, breathe out.
 - Only do 4 of these breaths at 1 time. Practice twice a day.
 - For a video demo, go to the internet and search “the 4-7-8 breathing”.

➤ **Progressive Relaxation Technique – a good way to relax the mind is to deliberately relax the body**

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position or lie down. Choose a time and place where you won't be interrupted.
- Close your eyes and focus your attention on different parts of your body in a sequence – such as first one arm, then the other, then one leg, then the other, etc. End with your head.
- Then, as you focus on the body part, lightly tense that area and release it.
- Then just pay attention to the muscles in that part of the body and decide to relax them.
- Take slow deep breaths through your nose. Try to focus your mind only on the body. If focusing on any body part is too difficult, or if you have an injury, skip it and go to the next.
- Continue this for 5 minutes or more. Sit quietly for a few minutes, then stretch your muscles, and continue with your day.
- There are many podcasts or short videos on the internet that can guide your relaxation journey. Search for “progressive relaxation”.

➤ **Self-talk – a way to change your thinking and mood**

- A message like, “this always goes badly” or “I can't deal with this” will work against you.
- A message like, “I can handle this” or “I am doing my best” can help you overcome challenges and keep a more positive mood.
- See the next handout for more information on self-talk

For additional information on relaxation and managing stress including handouts, websites or short videos, feel free to contact your Aurora EAP coach at 800-236-3231.

Keep Your Body Tuned Up

To keep your body working well, you need to move, eat and sleep. Those are not always easy things to do and most of us have 'bad habits' and could take better care of ourselves. Remember, making small changes in habits can lead to big results!

- **Move Well*:** Let your body be strong. Build some activity in your life, whether it is getting up more often, starting a walking routine, or going to the gym for a workout. The added side-effect is an improved mood and an outlet for tension.
 - Studies show that a short 1-2 minute walking break every 30 minutes can decrease the likelihood of disease and boost positive feelings.
 - Along with improving how your body works, studies show that, for many people, those 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 3x/week can be as effective as taking anti-anxiety and/or anti-depressant medication.
 - To safely exercise, start with a 5 minute stretch or warm-up followed by the 30 minutes of aerobic activity, with a 5 minute cool down.
 - Talk to your coach about ways to fit movement into your life!

** always check with your doctor before beginning any exercise routine*

- **Eat Well:** Let your body function at its best. It's easy to forget that food is the fuel that keeps our bodies functioning like a fine-tuned engine. Bad fuel = bad performance.
 - Find ways to reduce high fat foods. Remember, it doesn't have to be all or nothing.
 - Find creative ways to sneak fruits and veggies in your life.
 - Eat smaller amounts of food throughout the day, rather than not eating at all or skipping meals. Remember, eating when you get up keeps your metabolism functioning like a fine-tuned engine – and you may find you lose weight by doing so.
 - Drink up to 8 glasses of water each day to stay fully hydrated.

- **Rest Well:** Let your body and mind re-fuel. Aim for six to nine hours of sleep each night. Poor sleep can impact your health and happiness.
 - Sleep in a cool, darkened room with no TV or computers.
 - Avoid caffeine after noon. Avoid alcohol, which can produce a quick, but poor quality, interrupted sleep. Avoid eating a meal at least 3 hours prior to going to sleep.
 - Before bed, having a restful routine such as taking a warm bath or shower, turning the lights down low, quieting the noise in your home, or reading a calming book can also be helpful sleep aids.

- **Be Well** – Live your best life. Keep watch on your body, mind and behavior. Certain substances and behaviors cause health problems, which will eventually create other big problems in life.
- Keep alcohol below healthy limits (14 standard size drinks for men a week and 7 for women)
 - You can quit tobacco and nicotine. There are many useful aids to help make it possible.
 - There is treatment available for drug use and misuse of prescription drugs.
 - Your coach can assist you with information and resources if you are interested.

If you'd like more specific information or ideas on any of these topics, or for websites, short videos or other handouts, contact your Aurora EAP coach at 800-236-3231.

GAD-7 Anxiety

Over the <u>last two weeks</u> , how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0	1	2	3
2. Not being able to sleep or control worrying	0	1	2	3
3. Worrying too much about different things	0	1	2	3
4. Trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3
5. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	0	1	2	3
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0	1	2	3
7. Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen	0	1	2	3

Column totals _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ =

Total score _____

If you checked any problems, how difficult have they made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all

Somewhat difficult

Very difficult

Extremely difficult

Source: Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders Patient Health Questionnaire (PRIME-MD-PHQ). The PHQ was developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke, and colleagues. For research information, contact Dr. Spitzer at ris8@columbia.edu. PRIME-MD® is a trademark of Pfizer Inc. Copyright© 1999 Pfizer Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission

Scoring GAD-7 Anxiety Severity

This is calculated by assigning scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3 to the response categories, respectively, of “not at all,” “several days,” “more than half the days,” and “nearly every day.” GAD-7 total score for the seven items ranges from 0 to 21.

0–4: minimal anxiety

5–9: mild anxiety

10–14: moderate anxiety

15–21: severe anxiety

Life Stress Test

In the past 12 months, which of the following major life events have taken place in your life? Make a checkmark next to each event that you have experienced in the past year. When you're done, add up the points listed for each event. Check your Life Stress Score on page 2.

- Death of Spouse (100)
- Divorce (73)
- Marital Separation (65)
- Jail Term (63)
- Death of close family member (63)
- Personal injury or illness (53)
- Marriage (50)
- Fired or laid off from work (47)
- Marital reconciliation (45)
- Retirement (45)
- Change in family member's health (44)
- Pregnancy (40)
- Sexual difficulties (39)
- Addition to family (39) Change in financial status (38)
- Death of a close friend (37)
- Career change or new line of work (36)
- Change in number of marital arguments (36)
- Mortgage or loan over \$10,000 (31)
- Foreclosure of mortgage or loan (30)
- Change in work responsibilities (29)
- Trouble with in-laws (29)
- Outstanding personal achievement (28)
- Change in spouse's job status (26)
- Starting or finishing school (26)
- Change in living conditions (25)
- Revision of personal habits i.e. quitting smoking or beginning to gamble (24)
- Trouble with your boss (23)
- Change in work hours or conditions (20)
- Change in residence (20)
- Change in schools (20)
- Change in recreational habits (19)
- Change in spiritual activities (19)
- Change in social activities (19)
- Mortgage or loan under \$10,000 (17)
- Change in sleeping habits (16)
- Change in eating habits (15)
- Change in family gatherings or activities (15)
- Vacation (13)
- Holiday season (12)
- Minor violations of the law i.e. traffic ticket or misdemeanor (11)

- _____ Your Total Score

Life Stress Test Scoring

This scale shows the level of life pressure and stress that you are currently facing. Depending on your coping skills or lack thereof, this scale can shed some light on the possibility of falling victim to one or more stress related illnesses or conditions yourself. A condition could be mild, like frequent tension headaches, acid indigestion, poor sleep, muscle tension or irritability. However, a condition could also be more serious like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart conditions, irregular heartbeat or even unhealthy weight gain or loss, which could lead to other serious health conditions. Certain habitual behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, using recreational drugs, lack of exercise and unhealthy eating habits can also put you at higher risk for stress related conditions. So how susceptible are you to stress related illnesses or conditions?

0-149: Low susceptibility to stress related illnesses.

While your susceptibility to stress related illnesses is low, you may still benefit from learning and practicing relaxation and stress management techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, working out or simply doing things you enjoy. By taking care of yourself, you prepare yourself to be able to handle any future life experiences that may cause you stress in a healthy way.

150-299: Medium susceptibility to stress related illnesses.

Now is the time to begin taking better care of yourself by learning and practicing relaxation and stress management techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, working out, or even simply doing more of the things you enjoy doing most like a hobby. Learning to live a healthy lifestyle goes much beyond a work out and dietary plan, you also have to care for yourself emotionally and mentally as well. Positive self-talk and visualization (see yourself relaxing on a beach or watching a sunset) are a couple tools you can use for enhancing your mental and emotional wellness.

300 or higher: High susceptibility to stress related illness.

Daily practice of relaxation and stress management techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, working out or doing things that bring you joy are very important to your health and well-being. Being able to manage the stressful life situations you are experiencing right now in a healthy way is imperative to help you avoid experiencing or worsening stress related illnesses. There are many tools at your disposal, such as positive self-talk, visualization (seeing yourself on a beach or watching a sunset), working out, healthier food choices, or any other activity that you enjoy or brings you comfort. It is very important to your overall health and well being to take time each day to focus on taking good care of yourself physically, mentally and emotionally!

Adapted from an article by Dr. Tim Lowenstein of Conscious Living Foundation

Homework Session 1 – Stress Management Coaching

Please complete the following homework after Session 1:

- *My Stress Thermometer*
- *Coping Well*

Please fax homework at least 2 business days before your Session 2 appointment.

Use this sheet as your fax cover sheet. PRINT your name below. Fax your completed forms to:

FAX

4067 N. 92nd Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53222

Tel: (414) 760-5400

Fax: (414) 760-5418

www.aurorahealthcare.org/eap

To: Aurora EAP Coaching
414-760-5418

Your Name: _____

Your Fax Number: _____

Number of Pages: _____

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Homework: Stress Thermometer

Last Name, First Name

List up to 4 of your most difficult stressors:

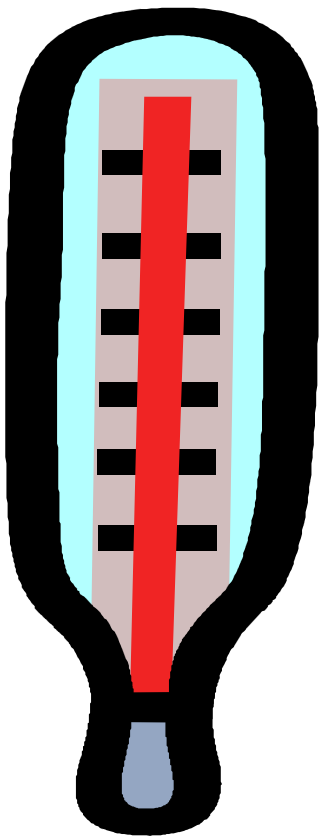
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

My Stress Thermometer



10 --- Worst ever!

9

8

7

6



5 ---- Hard, but I'm handling it.

4

3

2



1 ---- No problem at all!

Now, and for the next 2 weeks, track and record your daily stress temperature from 1-10. You may want to also include your major source(s) of stress on that day.

WEEK 1	WEEK 2
Monday	Monday
Tuesday	Tuesday
Wednesday	Wednesday
Thursday	Thursday
Friday	Friday

Homework: Coping Well

Good coping is active problem solving that has:
(Weisman and Worden, Project Omega, 1980)

Last Name, First Name

- ✓ **OPTIMISM** or an expectation that positive change is possible,
- ✓ **PRACTICALITY** about the kinds of solutions that are feasible,
- ✓ **FLEXIBILITY** in approach to any problem,
- ✓ **RESOURCEFULNESS** in finding support or additional information that helps.

With good coping, you can decrease feeling helpless or hopeless.

The below coping tools may be helpful to you, though they will take some practice.

*I hear, I forget,
I see, I remember,
I do, I understand,
I practice, I master.*

Skills I Use Now

Skills I Would Like to Try

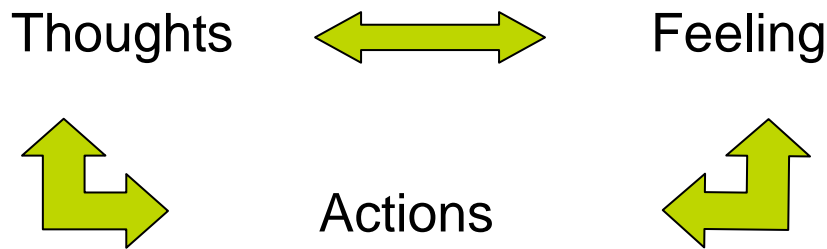
- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. | Talk to someone who could do something | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. | Ask a friend or buddy, spiritual advisor, or support person for advice or help | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. | Talk to someone about how I am feeling | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. | Let my feelings out somehow | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. | Speak to a counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. | Journal or write my thoughts and feelings down | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. | Get moving – exercise or take a walk | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. | Spend time doing an enjoyable hobby or activity | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. | Practice deep breathing or relaxation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. | Change or grow as a person in a good way | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. | Change something about myself or in my life | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. | Try to find out as much as I can | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. | Brainstorm and come up with different solutions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. | Make a plan of action and follow through with it | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. | Remind myself how much worse things could be | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. | Live one day at a time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. | Slow down or let some time pass | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18. | Practice acceptance – “I cannot change this” | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. | Be inspired to be creative | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20. | Rediscover what is important in life | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21. | Look for an unseen benefit or silver lining | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 22. | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Session 2 – Stress Management Making a Change

Creating Positive Self-Talk

Self -Talk

What you *say to yourself* (your thoughts) *creates a feeling* (both physical and emotional). Thoughts and feelings *work together to create your attitude* about something. *Your attitude affects your actions* and your progress on goals.



Negative self-talk can create negative feelings that may make it more difficult to take positive actions.

If you say negative things to yourself such as “I can’t do anything right”, “I don’t have time”, “I’ll never be able to ...” you may start to feel ‘down’, angry, sad or stressed. Telling yourself, “maybe I’m (not smart enough, not accepted, looking stupid).....” will also create uncertainty, doubt, and anxiety.

Positive, Constructive self-talk can create feelings that lead to positive actions.

When you can create helpful self-talk such as “I can find 1 minute to practice my breathing”, “I am doing better”, “The good things I did for myself today are.....”, “I can try something new”, you may start to feel more positive, happier, or less stressed.

Thought-Stopping & Thought-Replacement

Studies show that when you change what you think, you can change your mood. Thought-stopping and thought replacement can be learned, and it can help you feel better. Negative, unwanted thoughts can lead to anxiety or depression. They can keep you from sleeping well. And they can make it hard for you to work and enjoy your life.

- Focusing on what IS working in your life rather than what is difficult or stressful can be helpful to improving mood and functioning.

Thought stopping and thought replacement is easy to learn. But it does take practice, persistence, and patience.

To stop unwanted thoughts:

- ✓ Focus on the thought and then learn to say "Stop" to end the thought. At first, you say "stop" out loud. Then you will learn to say it in your mind so that you can use this technique anywhere.
- ✓ Replace that negative or stressful thought with a positive, soothing thought or picture in your mind.

Let's Begin:

1. **List your most stressful thoughts.** Write down your upsetting thoughts in order of the most stressful to the least stressful. Start practicing thought-stopping with the thought that is the least stressful. Here are some examples of stressful thoughts:
 - What if I get sick?
 - I just know that one of us is going to get laid off from work.
 - I'm so nervous about making a presentation at work that it's all I can think about.
2. **Now list what is working well in your life**
 - I feel good-enough now. I will create an emergency savings account.
 - We are doing our best to find other jobs. I have good experience and references.
 - I am capable. I have good information to share.

Or think about people, things or situations to create positive feelings

- People who I care about
- Activities I enjoy
- A beautiful or restful scene I can imagine
- A time when I was successful or met my goals

Now Let's Practice:

1. **Imagine the negative thought.** Sit or lie down in a private place (so you can say, "Stop!" out loud and not feel self-conscious). Close your eyes. Imagine a situation in which you might have this stressful thought. Then allow yourself to focus on the thought.
2. **Stop the negative thought.** Startling yourself is a good way to interrupt the thought. Try these techniques:
 - Focus on the thought for several minutes. Then say, "Stop" loudly. If you want, stand up when you say, "Stop!" Some people snap their fingers or clap their hands, or snap a rubber band on their wrist. These actions and saying, "Stop!" are cues to stop thinking. Empty your mind, and try to keep it empty for about 30 seconds. If the thought comes back before the 30 seconds is up, use your voice and physical cue to end the thought again. Hearing your own voice telling you to stop helps strengthen your commitment to getting rid of the unwanted thought.
 - Practice these steps until the thought goes away on command.
 - After your normal voice is able to stop the thought, try whispering, "Stop." Over time, you can just imagine hearing "Stop" inside your mind.
3. **Replace that negative thought with the positive thought or image.** Picture that positive image or engage in self-talk to challenge the negative thought.
 - For example, "I don't actually know what's going to happen but I will do my best and cope with whatever comes my way."
 - "I can picture myself doing a good job and feeling good afterward."
 - "That person has disappointed me but I am thinking now about the positive people in my life."
 - "I can see myself on a beach at sunset, relaxed and enjoying the view."

Say Something Positive: How Self-Talk Affects Your Attitude

Most people carry on a silent conversation with themselves during much of the day. This “self-talk” has a direct effect on your thoughts and behaviors. Understanding self-talk and its effects on you can help you learn to rewrite your own self-talk “script” and maintain a positive mental attitude.

Positive or Negative?

You’ve probably heard the term “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Self-talk is very much like a self-fulfilling prophecy – you think about something so much that you can actually make it happen.

When your self-talk is positive – “I am doing my best,” “I know I can do _____” – you are giving yourself permission to succeed, and chances are, you will.

When your self-talk is negative – “I’ll never be able to do that,” “I always fail” – you’re giving up on yourself and chances are you won’t even try to succeed.

Often your self-talk reflects the values and behaviors you learned as a child, and the self-esteem you now have as an adult.

Thoughts and Behaviors

Self-talk can direct your thoughts and behaviors.

If you say to yourself, “I know I can do _____ and it will help me by _____,” you’ll be more willing to do something different. You’ll be more likely to exhibit confidence in yourself and your abilities, and have a better chance at success.

If you say to yourself, “I’ll never be able to do it and it doesn’t make any difference anyway,” you may not even take any action, guaranteeing that nothing will change.

Physical and Mental Effects

Negative self-talk can increase your distress and it can make effects such as headaches or stomach pain much worse. It can also encourage you to behave in self-destructive ways which further distress your body. (“No one cares, so why shouldn’t I _____?”) Fortunately, positive self-talk can have the opposite effect, leading to a confident, positive attitude.

Rewrite Your Script

Learn to listen to your own self-talk. One good way is to use your pencil and paper to note your automatic responses to an idea.

1. Use the sheet attached. In the first column, write several things you would like to have happen. (Example: “I’d like to handle my worry by _____.” “I’d like to move more.”)
2. Then, close your eyes and listen to how you react to each item. Write your own self-talk in the second column. (Example: “Me? Find a moment to move more? Forget it. I never have time.”)
3. In the third column, write down a thought that is the *opposite* of the thought in column two. (Example: I can find 5 minutes today when I will move. I can have fun finding a creative ways to fit it in my life.”)
4. Now look at your list.
 - a. If column two is more positive than column three, you’re already on your way to thinking positively.
 - b. If column two is more negative, look at column three for a more helpful, healthier response.

Last Name, First Name

<i>What would I like to happen?</i>	<i>What do I say to myself?</i>	<i>What is the opposite?</i>

Practice choosing positive self-talk. It may help you to feel happier and more confident.

Homework Session 2 – Stress Management Coaching

Please complete the following homework after Session 2:

- ***Four A's Worksheet***
- ***Stress Management Plan A OR B***
- ***10 Ways to Build Your Resilience***
- ***Say Something Positive (Optional)***

Please fax homework at least 2 business days before your Session 3 appointment.

Use this sheet as your fax cover sheet. PRINT your name below. Fax your completed forms to:

FAX

4067 N. 92nd Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53222

Tel: (414) 760-5400
Fax: (414) 760-5418

www.aurorahealthcare.org/eap

To: Aurora EAP Coaching
414-760-5418

Your Name: _____

Your Fax Number: _____

Number of Pages: _____

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The Four A's of Coping with Stress

Last Name, First Name

List your 4 current most difficult stressors. Then decide under which "A" box they belong:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

4. _____

<p style="text-align: center;">AVOID</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can learn to say no • I can stay away from negative people, situations and things • I can pare down my to-do list 	<p style="text-align: center;">ALTER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can express my feelings using positive communication skills • I can compromise when it's appropriate • I can manage my time better by planning ahead or allowing for extra time
<p style="text-align: center;">ADAPT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can adjust my standards or allow imperfection • I can focus on the positives, thinking about what is working in my life 	<p style="text-align: center;">ACCEPT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand I cannot control the world or how others choose to behave. Instead, I understand that I have control over how I cope with difficult situations or people. • I can forgive when appropriate, even though I remember the hurt

Stress Management Plan A

Last Name, First Name

Stress affects people in three ways: **Physically** **Emotionally** **Behaviorally**

1. Identify your major source(s) of stress:

2. Identify how the stress affects you **physically** (for example, sleep issues, muscular aches, stomach issues, headaches, etc.):

3. Identify how the stress affects you **emotionally** (for example, irritability, sadness, worry, negative thinking, etc.):

4. Identify how you **behave** when the stress affects you (for example, tearfulness, over-eating or restricting eating, excessive drinking or drug use, yelling or criticizing others, spending too much time on the computer or television, etc.):

5. Identify three reasons for making a change:

6. Name three things that will have improved when you more effectively manage the targeted stress:

7. What will be three potential roadblocks to managing stress:

8. How can you address or resolve the roadblocks you noted:

9. List one way you will reward yourself for effectively managing the stress:

Stress Management Plan B

_____ Last Name, First Name

Target Stress Area: _____

Impact it has on you:

Physically: _____

Emotionally: _____

Mentally: _____

Behaviorally: _____

Desired Goal:

Reasons for Change:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Potential Road Blocks:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What will you do to accomplish your goal? (ie, exercise daily from 30 minutes, meditate, consider career change, stop smoking, etc.)

When is your start date? _____

How will you measure your success? _____

How will you reward yourself for sticking to it? : _____

10 Ways to Build Your Resilience

Last Name, First Name

Resilience is the ability to be realistically optimistic, flexible, motivated and determined in the face of personal challenges. Resilience helps you “bend but not break.” It points the way to increased health and happiness.

How does a person develop Resilience?

1. **Keep good company** – Seek out and surround yourself with positive people for fun, support, or just to enjoy a quiet time with company. Developing and using a strong support system is one of the most effective ways to overcome obstacles or challenges.
2. **Know yourself** – Always listen to your body and be aware of your mood. Define what you need emotionally and physically.
3. **Spend time building positive beliefs about who you are** – Identify what you can do. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments.
4. **Contemplate your life’s meaning and purpose** – Think about the “who, what and why” in your life and explore what those relationships and experiences may have taught you, about yourself or the world.
5. **Explore all of the possibilities** – List all of the practical options to any problem. Consider your goals and values. Do some creative problem-solving. If the problem is unsolvable, try to find lessons in the difficult times, distract yourself and have hope or optimism for the future.
6. **Identify what is within your control and responsibility and what is outside of your control and may be the responsibility of another** – This can be especially difficult with family members who are making negative choices, or in the work environment with situations over which we do not have authority to change. It can be helpful to remember the popular saying: “We cannot change the behaviors of others, we can only change the way we behave towards others.”
7. **Know you don’t have to have all the answers** – Many things don’t have ready solutions. Take stressful periods a day at a time and trust that things will gradually become more endurable.
8. **Practice acceptance** – Pain and stress are a part of living and come and go. Acceptance is not about giving up and letting stress take over. It’s about having the experience and the emotions that come with stress and trusting that you will bounce back, using the coping skills you have learned.
9. **Have a menu of self-care habits** – List the good habits that you have learned that bring positive feelings into your life. These can be physical habits such as exercise, cooking good meals, or engaging in sporting activities. They can also be emotionally or mentally rewarding pursuits such as spending time with friends, enjoying music, art, movies, a good book, or practicing meditation.
10. **Ask for help when you need it** – Know who will be a good listening ear, someone who you trust to be honest with you and keep your thoughts and situations confidential. Those people should be willing to listen without judgment or even comment unless you ask for it.

Identify 2 strategies you can try:

Session 3 – Stress Management

**Building on Changes,
Planning ahead**

Managing Stress, Creating Balance

Any change, good or bad, small or large, can trigger a stress-response. Stress can be short-lived, such as when you have an occasional busy day. Stress can become long-term if there are multiple stressors, or if a stressful situation is ongoing or not easily fixed.

What does stress do to your body? Any change in your life sets off a physical response such as an increased heart rate, constricted blood vessels, and tensed muscles. These are normal stress responses to help you physically deal with the life change. Once you've adjusted to the stress, your body relaxes again and returns to normal. Your heart rate goes down, your blood vessels return to normal, and your muscles relax.

Why is stress a problem? When many stressful things happen in a short time or if there is chronic stress, your body stays in a stress-response mode and can't relax. Ongoing stress can affect all areas of life, including your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. People who experience ongoing, chronic stress may be more likely to feel depressed or be anxious. Ongoing stress can make it difficult to manage physical conditions and may lead to increased symptoms. Irritability and angry outbursts are common responses.

You can't avoid everything that trigger your stress, but you can control how you respond to the stressful situation. It's important to develop a plan to manage your stress so that it doesn't negatively affect your life.

The Steps to Manage Stress

Step 1 - Become aware of the stressors in your life.

External stressors are those things that happen in the course of normal life. They can include people, places & things or major life events that are expected or unexpected. These are the things we normally associate with stress. Often, you have little control over external stressors and how or why they happen.

You do have control over how you treat yourself or how you interpret an external stressor. Often, people put more stress on themselves through negative thinking, ignoring physical health, and critical self-talk. This adds to the stress and can contribute to long-term chronic stress.

Step 2 - Manage negative thinking.

Stress response gets more intense if you interpret events in a way that is self-blaming. Negative thinking can create feelings of irritability, hopelessness, or helplessness. Negative thinking can also trigger the fight or flight response, making it difficult to concentrate.

Manage your negative thinking so you can handle a stressful situation without creating more stress. For example, acknowledging that a situation is bad or difficult may be realistic. Blaming yourself for

not being able to handle it or thinking you're a failure may not be accurate and can lead to negative feelings. Negative feelings may make it more difficult to take action toward a solution.

Provide yourself with positive and constructive self-talk. Remind yourself that you're doing the best you can in a difficult situation. Find constructive things to say to yourself. Problem-solve to find a solution (more information on this topic is available through the EAP). Take one small action toward changing the situation.

Step 3 - Identify your stress warning signs.

People experience stress in different ways. It's important to learn your own physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms of stress. Be proactive and identify your 'stress signals' before your stress gets out of control. Awareness of your unique signs of stress is important so that you can 'catch' yourself and do something different.

Examples of stress signals are:

Body signals

- Headaches, muscle tension
- Upset stomach/heartburn
- Fatigue
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Weight gain

Behavior signals

- Nervous tic or habit
- More smoking, drinking, eating
- Irritability or short temper
- Crying

Mental/emotional signals

- Sense of loss of control
- Worry, anxiety
- Anger
- Difficulty concentrating

Identify your unique stress signals.

Rate each of your warning signs according to how soon they occur.

'1' for the earliest warning signs

'2' for the warning signs that come on in the middle of the stress

'3' for the latest warning signs

Step 4 - Make a stress management plan.

Once you understand your stress signals, make a plan to practice stress-busting strategies that work for you. Practice until they become a habit.

Circle any of the coping skills that you would like to develop (and feel free to add your own). For more information on any of the coping skills listed below, speak to your EAP counselor or coach. Then pick one coping skill and practice it for a week.

Dealing With Stressors	Calming Yourself	Doing the Basics	Creating and Living a Life of Meaning
Benefit	Benefit	Benefit	Benefit
-Brings a sense of control and mastery -Increases knowledge about stressors	-Brings a sense of self-control -Promotes relaxation -Can stop or decrease intensity of the stress reaction	-Brings structure and predictability to life	-Brings meaning and purpose to life -Brings increased balance to life -Offers opportunities to experience pleasurable activities and be creative.
Coping Skills	Coping Skills	Coping Skills	Coping Skills
-Spend time with supportive people -Ask for help and delegate -Learn about the stressor and its effects -Use problem-solving techniques -Avoid stressful people and situations when appropriate -Increase acceptance	-Use relaxation and breathing techniques -Move your body -Use music, nature, prayer -Practice positive constructive thinking -Practice self-compassion	-Eat well, sleep well, drink water -Manage any health conditions -Go to work and keep up with chores -Practice time management -Monitor your attitude -Schedule time for self-care and fun -Schedule social time	-Explore hobbies, travel, music -Do volunteer work, help others -Read, watch movies -Learn new things professionally and personally -Get involved with exercise and sports -Practice spirituality, religion ---Involve yourself with friends, children and relationships -Try anything creative

Step 5 – Create Balance in your Life.

Increase your stress-busting capacity with things like spending time with supportive people, delegating responsibilities to others, deep breathing exercises, moving your body, practicing self-care, using positive and constructive self-talk, and finding ways to be creative.

Step 6 – The 3 P’s

Whenever attempting to make a change, it is important to utilize the “3 P’s”.... practice, patience and persistence.

- **Practice** – Adding a new behavior or changing an attitude requires repetition. So, practice, practice, practice.
- **Patience** – Be patient. Making a change is not easy and it takes time. The most important thing is that you stick with it at a pace that works for you.
- **Persistence** – Sticking with it, refusing to give up, and committing to your well-being are all ways of being persistent in change. Even if you get knocked off track by life events, rework your plan and try again. Be persistent!

If you’d like more specific information or ideas on any of these topics, or for websites, short videos or other handouts, contact your Aurora EAP counselor or coach at 800-236-3231.

Access

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Happiness Habits



Have you ever said, “I’ll be happy when I ... [have more money, find that perfect mate, lose 10 lbs.]?” According to Dr. Steve Achor, a Harvard research psychologist, these types of events can cause you to feel some temporary happiness, though they may not be the key to

long-term happiness. Despite popular belief, wealth, a blissful relationship or achieving your weight-loss goal does not necessarily lead to life-long happiness. As an alternative to achieving happiness through external factors, it may be more helpful to look within yourself.

Continued

In fact, inside each of us is our own unique happiness baseline; that is, the place where we typically end up, whether it be after tragedy or triumph. Although there are people who are born with a happier disposition, and some who have childhoods that make happiness easier to attain, happiness can also be a choice. Thankfully, you have the ability to be more than just your genes and environment.

When you begin to choose a more optimistic outlook, science shows that you change or 'rewire' your brain and increase your happiness levels. Research demonstrates that as little as 2 minutes of a positive habit or practice moves your natural happiness level higher, causing you to feel more satisfied. What this means is that you can benefit from working at being happy, just like you can benefit from working at being healthy.

Here are some happiness habits you can try. All but one require 2 minutes or less of your time.

1. Write down three new things you are grateful for each day into a journal. You can help your brain build awareness that every moment is truly a gift.
2. Write down the best part of your day – one positive experience you had. Specifically detail the event. Journaling allows your brain to relive it and doubles the positive impact.
3. Exercise for 10-15 minutes a day. It teaches your brain that your behavior matters and releases your "feel good" emotions or endorphins.

4. Meditate for 2 minutes, focusing on watching your breath going in and out. Stillness and silence are necessary to allow your brain to stop multi-tasking and focus solely on the task at hand.
5. Perform a "random act of kindness" or write a quick note or email thanking or complimenting someone. These are conscious acts of kindness. They have the benefit of making you feel more connected to others and building your social support network – which is the most significant factor influencing your happiness levels.

Consider striving for your happier self by doing just one of these habits daily for 21 consecutive days. You and those around you will see and feel the benefits and, more importantly, that happiness will spread because it's contagious! More to come in Part 2 of this segment – *The Happy Secret to Better Work*.

For more information on how to live a happier life, simply reach out to your Aurora EAP counselors at 800-236-3231. You'll be happy you did.



Homework Session 3 – Stress Management Coaching

Please complete the following homework after Session 3:

- ***My Change for Good Plan***

Please fax homework within two weeks of final appointment.

Use this sheet as your fax cover sheet. PRINT your name below. Fax your completed forms to:

FAX

4067 N. 92nd Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53222

Tel: (414) 760-5400

Fax: (414) 760-5418

www.aurorahealthcare.org/eap

To: Aurora EAP Coaching
414-760-5418

Your Name: _____

Your Fax Number: _____

Number of Pages: _____

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My Change for Good Plan

_____ Last Name, First Name

	<i>What positive changes have I made?</i>	<i>How do these changes benefit me?</i>	<i>What will get me off track?</i>	<i>What will I do to get back on track?</i>
Family and/or Social Relationships				
Job				
Physical/Health				
Emotional Aspects				

My Support System is: 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____