Stress Management: 5 Skills That Can Change Your Life

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Assess Your Stress

- There isn’t enough time to get everything done.
  - I feel alone.
  - I have physical/medical health problems.
  - **Something significant has changed about my life.**
  - I don’t sleep well.
  - **Many things in my life are outside of my control.**
  - A person (or people) depends on me.
  - I’ve lost someone or something that is important to me.
  - **Something negative has occurred in my life** (e.g., lost a job, been evicted, car broke down).
  - I frequently feel tired.
  - I tend to put other people’s needs ahead of my own.
  - **I don’t have time to do things for myself.**
  - I am worried about either my situation or the situation of someone I know.
  - I need more money.
  - Something positive has occurred in my life (e.g., got a job, a promotion, an award).
Stress may be a problem if you:

- frequently feel overwhelmed
- find it difficult to concentrate
- have frequent and recurring medical/physical problems
- feel like you don’t spend your time efficiently
- fail to get things done in a timely manner
- feel easily irritated or annoyed
- have difficulty recovering from illness
- are using substances to cope

Stress is necessary for survival
Too little or too much stress = poor performance
Just the right amount of stress = best performance
Stress Management Sabotage

- Poor planning leading to avoidance or procrastination,
- Poor boundary setting, Super-person Syndrome (hyper-focused on pleasing others, neglect yourself),
- Rigid mentality, worrying about what you can’t control,
- Not eating, sleeping, or exercising well, not utilizing support system.
5 Skills That Can Change Your Life

- Plan
- Change your lifestyle
- Learn to relax
- Know your limits
- Gain control over your thoughts
Plan

• **Know your triggers:** What are the things/people/situations/events that contribute to your stress?

• **Know what stress looks like:** emotional, behavioral, and physical signs.

• **Make a timeline:** Use a calendar or planner to keep track of important dates.
Your Lifestyle Input

- Post-It Activity four categories sleep, nutrition, exercise and socialization:
  - Give one example of a strength you have
  - Also one example of an area you struggle with and how.
Change Your Lifestyle

**Assess your lifestyle:**

- Sleep: Do I have a sleep routine? Do I feel rested?
- Food: How many times do I eat each day? How do I relate to food?
- Exercise: Am I able to do the things I want to do?
- Social: Do I tend to feel lonely, or like I don’t want to burden others by talking about my problems?
Change Your Lifestyle

• **Make small changes to your lifestyle:**
  – Sleep: 7 – 9 hours a night, avoid naps, avoid caffeine after 3 pm
  – Food: eat every few hours, balanced meals, prepare food, drink water
  – Exercise: set a goal, start small, avoid comparing yourself to other exercisers, schedule exercise into your day
  – Social: don’t assume that others are too busy or that you’re burdening them, ask for support when needed
Learn to Relax

• We focus and feel better when we are relaxed.

• *Breathe deeply:* slowing down your breathing is one of the easiest, quickest ways you can relax.

• *Prioritize time for relaxation:* commit to making time for relaxation.
Know Your Limits

- Super-person Syndrome: taking on way more responsibility than you need to.
- **Ask yourself:** “What do I have direct control over?” Circle the triggers that you have control over.
- **Set healthy boundaries:**
  - accept that you can’t be all things to all people all the time,
  - practice saying “no” and not feeling guilty,
  - don’t make yourself responsible for others,
  - ask for help when needed,
  - pay attention to yourself.
Gain Control Over Your Thoughts

• *Keep track of your inner dialogue:* write down your thoughts, feelings and events. They are connected.

• *Practice mindfulness:* focus your attention on the present moment. When you notice yourself living in the past or future, gently remind yourself to come back to right now.
Positive Phrases to Keep You in the Present

• In this moment I’m alive and I can make choices.
• I can’t change the past.
• Today I’m going to work on....... 
• Worrying about the future won’t change it.
• This is what I can do right now.
• I’m grateful for.......
Don’t Go It Alone

• Counseling and Health Services, Women’s Programs, TRIO, Veteran’s Programs, Disability Support Services, Diversity Services, Fitness Center, Child Care Center, Math Learning Center, Help Center

• Web resources on stress management abound! Do a search on “stress management” and you’ll get tons of hits.

• Contact Counseling Services if you need help finding resources.