


Trainer's Guide

Slide 1



**Enhancing Stress Hardiness
During Covid-19**

Presentation by:
MHN Training & Development

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Introduce yourself and your relationship to MHN.

Welcome participants to the workshop.

Discuss housekeeping issues (restroom locations, break times, etc.)

Introduce the program: *Enhancing Stress Hardiness During COVID-19*. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the importance of cultivating stress hardiness during the pandemic, and how to develop the skills needed to create a mindset and lifestyle that minimizes the impact of the multitude of pandemic-related stressors in their lives.

Life is stressful. It has become even more stressful when dealing with all of the different and changing aspects of living during the COVID-19 pandemic. People may be facing financial strains, employment worries, relationship difficulties, and parenting challenges -- all which can lead us to feel overwhelmed and stressed out.

But what exactly makes the difference between those who get pushed over the edge by stress and those who, when faced with stressors, actually thrive and develop? In over 30-plus years of research, psychologists have discovered that hardiness coping strategies, attitudes, and beliefs make the difference.

Stress Hardiness is characterized by resilience and the ability to cope effectively with stress. During these challenging times of the pandemic, we need to further develop the skills and create the attitudes that enhance stress hardiness to help us persevere and remain healthy and resilient.

Adapted from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/compassion-matters/201208/are-you-hardy-enough>

Note to Trainers about the *Stress Hardiness* Trainer’s Guide:

- This presentation has multiple handouts for participants that trainers can choose to use in the workshop. These handouts should be given to the participants at the beginning of the workshop.

The handouts are found in the Participant Handbook. If an exercise, self-assessment, or activity is not used during the workshop, then instruct the participants to complete the handouts at a later date, to be used for their own information. All activities in the “Handouts” are self-explanatory.

- For the one-hour format, you may wish to only refer to handouts and instruct participants to complete the quizzes/questionnaires or read information on their own time. Due to time constraints and amount of material to be covered, the one-hour format will be more didactic in format, and highlights of the different slides/topics should be introduced and discussed. The workshop topics that are emphasized or discussed in greater depth are at the discretion of the trainer.
- If a longer session length is being delivered, then the trainer may choose to incorporate more interactive activities into the training.
- Some of the slides in this workshop have extensive trainer notes. These notes are to provide you with information about Stress Hardiness, or may be examples you may want to use in your presentation.

The main points of the workshop are presented on the slides. The trainer notes sections for each slide are to provide you with: a) more in-depth information in anticipation of participant questions; b) more information for discussion points on the slides; or, c) more information directly for the trainer as an “FYI”.

Trainer notes are not a script for the session.

Slide 2

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Learning Objectives

- Describe the different pandemic-related factors impacting stress levels
- Understand the nature of stress and the body's typical responses to ongoing stressors
- Discuss different short- and long-term strategies that can buffer the negative effects of sustained stress
- Present the different aspects of developing and maintaining stress hardiness and resilience

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2

Review the learning objectives on the slide.

Slide 3

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Life in the Times of the Pandemic

- What have been your major issues, challenges or concerns?
- How have these issues or concerns evolved or changed?
- How have these issues complicated each other?

*"We have experienced 5 years' worth of change over the last several **months**."*

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Note to Trainer: Facilitate a group discussion with the questions from the slide.

What have been your major issues, challenges or concerns?

Some possible responses could include:

- Shopping for necessities can create apprehension and concern
- Providing schooling to their children while trying to work overloads parents
- An inability to go out to restaurants or other social gathering places is isolating
- Visits with select friends or family may contribute to concern about illness or contagion
- Finding needed food and supplies sometimes can be challenging
- Obtaining medical or dental care can possibly cause exposure to unwanted illness
- Engaging in simple activities have become more complex and/or fraught with trepidation and ambiguity
- Going on-site to work may expose me to more germs and possible illness
- Friends and/or family members have struggled with illness or loss due to the COVID-19
- A partner/spouse/family member has been furloughed or lost a job, creating financial worries or struggles
- The added stress and isolation that some are experiencing due to be labeled as “high risk” which is being used for many decision-making purposes (i.e., who can return to work in earlier waves in phased return approaches, etc.)
- Long-lasting symptom issues for those who have been previously diagnosed that are lingering / not going away (“long haulers”)
- Increased pressure / stress on relationships (there are also increased risks / patterns of domestic violence and child abuse)
- *What else?*

How have these issues or concerns evolved or changed?


Ask participants to briefly share some experiences.

How have these issues complicated each other?

On-going challenges and ambiguity all contribute to an increase in stress levels. Some of these issues may build upon one another, where an issue in one area of life contributes to concerns in another area.

We have all been through unprecedented changes, unlike anything ever encountered in our lifetimes – all within a very short time-span of a few months.

“We have experienced 5 years’ worth of change over the last several months.”



Chronic Stress During the Pandemic

- What is “stress”?

Stress is the body's innate and natural reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses.

 - A normal part of life
 - Experienced from the environment, your body, and/or your thoughts
 - Positive stress (Eustress)
 - Stress keeps us alert, motivated, and ready to avoid danger
 - Negative stress (Distress)
 - Continuous stress without relief negatively impacts physical, emotional and mental responses
- Chronic stress
 - Unhealthy and can contribute to physical and mental health issues

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Stress is a normal reaction the body has when changes occur. It can respond to these changes physically, mentally, or emotionally.

What is stress?

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. Stress is a normal part of life. You can experience stress from your environment, your body, and your thoughts. Even positive life changes such as a promotion, a mortgage, or the birth of a child produce stress.

Types of stress:

Positive Stress (called Eustress) has a different impact on the body and is generally characterized by:

- A focus of energy or an increase in motivation
- Time length is typically short-term
- Seen as within our coping abilities / skills
- Can feel exciting
- May improve our performance

Negative Stress (called Distress) is what we usually think of when we hear the term stress and is generally characterized by:

- Feelings of anxiety / concern
- Time length can be either short- or long-term
- Seen as outside our coping abilities / skills
- Can feel unpleasant
- May decrease our performance
- Over time can lead to mental and physical health issues

How does stress affect health?

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated, and ready to avoid danger. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between stressors. As a result, the person becomes overworked, and stress-related tension builds. The body's autonomic nervous system has a built-in stress response that causes physiological changes to allow the body to combat stressful situations. This stress response, also known as the "fight, flight or freeze response", is activated in case of an emergency. However, this response can become chronically activated during prolonged periods of stress. Prolonged activation of the stress response causes wear and tear on the body – both physical and emotional.

Stress that continues without relief can lead to a negative stress reaction. Distress can disturb the body's internal balance or equilibrium, leading to physical symptoms such as headaches, an upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, sexual dysfunction, and problems sleeping. Emotional problems can also result from distress. These problems include depression, panic attacks, or other forms of anxiety and worry. Research suggests that stress also can bring on or worsen certain symptoms or diseases. Stress is linked to 6 of the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide.

Source: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/11874-stress>

Slide 5

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What are Some Pandemic-Related Changes, Issues and Stressors?

- Health concerns
 - Self
 - Family & Friends
- Daily protocols
 - Health and safety procedures
 - Others' compliance to Covid-19 precautions
- Family
 - Kids and their schooling
 - Immediate family
 - Extended family
- Work
 - Remote work
 - On-site work
- Social and cultural issues
 - Changes in regular activities
 - Changes in special events or activities
 - Politics
- Economic
 - Family stability and security
 - Local, state and national

What else?

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We're living in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a variety of health-related, financial and emotional hardships to individuals across the country. For many people, this has resulted in a significant increase in stress and anxiety. When not managed properly, this stress can prove to be crippling in a time when life is already very challenging.

Note to Trainer: Continue group discussion about the changes and issues experienced across all the various domains as shown on the slide and ask participants to add to the list with their own experiences / knowledge.

We're living in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a variety of health-related, financial and emotional hardships to individuals across the country. For many people, this has resulted in a significant increase in stress and anxiety. When not managed properly, this stress can prove to be crippling in a time when life is already very challenging.

As seen on the slide, these changes and issues have occurred across a broad range of categories, including:

- Health Concerns
Health concerns have multiplied as there continues to be changes as to who is at risk, the various risk factors being added or changed, etc. and this has led to not only personal concerns, but also expanded concerns to include our families, friends and others.
- Daily Protocols

The increased protocols that we have all been asked to follow, including social distancing, changing work locations due to the closing of many businesses, schools, etc. can add to the stress level by increasing our feelings of loneliness and isolation.

It can also just increase the amount of time we need to complete what used to be routine tasks such as running errands, getting groceries, etc.

There are also greater concerns and big differences in how individuals are choosing to comply or not comply with recommendations (i.e., mask wearing or social distancing) which can increase the stress factor for many.

- Family

Even in the area of family there have been many disruptions including the amount of time families may now be spending together, which can put stress on healthy relationships and be a trigger for relationships that may have already been strained.

Everyone, especially parents, have found that they are taking on new roles or being expected to take on a more active role in areas such as their child's schoolwork and education.

Families may not be able to count on extended family members as much as they were once able to due to health concerns (i.e., grandparents may have been great supports as babysitters in the past but now are not able to fill that role anymore).

- Work

Work has become more complicated for pretty much everyone. People that used to work onsite may now be struggling with trying to find a balance between home life and work life when the two exist in the same location.

Front-line / essential workers have been confronted with the reality of maintaining an income while potentially putting their health and other's health at risk.

Many businesses have had to reduce hours, furlough or lay-off workers and/or close which has led to some being temporarily out of work or even currently unemployed.

Attempting to find work in a pandemic with unprecedented levels of unemployment adds a whole other layer of stress for those in that situation.

- Social and Cultural Issues

Everything from holidays to date nights to outings with friends and families have been disrupted with no clear line of sight as to when things might change.

Events we have come to enjoy have been routinely cancelled and virtual "substitutions" are not always fulfilling our social needs and/or can contribute to

increased fatigue due to increased amounts of “screen time” occurring over in-person connections.

- Economic
Economic instability on personal, state, national and even world levels are an increasing source of stress for many.
- What else???
Are there other areas of changes and issues that you can identify or relate to that others have mentioned?

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Why are Changes due to the Pandemic so Stressful?

- Changes are occurring across many different life areas simultaneously
 - Changes may be happening very rapidly and/or unpredictably
 - Changes are on-going and feel unrelenting
 - Changes can be overlapping, compounding or multiplicative
 - Changes are ambiguous
- Adjusting to change, in and of itself, creates stress
- Changes may require you to:
 - Readjust your behavior
 - Rethink your thinking
 - Redefine your feelings
 - Reevaluate values & goals

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Changes are occurring across many different life areas simultaneously

- Changes may be happening very rapidly and/or unpredictably
- Changes are on-going and feel unrelenting
- Changes can be overlapping, compounding or multiplicative
- Changes are ambiguous

Adjusting to change, in and of itself, creates stress.

Changes are stressful because they may require you to:

Readjust Your Behavior. Humans are, for the most part, creatures of habit. We will continue to do things the same way, whether or not we “like” it, because it is familiar. Relinquishing old methods of doing things can sometimes be difficult and can make us feel unsettled, until new actions and ways of doing things become more “normal” or like a habit.

Change is challenging because in order to effectively deal with and manage change in your life, you may need to choose new actions. Also, this process of adjusting your behavior to change may also require you to review your progress along the way. You may need to determine if the new behaviors you are using are adequately helping you to deal with the change in your life.

Rethink Your Thinking. When a change in your life occurs, you may find yourself trying to be a “quick study” about the change itself, as well as trying to determine the impact that the change may have on your life. It is a good idea to try to learn everything you can about the change. The more you know about it, the better you’ll be able to deal with it. By understanding the change, then you may begin to see opportunities too and create plans for action.

However, change is challenging since it involves having to think differently about things. And, sometimes because we are human, we don't want to think differently about our lives. It is easier and less complicated to continue with our old ways of thinking about things. For example, when an unexpected disease hits a member of the family, the patient had to rethink how chores and errands would get done in the house since she was the primary caretaker. All sorts of planning and thinking differently about how the household was run, and then organizing had to be done to adjust to this new situation.

Redefine Your Feelings. People often say: 'I don't know why it's affected me so much', and criticize themselves for crying, laughing, or feeling moody. All these, and every other emotion, are normal in the face of change – any change. In fact, it's more normal to expect to have some type of emotional reaction when a large-scale change occurs in your life!

Additionally, it's a good idea to allow feelings of *grief*. *Change means loss*. When something in your life changes you lose the old way of being or the old set of circumstances. And, loss means grief and nostalgia. Part of that grief may be the desire for life and events to “go back” to a previous way of being or living.


Reevaluate Your Values or Goals. Sometimes change requires us to reevaluate our values and/or goals, or to determine if our behaviors *match* what we say we want in our lives. This process of sorting through what we do, how we do it, and whether or not our actions and values jibe can be a very challenging process.

For example, a person may say that they value time with his or her family, but spends long hours at the office. Illness may strike, and then the person may realize that they were not living their professed values, in that too much time was being spent in the office. So, with the unplanned change (illness), the person must reevaluate what s/he wants to do: Either continue working long hours each day, thus seeing the family less (and perhaps exacerbating the health concerns, while at the same time making good money); or, create new solutions so that less time is spent at work and more time home with the family (but may make less money or feel there is less opportunity at work, yet protecting their own health). The ultimate decision will feel less stressful to the individual if there is a good match between their stated values or goals and the actions that they choose to deal with the changing situation.

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The Body: Continual and Prolonged Stress

- The “fight, flight or freeze” reaction
 - Evolutionary protective response
 - Can be adaptive and beneficial
 - Long-term stress impacts body functioning
- Under stress, your body will have:
 - Increased pupil dilation
 - Perspiration
 - Increased heart rate and blood pressure
 - Rapid breathing
 - Muscle tenseness
 - Increased mental alertness/focus
 - Decreased/stopped digestion



Predictable and negative impacts may occur when dealing with extreme and/or unrelenting amounts of stress

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What happens to the body when a stress response occurs? When a person perceives an event or situation as “dangerous”, this creates a corresponding physiological reaction called an “Alarm Reaction”. This is because the body is made ready (by biological design) to act in response to the event. During the Alarm Reaction phase of stress, the body is made ready for physical activity due to a large amount of hormones (such as adrenalin) excreted into the body to make it more efficient for “fight, flight or freeze”. Our mind and bodies prepare for threats depending on the situation. For example, if you are driving and notice another car approaching an intersection and it is not slowing down, you can respond with a “fight” response by attempting to get their attention by honking your horn; a “flight” responses by speeding up to safely remove your vehicle from their path; or a “freeze” response by slamming your brakes and stopping your vehicle.

As mentioned previously, this is the work of the sympathetic nervous system which helps us to prepare our physical and mental response to perceived danger.

The physical changes that can occur during this phase are:

- Increased pupil dilation
- Perspiration
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Muscle tenseness or tingling
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- *Increased mental alertness/focus*
- Decreased/stopped digestion

Occasional Alarm Reactions are normal and have minimal or no negative impact on the body. Examples of this include: Moving quickly because you are late for work; the reaction that you have physically and mentally to avoid a car accident; or the feelings of

increased heart rate and blood pressure when you are having a heated argument with someone. All of these types of reactions are normal in response to **temporary events**, and your body returns back to a normal state after the stress of the events have passed.

However, during the last few months of the pandemic, many individuals find themselves remaining in an alarm reaction phase of stress, with stress hyperarousal for prolonged time periods. What is the possible long term the impact of this? Exhaustion, fatigue, and perceived burn-out, as well as possible susceptibility to diseases, such as colds and viruses.

When we consider what is occurring with your body during a stress reaction, can you see why prolonged and/or severe stress reactions can contribute to physical problems? This is especially true when people are not engaging in healthy practices that help to counteract the negative impact of prolonged hyperarousal.

For example: Prolonged heart rate elevation and blood pressure elevation can contribute to circulatory system damage. Or, prolonged or severe digestion disruption can contribute to ulcers, acid reflux, or other GI disorders.

It is important to realize that stress is an *individualized* phenomenon. Circumstances and pressures that you may be able to handle with ease may be stressful and anxiety-provoking to a co-worker or friend. Some people thrive on large doses of stress. Others can tolerate only minute amounts. We each have a comfort zone: the amount of stress sufficient to energize us to perform at peak, but not enough to erode the spirit and wear down the body.

Since we can never escape stress, it is necessary to our survival to learn how to live with it and how to mitigate the effects of stress by using healthy coping mechanisms (to be discussed later in this presentation).

Different levels of stress are normal for different people, and different stressors may create more or less distress depending on what is happening in our lives at the time. It is important to learn what level of stress and what types of stressors are the most difficult for you. Also, we need to be mindful and sensitive to the individual differences in stress tolerance in other people.

Stress and the Pandemic:

Many people have reported that they are feeling very fatigued or tired as a result of issue they are dealing with due to the pandemic. (Trainer note: You can ask for a quick poll with the participants to find out how many have felt this way). This is because the parasympathetic nervous system becomes responsible for bringing the body back to a non-stressed “steady state”, takes over. Since the body was in Alarm Reaction mode (hyperarousal) either for a prolonged or for intensive times during days or weeks (or months), the parasympathetic response mandates that the person slows down precipitously in order to counteract and repair from the prior stress state.

How many of you can relate to the following behaviors that you may have experienced during the pandemic:

Fight Responses:


- Increased feelings of irritability
- Being more likely or feeling ready to argue with family members or even people in public more than was previously typical for you
- Hoarding items perceived to be needed such as cleaning items, disinfectants or toilet paper and other personal items
- Being more competitive or aggressive when shopping for items or being critical or demanding of store personnel if the items are low, restricted quantity or out of stock
- Running through scenarios in your mind where you feel like you might need to fight or become aggressive in order to survive

Flight Responses:

- Isolating more even when it is not required, such as not doing activities that have generally been deemed safe by credible public health officials and/or your doctor i.e., going for walks outside
- Reluctance or even refusal to return to activities when restrictions have been lifted (assuming of course it has been deemed safe to do so or the risk can be effectively mitigated)
- Being more passive in your communication or trying to “people please” to avoid anticipated conflicts

Freeze Responses:

- Increased “numbing out” behaviors such as substance use
- Spending more time on social media
- Excessive TV watching or time spent online where you are not really involved in the activity but more just filling time or “zoning out”
- Gambling activities, disordered eating (eating too much / too little or in problematic patterns)



Predictable Responses to Sustained Stress due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

- **Emotional and/or mental responses**
 - Checking out emotionally and/or mentally
 - Increased emotionality in reactions
 - Displaced anger/frustration; Irritability
 - Teary or crying unexpectedly
 - Increased sense of grief and loss
 - Forgetfulness or preoccupation
 - Reactive responses to events
 - Anxiety, hyperarousal and/or hypervigilance
 - Increased cynicism and negative world view

These are all normal reactions to uncertainty, stress and change.


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The effects of stress are experienced physically, mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally. These effects or symptoms are signals our bodies are giving us that we are running out of coping resources and something needs to be done. Eventually, the effects of stress become stressors in and of themselves.

Emotional. The effects of stress can affect us emotionally by making us engage in negative mood states, such as edginess, hostility, impatience, depression, anger, frustration or boredom. It becomes difficult to function, we get lethargic, apathetic, and feel defeated. We may feel alienated and paranoid. Stress can create hypersensitivity to situations causing a more extreme emotional reaction, such as a quick to anger response, or overreaction to simple frustrations.

Mental. The changes that take place in the brain as a result of the stress response interfere with higher functioning ability, i.e., the ability to think, to reason, to evaluate, to make choices.

We can experience the effects of stress mentally as the inability to concentrate, or the difficulty in making decisions. For example, memory is affected by the stress response because stress interferes with the biochemicals that are responsible for transferring information into short-term memory and then into long-term memory. Thus, we feel we have more memory lapses or forgetfulness during times of stress. This is the reason we forget why we went from one room to another or why we forgot who we're calling by the time we finish dialing the number. Sometimes, severe stress can be associated with confusion, feeling disoriented or even panic attacks.



Predictable Responses to Sustained Stress due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

- **Physical responses**
 - Fatigue and/or exhaustion
 - Sleep issues (i.e. sleep disruption, insomnia)
 - Physical symptoms (i.e. headaches, gastrointestinal issues)
 - Changes in eating patterns
 - Feeling “out of sorts”
- **Behavioral**
 - Neglect of finances or excessive spending
 - Excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs
 - Dramatic changes in behavior and/or responses
 - Lack of motivation
 - Disinterest in normal activities, dealing with friends or family
 - Neglecting hobbies or leisure activities

These are all normal reactions to uncertainty, stress and change.

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Physical. Stress is experienced by the body not only in stress-related illness as a result of a prolonged stress response, but also as physical symptoms that indicate we are not using adequate coping mechanisms. Some physical changes that may occur with prolonged or incessant stress: Sleep pattern changes, fatigue, digestion changes, loss of sexual drive, headaches, aches and pains, infections, indigestion, dizziness, fainting, sweating and trembling, tingling hands and feet, breathlessness, palpitations, missed heartbeats.

Behavioral. We may see changes in our normal patterns of behavior in response to stress. Some of these may include:

- Appetite changes (too much or too little)
- Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia)
- Increased consumption of alcohol (or other drugs)
- Excessive spending
- Dramatic changes in mood or behavior
- Restlessness and/or fidgeting
- Lack of interest in hobbies, family activities or socializing. You may find yourself “checking out” of life as the exhaustion response to the hyperarousal from dealing with daily, chronic issues related to the pandemic. You may feel physically, emotionally, and mentally immobilized by the exhaustion and fatigue.

Ask: “What are your indicators that stress may be getting the better of you?”

Activity: Have participants take a few moments to look over **Handout A** “*Is Your Stress Adding Up?*”. This checklist is easy to use and can be completed after the session is completed. Responses and scores may change depending on daily stressors.



Counteracting Chronic Stress Responses: Enhancing Stress Hardiness

- Short term strategies – Active relaxation
 - Active relaxation helps the body to return to a “steady state”
 - It decreases the physiological responses to sustained stress
 - Use during “breaks” intermittently throughout the day
 - ASAR (as soon as reasonable) and/or “real time” opportunities
 - Different types of strategies:
 - Deep breathing techniques
 - Muscle relaxation
- Long term strategies
 - Used to maintain a sense of life balance
 - Helps counteract the negative impact of prolonged stress
 - Different types of strategies:
 - Proactive behaviors
 - Healthy lifestyle habits
 - Focus on areas of control

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Healthy stress management behaviors serve to reduce the impact of stressors over the short- and long-term. These actions are proactive behaviors that enhance your functioning and well-being, as well as assisting in revitalizing you over time.

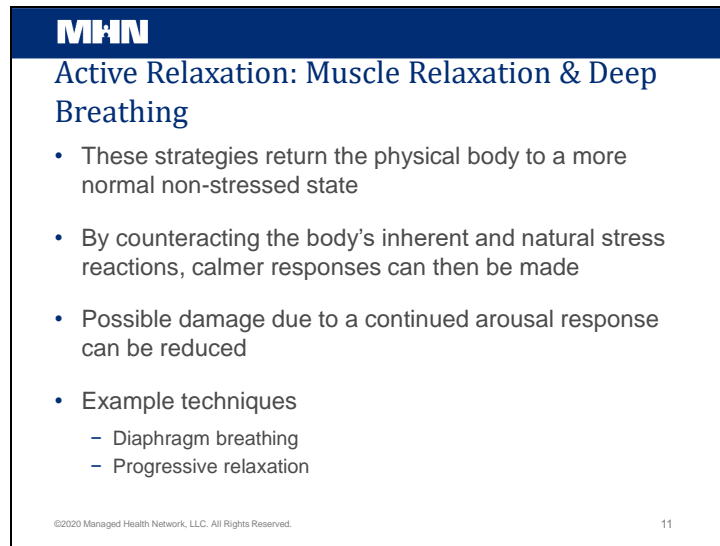
If your methods of coping with stress aren’t contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it’s time to find healthier ones. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction.

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no “one size fits all” solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

Managing stress in a healthy way is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun – plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on.

There are many different types of stress management strategies and techniques to choose from to deal with life’s stressors. Some techniques help you reduce the physical stress response “in the moment” (short term) and assist in calming you down and returning your body to a normal non-stressed state. Other strategies focus on long term stress management and are related to lifestyle and health habits that reduce not only the physical impact of stress, but also the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects.

The next few slides will present and discuss some of these strategies and techniques.



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Active Relaxation: Muscle Relaxation & Deep Breathing

- These strategies return the physical body to a more normal non-stressed state
- By counteracting the body's inherent and natural stress reactions, calmer responses can then be made
- Possible damage due to a continued arousal response can be reduced
- Example techniques
 - Diaphragm breathing
 - Progressive relaxation

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Physical relaxation techniques can help you reduce muscle tension and manage the effects of the fight-or-flight response on your body. This is particularly important if you need to think clearly and perform precisely when you are under pressure.

Deep Breathing. Deep breathing is a simple but very effective method of relaxation. It is a core component of everything from the "take ten deep breaths" approach to calming someone down, right through to yoga relaxation and meditation. It works well in conjunction with other relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscular Relaxation, relaxation imagery and meditation to reduce stress.


To use the technique, take a number of deep breaths and relax your body further with each breath. That's all there is to it!

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR). Progressive Muscular Relaxation is useful for relaxing your body when your muscles are tense.

The idea behind PMR is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as possible. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then, relax the muscles to their previous state. Finally, consciously relax the muscles even further so that you are as relaxed as possible. By tensing your muscles first, you will probably find that you are able to relax your muscles more than would be the case if you tried to relax your muscles directly.

For maximum relaxation you can use PMR in conjunction with breathing techniques.

See **Handout B “Relaxation Techniques”**, for in-depth descriptions on how to perform the different relaxation activities. **Trainer Note:** Lead the group through a simple breathing exercise to demonstrate the benefits of the process.



Proactive Behaviors to Enhance Stress Hardiness

- Be compassionate with yourself and others
- Maintain effective work-life balance
 - Identify your core values
 - Ensure that your actions align with your core values
 - Practice good personal time management
 - Schedule important family activities, exercise, hobbies and self-care
- Be proactive and assertive about expressing your needs
- Get organized (and stay that way...)
- Vent in emotionally healthy ways
- Use humor appropriately

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Be compassionate with yourself and others

- Acknowledge that we are all going through an unprecedented time of stress and anxiety. Give yourself permission to feel what you need to feel and give others the benefit of the doubt when they are reacting in ways that may seem “over the top” for a situation.
- Listen to your self-talk and ask yourself if that is how you would speak to a loved one? If you are beating yourself up (verbally or with your internal self-talk) because of something, is that the best way to handle it? Try speaking to yourself the same way you would a loved one.
- When other people seem to be overreacting, imagine that they just found out that a loved one was sick or dying. The lesson here is you do not know the person’s circumstances and they could be reacting to stress from a situation that they just discovered and not really thinking about how they are coming across. It doesn’t generally hurt to give others the benefit of the doubt (unless it is an ongoing problematic pattern) and can help you be more resilient in how you deal with stress from interactions with others.

Maintain effective work-life balance

- When you identify your core values in your life, this can help you determine where to place your time and energy. “Satisfying career” can be a core value, so can “Happy family life”.
- Commit your time and energy to those core values. Talk and work with the important others in your life to get feedback on if you are managing the balance between home life and work life. Have discussions on what balance looks like, as well as be open to things that you may need to do (differently) to enhance that balance.

- Practice good personal time management. Schedule important family activities and schedule time for exercise, hobbies and self-care.
- Ensure that your actions align with your core values. When your expressed values are not aligned with your daily actions, you will feel more stressed. For example, if you say that you value “family time” but schedule excessive overtime and take on extra shifts at work, then your actions (over work) do not align with your values (spending time with your family).

Be assertive with your needs and wants (not aggressive or passive)

- Learn (and use) good communication skills (with positive “I” statements)
- Ask for what you need
- Create win-win situations with your requests

Get organized

- Reduce clutter and mess in your personal and job spaces
- Use devices such as schedules, calendars, appointment books or PDA’s to keep on top of appointments. (Make sure to include your leisure time activities....scheduling in “down time” helps reduce stress!)
- Make daily to-do lists!
- Allow sufficient time to get to appointments.
- Refrain from becoming overscheduled.

Vent emotionally (safely and appropriately)

- Find a safe place or person(s) to blow off steam.
- Keep venting to the topic of stress.
- Allow yourself a set time to “gripe” or vent about the event or issue (say 10 or 15 minutes).
- Let the stressor go and get on with your life.

Use humor

- Try to find humor in the stressful event or issue.
- Use humor as a “pressure valve” if the stressor is creating frustration or anxiety.
- Use humor to keep perspective on the stressful situation.



Healthy Lifestyle Habits

- Enhance your healthy diet
- Stop smoking
- Reduce alcohol consumption
- Increase your level of exercise
- Protect your sleep
- Pursue healthy leisure activities
- Engage in active relaxation
- Reduce exposure to news and/or social media
- *What else?*

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Keeping yourself physically healthy can do a great deal to ward off the negative effects of stress. Your body’s response to stressors will be less extreme and you will have a more efficient ability to “heal” during those times when stress may take a toll.

Healthy diet. Eat nutritious meals, keep sodium and fat content low (or reasonable) to prevent stress on the heart and circulatory system.

Stop smoking. Smoking pollutes the body with over 400 chemicals with each puff taken and adds carcinogens to your lungs. Polluting your lungs adds physical stress to your body and reduces cardio-pulmonary functioning.

Reduce or eliminate alcohol consumption. There are many mixed messages and differing opinions on the amount and frequency of alcohol use with current recommendations suggesting no more than one drink per day. Recommendations often vary depending on sex, age and other potential risk factors. It is important to know your personal risk factors for alcohol use and work with your doctor or other health professional if you believe (or others have told you) that your substance use is impacting your life negatively.

Exercise. Aerobic and strength training exercises increase the efficiency of your body’s metabolism and helps to ward off the effects of stress. Additionally, your body may become more efficient in self-healing. Moreover, exercise is a great way to restore your body’s physical reactions to stress, in that activity helps to discharge stress-related energy in a productive way.

Sleep. The average adult needs 8 hours of sleep per night. If you rob yourself of an hour or two of sleep each night, you build up a significant “sleep debt” that puts physical stress

on your body. Depriving yourself of sleep regularly decreases your body's effectiveness and efficiency and does not provide enough time for your body to rest, restore, and rebuild.

Pursue leisure activities. Find an activity that helps you mentally and/or physically remove yourself from stressors. Gardening, fishing, reading, or jogging are all good ways to create time for yourself and de-stress.

Engage in active relaxation. Active relaxation requires that you engage in activities in which you mentally focus on reducing the physical symptoms of stress. By changing the physical manifestations of stress (such as slowing down your breathing) you correspondingly feel mentally or emotionally less stressed. Visual imagery, deep breathing, and toe tensing are all techniques used to de-stress.

As you can see, many of the things on this list are self-nurturing. By taking care of yourself you will be stronger, more stress resilient and better able to respond to things that come your way.



Perceived Stress and Locus of Control

- Focus your thoughts, energy and actions on situations and events that you can control
- Reduce your focus, thoughts, energy and actions on situations and events that you cannot control
- What happens when you focus too much on events and situations that you cannot control?
 - Risk of becoming a victim to external situations, people and factors
 - Feelings of cynicism, helplessness and resentment may prevail
 - Perceived grief and loss can become overwhelming
 - *What else?*

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Excessive worrying over events in which you have no control will only serve to increase your individual perceived stress. It is important to consider and create a plan of action for those issues in your life over which you can have some control. While acknowledging that these some events out of your control can create personal challenges, you can remain on course and keep your life less stressed.

What is a sign that you may be focusing too much energy and attention to the external factors in your work or life? You may find yourself caught in thinking traps, such as:

- I often feel that I have little control over my life and what happens to me.
- People rarely get what they deserve.
- It isn't worth setting goals or making plans because too many things can happen that are outside of my control.
- Life is a game of chance.
- Individuals have little influence over the events of the world.

What happens when you focus too much on events and situations that you cannot control?

There is a risk of becoming a victim to external situations, people and factors, and may you feel that you cannot change the situation through your own efforts. People with the external locus of control frequently feel hopeless and powerless in the face of difficult situations as they feel that the outcomes are dependent upon luck, fate, or determined by people in authority.

Correspondingly, feelings of cynicism, helplessness and resentment may prevail as a result of the sense of being powerless and hopeless. Many people fall into the “why bother?” mindset. *What else?*



Perceived Stress and Control

- Factors beyond our control:
 - Local, state and national economic issues
 - Media/publicity on the pandemic
 - Organizational issues
 - Management actions
 - Work assignments
 - Other external events
 - *What else?*
- Factors within our control:
 - Your self (personal habits, health, etc.)
 - Your core values and time/attention to them
 - Your responses in relationships and to life events
 - Your financial planning and spending habits
 - Your role as a professional
 - *What else?*

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Some sources of stress are unavoidable. Many sources of stress are simply out of our control. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

Like most of our everyday stress, this extra tension due to events and changes outside of our control can be effectively managed. Psychologists first recommend taking pause and not panicking. There are also healthy strategies available for managing stress during challenging events or difficult times. First is to determine which factors of the current situation are out of our control and which factors are directly within our control

Many factors that are out of your control are newsworthy *and important to monitor*. For example, the stock market or fluctuating housing values may be having a direct impact on your financial well-being. Being aware of upper management processes and decisions may have an impact on your career success. However, excessive worrying on your part will not impact those situations nor change the outcome of those events.

To Reiterate: Excessive worrying over events in which you have no control will only serve to increase your individual perceived stress.

It is important to consider and create a plan of action for those issues in your life over which you can have some control. (i.e., your relationships, your health, your professional attitude and choices) While acknowledging that these some events out of your control can create personal challenges, you can remain on course and keep your life less stressed.



Focusing on Factors within Your Control

- Revisit your core values
 - Make sure your time, attention and actions are aligned with what is important in your life
- Be aware of thinking patterns and self-talk that may contribute to a sense of helplessness
 - Realize that you always have a choice
 - Review your options and chose what is best for you
 - Redirect your thoughts and self-talk to be more positive and to focus on what you CAN control
 - Remind yourself of your strengths
- Focus on the resources that you do have to meet the challenges
 - Search to obtain resources, as needed

What else?

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What are some actions that you can take to *regain* a sense of control?

Revisit your core values that you have identified.

Make sure your time and attention (and actions) are aligned with what is important in your life. Focus on those areas in your life in which you can engage in positive actions, which will help you regain your sense of control.

Be aware of thinking patterns and self-talk that may contribute to a sense of helplessness and/or victimization

- Realize that you always have a choice. Even in the most challenging of situations, you have a choice. You can choose your action and you can choose your emotional/mental reaction to the situation.
- Review your options and chose what is best for you.
- Redirect your thoughts and self-talk to be more positive and to focus on what you CAN control.
- Some research has found that practicing gratitude or using gratitude journals helps with focusing on areas of life control.


Focus on the resources that you do have to meet the challenges.

- What has worked for you in the past to overcome challenges? Remind yourself of times when you have faced stress or adversity and overcome it. If needed, write these down and keep them to remind you of your abilities when stress becomes overwhelming.
- Get creative with your resources. Is there another family or friend who is like minded in terms of how they are managing the pandemic (i.e., maintaining social distance, limiting interactions with others, etc.) and you can “trade” resources. Maybe you can each take turns doing things to help each other. Is one of you good

at math and can help tutor the kids once a week? Is one of you exceptional at making casseroles and can make an extra one for the other to freeze to help with meal prep? Get creative and determine what resources you can repurpose for the current situation.

- Never stop developing new tools and resources throughout your life. Search for things that sound interesting to you and fit within your personality / life and practice using them during non-stressful times so that they can become like second nature when you really need them.

What else?



Increase Your Personal Resilience and Stress Hardiness

- Enhance your Resiliency Attitudes
 - Control what you can, let go of what you can't
 - Change as a positive challenge
 - Commitment to core values
- Enhance your Resiliency Skills
 - Transformational coping by turning "negative" events into opportunities to grow and learn
 - Social support networking (with appropriate precautions)
 - Continuous learning and improvement in both your professional and personal lives

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The American Psychological Association defines personal resilience as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and from sources of stress such as work pressures, health, family or relationship problems. **A resilient person is not only able to handle such experiences in the moment, but also to bounce back afterward.**

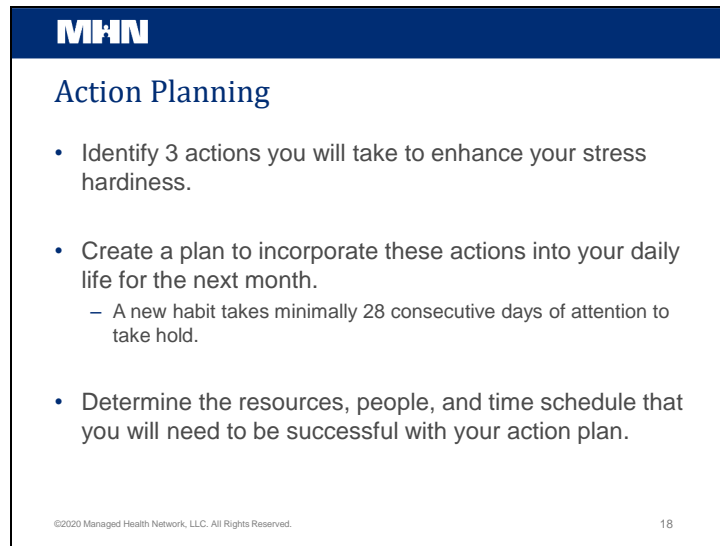
Resiliency Attitudes

- **Having a strong Commitment.** Individuals who have a strong commitment have a sense of purpose and meaning for why they are doing what they are doing. They are guided by a vision, an energy and a passion that gives meaning to their lives and lessens the impact of stress. Their values and goals have centrality in their lives.
- **Having a sense of Control.** The emphasis on this is “personal control”, where individuals tend to focus their energy on those events that they have control over rather than on situations beyond their control. People with a strong sense of personal control realize that they will feel more stressed when they attempt to alter uncontrollable circumstances. When individuals delineate a clear plan of reasonable action for situations that they can alter, their stress lessens. Any decisions made are also based with the individual’s values and goals in mind, so that actions are aligned with their life purpose.
- **Seeing Change as a Positive Challenge.** Positive challenge is based on the belief that change is a constant in one’s life. Stress hardy people tend to see change as challenges to confront and master rather than as stress to avoid. They appreciate that change is an opportunity for self-reflection and growth, as well as to use or enhance their unique talents and abilities.

Resiliency Skills

- **Transformational Coping.** Resilient individuals who engage in transformational coping are able to approach change as a meaningful challenge, rather than detaching and giving up. This provides a framework and approach to allow these individuals to map out sound problem-solving strategies. This positive approach to learning and growing with change also increases positive attitudes like commitment, control, and challenge, while decreasing those of isolation, powerlessness, and threat.
- **Social Support.** Stress hardy and resilient people understand that developing and using a good social support network can ameliorate the impact of life's stressors. When stressful situations develop, stress hardy people rely on others for assistance, and are similarly willing to provide help and support for others. Moreover, stress hardy individuals generally have or select stress hardy, resilient individuals to be in their support network. Thus the resilience of their supportive others helps to reinforce their own stress hardiness.
- **Continuous Learning and Improvement.** Important aspects of continuous learning to enhance personal resilience are:
 1. Having some basic values in your life or priorities in your work
 2. *Doing* something in the world, applying new information and skills
 3. Taking the time to inquire and reflect about life and experiences
 4. Getting up-to-date feedback, that is, understood and useful information about the self and relevant experiences
 5. Removing personal obstacles to accepting and understanding the feedback
 6. Having the courage and humility to change, when change is needed

Activity: Have participants complete the *Stress Hardiness* scale in **Appendix E**, if time permits.



The slide features a dark blue header with the MHN logo in white. Below the header, the title "Action Planning" is written in a blue serif font. The main content consists of three bullet points in a black sans-serif font. The first bullet point is "Identify 3 actions you will take to enhance your stress hardiness." The second bullet point is "Create a plan to incorporate these actions into your daily life for the next month." followed by a sub-bullet point: "– A new habit takes minimally 28 consecutive days of attention to take hold." The third bullet point is "Determine the resources, people, and time schedule that you will need to be successful with your action plan." At the bottom left of the slide, there is a small copyright notice: "©2020 Managed Health Network, LLC. All Rights Reserved." At the bottom right, the number "18" is displayed.

Managing stressors differently requires that we act differently than we have in the past. This means creating new habits and actions that will effectively assist in managing the challenging and potentially damaging effects of pandemic-related stressors.

Use **Handout F. Action Planning** to choose three new behaviors that will increase your stress hardiness. Remember: New habits take approximately 28 consecutive days to become a part of your daily routine. Also, keep your action planning small and simple. Smaller, doable actions are easier to implement and make a part of your routine.

For example: A new action may be “incorporate active relaxation in my day”.

Resources: Carve out time before and after work to do deep breathing exercises.

People: Let spouse know that I will be doing these breathing exercises before and after work (and ask not to be interrupted during that time)

Time schedule: Dedicate 5 minutes every morning before work and 5 minutes at the end of shift to do the breathing exercises.

Slide 19



The slide features a dark blue header with the MHN logo in white. Below the header, the word "Resources" is written in a dark blue font. The main content area is white and contains two bulleted sections: "Internet:" and "Reading:". The "Internet:" section lists three URLs: www.MHN.com, www.mayoclinic.com, and www.stress.about.com. The "Reading:" section lists two books: "The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook" by Davis, McKay, and Robbins Eshelman, and "Stress Management for Dummies" by Elkin. At the bottom of the slide, there is a small copyright notice and the number 19.

MHN

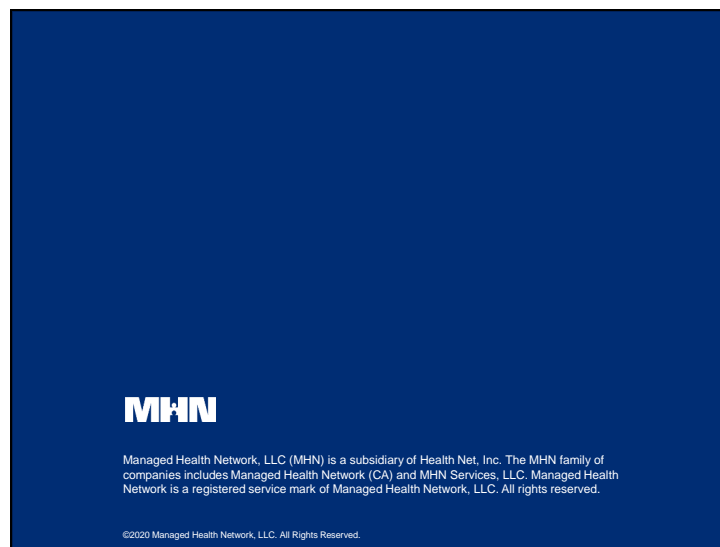
Resources

- Internet:
 - www.MHN.com
 - www.mayoclinic.com
 - www.stress.about.com
- Reading:
 - Davis, M., McKay, M., and Robbins Eshelman, R. *The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook*. New Harbinger Publications; 5th edition
 - Elkin, M. *Stress Management for Dummies*. For Dummies Publishers.

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Briefly review resources on the slide. Wrap up and close.

Slide 20



The slide is a solid dark blue rectangle. In the lower-left corner, the MHN logo is displayed in white. Below the logo, there is a block of small white text providing information about Managed Health Network, LLC (MHN) as a subsidiary of Health Net, Inc. At the bottom of the slide, there is a small copyright notice.

MHN

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Handout A. Is Your Stress Adding Up?

Emotional stress can affect you physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally and socially. Check the symptoms you've experienced lately.

PHYSICAL

- appetite changes
- headaches
- tension
- fatigue
- insomnia
- weight change
- colds
- muscle aches
- digestive upsets
- pounding heart
- accident prone
- teeth grinding
- rashes or skin problems
- restlessness
- foot-tapping
- finger-drumming
- increased alcohol, drug or tobacco use

MENTAL

- forgetful
- dull senses
- poor concentration
- low productivity
- negative attitude

EMOTIONAL

- anxiety
- frustration
- the "blues"
- mood swings
- bad temper

- nightmares
- crying spells
- irritability
- "no one cares"
- depression
- nervous laugh
- worrying
- easily discouraged
- little joy

SPIRITUAL

- emptiness
- loss of meaning
- doubt
- unforgiving
- martyrdom
- looking for magic
- loss of direction
- needing to "prove" self
- cynicism
- apathy

SOCIAL

- isolation
- intolerance
- loneliness
- lashing out
- hiding
- clamming up
- lowered sex drive
- nagging
- distrust
- fewer contacts with friends
- lack of intimacy
- confusion
- lethargy
- whirling mind
- no new ideas
- boredom
- spacing out
- negative self-talk
- using people

Source: *Well-being Magazine* Vol. 3, No.2

Handout B. Active Relaxation Techniques

Progressive Relaxation

This technique is often most useful when you tape the instructions beforehand. You can tape these instructions, reading them slowly and leaving a short pause after each one.

- Lie on your back, close your eyes.
- Feel your feet. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and sink into the bed. Start with your toes and progress to your ankles.
- Feel your knees. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel you upper legs and thighs. Feel their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your abdomen and chest. Sense your breathing. Consciously will them to relax. Deepen your breathing slightly and feel your abdomen and chest sink into the bed.
- Feel your buttocks. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your hands. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your upper arms. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your shoulders. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
- Feel your neck. Sense its weight. Consciously relax it and feel it sink into the bed.
- Feel your head and skull. Sense its weight. Consciously relax it and feel it sink into the bed.
- Feel your mouth and jaw. Consciously relax them. Pay particular attention to your jaw muscles and unclench them if you need to. Feel your mouth and jaw relax and sink into the bed.
- Feel your eyes. Sense if there is tension in your eyes. Sense if you are forcibly closing your eyelids. Consciously relax your eyelids and feel the tension slide off the eyes.
- Feel your face and cheeks. Consciously relax them and feel the tension slide off into the bed.
- Mentally scan your body. If you find any place that is still tense, then consciously relax that place and let it sink into the bed.

Toe Tensing

This one may seem like a bit of a contradiction to the previous one, but by alternately tensing and relaxing your toes, you actually draw tension from the rest of the body. Try it!

1. Lie on your back, close your eyes.
2. Sense your toes.
3. Now pull all 10 toes back toward your face. Count to 10 slowly.
4. Now relax your toes.
5. Count to 10 slowly.
6. Now repeat the above cycle 10 times.

Deep Breathing

By concentrating on our breathing, deep breathing allows the rest of our body to relax itself. Deep breathing is a great way to relax the body and get everything into synchrony. Relaxation breathing is an important part of yoga and martial arts for this reason.

1. Lie on your back.
2. Slowly relax your body. You can use the progressive relaxation technique we described above.
3. Begin to inhale slowly through your nose if possible. Fill the lower part of your chest first, then the middle and top part of your chest and lungs. Be sure to do this slowly, over 8–10 seconds.
4. Hold your breath for a second or two.
5. Then quietly and easily relax and let the air out.
6. Wait a few seconds and repeat this cycle.
7. If you find yourself getting dizzy, then you are overdoing it. Slow down.
8. You can also imagine yourself in a peaceful situation such as on a warm, gentle ocean. Imagine that you rise on the gentle swells of the water as you inhale and sink down into the waves as you exhale.
9. You can continue this breathing technique for as long as you like until you fall asleep.

Guided Imagery

In this technique, the goal is to visualize yourself in a peaceful setting.

1. Lie on your back with your eyes closed.
2. Imagine yourself in a favorite, peaceful place. The place may be on a sunny beach with the ocean breezes caressing you, swinging in a hammock in the mountains or in your own backyard. Any place that you find peaceful and relaxing is OK.
3. Imagine you are there. See and feel your surroundings, hear the peaceful sounds, smell the flowers or the barbecue, feel the warmth of the sun and any other sensations that you find. Relax and enjoy it.
4. You can return to this place any time you need to. As you use this place more and more you will find it easier to relax as this imagery becomes a de-stress conditioner.
5. Some patients find it useful to visualize something boring. This may be a particularly boring teacher or lecturer, co-worker or friend.

Quiet Ears

1. Lie on your back with your eyes closed.
2. Place your hands behind your head. Make sure they are relaxed.
3. Place your thumbs in your ears so that you close the ear canal.
4. You will hear a high-pitched rushing sound. This is normal.
5. Listen to this sound for 10–15 minutes.
6. Then put your arms at your sides, actively relax them and rest.

Handout C. Top 10 Stress Relievers

It's a fact of life: Everyone experiences stress. But when it goes unmanaged, daily stress can harm your health and reduce your quality of life. Fortunately, stress doesn't have to overcome or overwhelm you. Try these stress reducing suggestions.

By managing — and reducing — the stress in your life, you can improve your overall wellness.

1. **Make a list.** Write a to-do list, breaking down tasks into smaller steps. Prioritize the items and tackle them one at a time.
2. **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet. Avoid — or limit -- alcohol and caffeine.
3. **Set realistic goals.** Don't expect perfection from projects or people — including yourself.
4. **Mind your schedule.** Don't take on too many responsibilities or agree to attend too many social events. If you're overwhelmed, eliminate some obligations or share the work.
5. **Talk it out.** Call on the support and guidance of good friends and family.
6. **Exercise regularly.** Thirty minutes of physical activity a day can help fight stress.
7. **Set aside time every day for stress management.** Meditation, deep-breathing exercises, yoga and guided imagery are all good techniques to try.
8. **Have fun.** Spend time each day doing a hobby or other activity that you enjoy.
9. **Resolve conflicts.** Work toward repairing — or coming to terms with — any broken or difficult relationships.
10. **Visualize success.** Imagine how stressful situations might be resolved in a less stressful way.

Source: https://diet.mayoclinic.org/diet/motivate/stress-relieving-tips?xid=nl_nl_mayo_clinic_diet_2019-11-18_18642033&nl_key=nl_mayo_clinic_diet

Handout D. Handling Work Stress “in the Moment”

Perhaps you have heard a great deal about how to reduce stress at work. However, most of that advice is about what to do over the long term, such as get more sleep or exercise. But what do you do when you are overcome with stress in the moment – at your desk, say, or in a meeting? How can you regain control?

Here are some techniques to allow you to get a handle on your reaction to the stressful things that happen to you in the moment:

- **Identify your stress signals.** Train yourself to recognize your physiological signs of stress. Do your palms sweat, your neck stiffens or your pulse quicken? When you are able to recognize the signs of the onset of stress, you will then be able to begin addressing the underlying causes.
- **Don’t think of it as stress.** Many stressors at work relate to the desire to do well on important tasks or requests. When you strive for success, any related stress symptoms are telling you: “This matters.” Instead of interpreting the stress signals as “distress”, use that adrenaline pop to focus your energy, heighten your attention, and really apply yourself.
- **Use positive self-talk to calm down.** When you are stressed, the voice in your head is usually negative. It tells you, “I’m so angry” or “I’ll never be able to do this.” Try talking to yourself in a logical calm tone and injecting some positivity into your internal dialogue. For example, “I have had an assignment like this in the past and I succeeded. I can handle this, too.”
- **Take three deep breaths.** Deep breathing is another simple strategy for alleviating in-the-moment stress. Taking three big breaths induces a relaxation response by activating your parasympathetic nervous system.
- **Enlist a friendly ear.** Look to a trusted individual at work to be a member of your social support network. Find a person who can respond in a thoughtful manner to any issues that you may need to give voice to. Sometimes you may need to vent, and other times it can be helpful to hear a different perspective.
- **Make a list.** Making a to-do list that prioritizes your most important tasks is another way to combat feeling overwhelmed. List all of the personal and professional tasks you need to do, and then figure out which ones are “important” and which ones are “urgent”. Attend to those tasks first.
- **Project an aura of calm.** Stress can be contagious. If you are tense and stressed, someone talking to you can sense it and will react to it. Force yourself to speak in a gentle and controlled way. If you are persistently calm, others will be too.

As a recap...

DO:

- Identify your physiological signs of stress are so you can work to alleviate the tension
- Counteract stressful situations by taking deep breaths
- Find someone whose judgment you trust who can listen and provide counsel

DON'T:

- Forget the reason you feel stressed in the first place – you are being asked to do something important and you want to succeed
- Let the negative voice in your head spiral out of control – talk to yourself in a logical, gentle tone
- Project your stress onto others – speak in a calm, controlled way and others will too

Adapted from: “How to Handle Stress in the Moment”, by Rebecca Knight. *Harvard Business Review* (Nov. 5, 2014)

Handout E. How Stress Hardy Are You?

Write down how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using this scale:

0 = Strongly Disagree

1 = Mildly Disagree

2 = Mildly Agree

3 = Strongly Agree

- A. Trying my best at work makes a difference.
- B. Trusting to fate is sometimes all I can do in a relationship.
- C. I often wake up eager to start on the day's projects.
- D. Thinking of myself as a free person leads to great frustration and difficulty.
- E. I would be willing to sacrifice financial security in my work if something really challenging came along.
- F. It bothers me if I have to deviate from the routine or schedule I've set for myself.
- G. An average citizen can have an impact on politics.
- H. Without the right breaks, it is hard to be successful in my field.
- I. I know why I am doing what I am doing.
- J. Getting close to people puts me at risk of being obliterated by them.
- K. Encountering new situations is an important priority in my life.
- L. I really don't mind it when I have nothing to do.

To Score Yourself: The questions above measure control, commitment, and challenge. For half the questions, a high score (like "3=Strongly Agree") indicates hardiness; for the other half, a low score (disagreement) does.

First, you will calculate your scores on control, commitment, and challenge. Then, you will add those scores together to get a score for total hardiness. See the scoring instructions on the next page.

How Stress Hardy Are You -- Scoring

- To calculate your scores on control, commitment, and challenge, write in your answers above the letter of each question. Then add and subtract as indicated.

<u>Column 1</u>	<u>Column 2</u>	<u>Column 1 minus Column 2</u>
$\frac{\quad}{A} + \frac{\quad}{G} = \underline{\quad}$	$\frac{\quad}{B} + \frac{\quad}{H} = \underline{\quad}$	$= \underline{\quad}$ CONTROL
$\frac{\quad}{C} + \frac{\quad}{I} = \underline{\quad}$	$\frac{\quad}{D} + \frac{\quad}{J} = \underline{\quad}$	$= \underline{\quad}$ COMMITMENT
$\frac{\quad}{E} + \frac{\quad}{K} = \underline{\quad}$	$\frac{\quad}{F} + \frac{\quad}{L} = \underline{\quad}$	$= \underline{\quad}$ CHALLENGE

- Add your scores for control, commitment, and challenge together to obtain a score for total hardiness.

$$\underline{\quad} \text{ Control} + \underline{\quad} \text{ Commitment} + \underline{\quad} \text{ Challenge} = \underline{\quad} \text{ Hardiness Score}$$

3. Score Interpretation:

10 to 18 points: A Stress Hardy personality

0 to 9 points: Moderate hardiness

Less than 0 points (a negative score): Low hardiness

Handout F. Action Plan

Action #1	Time Frame & Schedule	Resources Needed	People

Action #2	Time Frame & Schedule	Resources Needed	People

Action #3	Time Frame & Schedule	Resources Needed	People