

## Managing Stress

### Session Objectives

1. Participants will engage in 45 minutes of physical activity.
2. Participants will discuss the benefits of stress management.
3. Participants will brainstorm ideas for healthy ways to manage stress.
4. Participants will try out one or two stress management techniques.

### Supply List

Tracking sheets

Large sticky paper

Markers, pens

4-7-8 Breathing handout

<https://www.cordem.org/globalassets/files/academic-assembly/2017-aa/handouts/day-three/biofeedback-exercises-for-stress-2---fernances-j.pdf>

Coloring sheets

Link to guided imagery handout

<https://www.greenchildmagazine.com/guided-relaxation/>

Link to progressive muscle relaxation

[https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Progressive\\_Muscle\\_Relaxation.pdf](https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Progressive_Muscle_Relaxation.pdf)

### Physical Activity *45 minutes*

Facilitate physical activity and/or lead walking group. Adults and older teens (15+) can use the fitness facility.

### Power House Activity

#### Part 1: Group Check-in *5 minutes*

Participants will review goal progress and set goal(s) for the next week.

1. Have participants turn in tracking sheets.
2. Handout participant journals. Participants will reflect on goal progress and set goals for the upcoming week.
3. Ask participants to share about goal progress.
4. Return tracking sheets with feedback.
5. Encourage continued food and activity tracking.

*Write positive feedback on tracking sheets while participants are setting goals for the next week.*

#### Part 2: Managing Stress *15 minutes*

Participants will discuss the benefits of stress management and brainstorm ideas for healthy ways to deal with stress.

1. Facilitate discussion on the benefits of stress management.
2. Have group brainstorm ideas for healthy ways to cope with stress.

3. Write ideas on large sticky paper.

**Facilitator's reference:**Benefits of Stress Management

Stress activates our “fight or flight” response. If stress is not dealt with healthfully over the long term it can have harmful effects on the body. Coping with stress in healthy ways can help us to feel better physically and emotionally. It can also help to improve focus and productivity which in turn can reduce stress.

Stress Management Strategies

Everyone is different in regards to what helps to relieve stress. Try out these tips and see what works for you.

- Plan ahead/try different organization strategies (checklists, planners, etc.)
- Minimize unnecessary stress
- Reframe the situation
- Do something that you enjoy
- Talk with a friend or family member
- Journal
- Read
- Go for a walk
- Color or draw
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Meditate
- Practice yoga
- Listen to music
- Use progressive muscle relaxation techniques
- Practice gratitude; write down 1-2 things for which you are thankful each day
- Use guided imagery

Part 3: Stress Management Experience 15 minutes

Participants will try out one or two stress management strategies.

1. Facilitate 4-7-8 deep breathing exercise and/or a progressive muscle relaxation exercise.
2. Provide handouts on other stress management strategies to experiment with at home.

**Facilitator's reference:**

#### 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise

This breathing exercise uses belly breathing to help provide relaxation. This exercise can be done either sitting or lying down. If you are sitting, place both feet on the floor and sit with your back straight.

1. Notice how you feel at the beginning of the exercise.
2. Begin by letting all the breath out of your lungs.
3. To start, put one hand on your belly and the other on your chest as in belly breathing exercise.
4. Place the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth, just behind the top teeth.
5. Take a deep (in through the nose), slow breath from your belly, and silently count to 4 as you breathe in.
6. Hold your breath, and silently count from 1 to 7.
7. Breathe out completely through your mouth as you silently count from 1 to 8. Try to get all the air out of your lungs by the time you count to 8.
8. Repeat 4 times. Gradually work your way up to 8 breathe cycles.
9. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.

Content:

<https://www.drweil.com/videos-features/videos/the-4-7-8-breath-health-benefits-demonstration/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRPh\\_GaiL8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRPh_GaiL8s)

#### Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Progressive muscle relaxation focuses on tensing and relaxing muscle groups throughout your entire body to provide relaxation. Tense each muscle group and then relax while visualizing a wave of relaxation flowing over them as the tension abates. This exercise can be performed sitting or lying down. Focus on breathing through each step.

See steps at:

[https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Progressive\\_Muscle\\_Relaxation.pdf](https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Progressive_Muscle_Relaxation.pdf)

**Shared Meal** 30 minutes

Focus on building relationships with families.

## Belly breathing

Belly breathing is easy to do and very relaxing. Try this basic exercise anytime you need to relax or relieve stress.

1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.

### 4-7-8 breathing

This exercise also uses belly breathing to help you relax. You can do this exercise either sitting or lying down.

1. To start, put one hand on your belly and the other on your chest as in the belly breathing exercise.
2. Take a deep, slow breath from your belly, and silently count to 4 as you breathe in.
3. Hold your breath, and silently count from 1 to 7.
4. Breathe out completely as you silently count from 1 to 8. Try to get all the air out of your lungs by the time you count to 8.
5. Repeat 3 to 7 times or until you feel calm.
6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.