



Stress Management Campaign

WEEK FOUR

Put It to Practice

Welcome to week four of the Stress Management Campaign!

Included in this packet are all the resources you need for your final week.



STRESS MANAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

Week Four Overview

Put It to Practice

Remember to track each completed activity on your campaign tracking sheet!

Complete 'Stress Less Mini Challenge'

Pages 3

Try out some small and simple suggestions for reducing your stress.

Read 'Getting Back to Basics: Breathing'

Pages 4-5

Relearn this simple breathing technique to slow heart rate, stabilize blood pressure, and reduce stress levels.



Mini Challenge

Stress Less

Nearly one third of Americans report suffering from extreme stress, and these numbers are on the rise, with approximately half of Americans experiencing increased stress levels over the last five years. Because everyone experiences stress to some degree, it is universally important to develop effective stress management tools. Without these tools' individuals may experience chronic stress which leads to poor mental and physical health, followed by an increased risk for anxiety or depression.

Not All Stress is Bad

Stress manifests itself differently in everyone. It is caused by various triggers and each individual copes uniquely. Not all stress is considered bad. Good stress or "eustress" can be motivating and exciting. It's a rush of adrenaline that can push individuals to excel, reach goals, and stand out in tense situations.

Chronic stress, however, is bad stress. This puts continued strain on the body and interferes with an individual's ability to perform tasks and function normally. Luckily, there are stress management strategies that help tackle these situations. Some of these strategies include:

- › Identifying the cause of stress and finding proactive ways to reduce these triggers.
- › Building supportive relationships that offer emotional support and an alternative perspective.
- › Setting aside time for hobbies, relaxation, or mindfulness.
- › Creating a list and prioritizing responsibilities.

Daily Practice

Below are small and simple suggestions for reducing your stress. Try to practice at least four of the listed suggestions this week.

- ☐ Take a walk
- ☐ Light a candle
- ☐ Plan quality time with friends and/or family
- ☐ Schedule quiet time
- ☐ Spend one hour without electronics
- ☐ Take time to stretch
- ☐ Be positive - view the glass half full
- ☐ Spend time with an animal
- ☐ Carve out time for a hobby
- ☐ Make sleep a priority
- ☐ Take adequate breaks during work
- ☐ Soak in the sunshine - eat lunch outside
- ☐ Practice meditation
- ☐ Take a walk down memory lane - look at old photos



Getting Back to Basics:

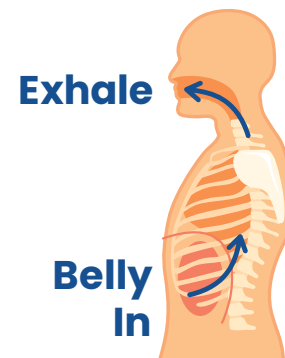
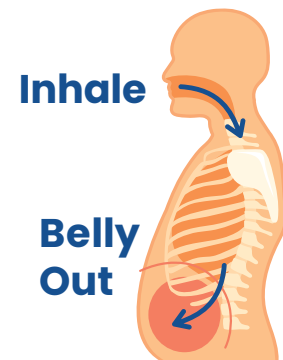
Breathing

When adolescents breathe, their stomachs expand with every inhale and contract with every exhale. When adults breathe, their chests typically rise with every inhale and fall with every exhale. As years pass, natural breathing patterns are forgotten, and short and shallow breaths become the new norm. As adults, it is important to take a step back and re-introduce proper breathing techniques, such as Diaphragmatic breathing. This breathing technique can slow the heart rate, stabilize blood pressure and reduce stress levels.

Diaphragmatic breathing, or belly breathing, is a technique that engages the diaphragm. The diaphragm is a dome-shaped muscle at the bottom of the ribcage that plays an important role in breathing. With each inhale, the diaphragm tightens, allowing room for the lungs to fill fully and the abdomen to expand. When exhaling, the diaphragm relaxes and the abdomen contracts.

Practice diaphragmatic breathing by following these steps:

1. Sit comfortably or lie on your back with knees bent
2. Place one hand on the upper chest and the other on the stomach, over the belly button
3. Breathe in slowly through the nose for two seconds. The air should move down to the abdomen causing the hand on the stomach to rise.
4. Breathe out slowly through the mouth for two seconds. Let your body relax. Feel the hand over the stomach gravitate towards the spine. The hand on the chest should continue to remain still.
5. Repeat this exercise for a total of 5 to 10 minutes a day.



Now put it to work!

Complete this simple exercise to see how diaphragmatic breathing can aid in decreasing heartrate.

Step A: Take You Pulse

Place two fingers (index and pointer finger) over the carotid artery, right below the jaw. Count each heartbeat for a total of 30 seconds. Multiply the number of heartbeats by two and write that number down.

Initial Heart Rate:

Step B: Repeat Steps 1-4 of Diaphragmatic Breathing for 1 Minute

1. Sit comfortably or lie on your back with knees bent
2. Place one hand on the upper chest and the other on the stomach, over the belly button
3. Breathe in slowly through the nose for two seconds. The air should move down to the abdomen causing the hand on the stomach to rise.
4. Breathe out slowly through the mouth for two seconds. Let your body relax. Feel the hand over the stomach gravitate towards the spine. The hand on the chest should continue to remain still.

Step C: Take Your Pulse Again

Place two fingers (index and pointer finger) over the carotid artery, right below the jaw. Count each heartbeat for a total of 30 seconds. Multiply the number of heartbeats by two and write that number down.

Second Heart Rate:

After the pulse is taken for a second time, the number of heartbeats should be lower. This may also be accompanied by a feeling of decreased stress and increased calmness.

When stressed or anxious, the brain releases cortisol, the “stress hormone.” By taking deep breaths, the heart rate slows, more oxygen enters the blood stream and ultimately communicates with the brain to relax. Deep breathing increases endorphins, the “feel good” chemical. Next time you are feeling stress or anxiety, remember to take it one breath at a time.



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