



MANAGE STRESS

Manage STRESS

WHY MANANGE STRESS?

What is stress?

- Stress is a naturally occurring reaction of your body to psychological or physical demands of the environment.
- Stress reaction increases blood pressure, heart rate and respiration as well as other changes to major body systems. These reactions prepare the body for “fight or flight” from physically dangerous or psychologically threatening situations. **Stress reaction can be positive or negative.**
 - **Positive stress reaction** leads to increased performance, feelings of success and confidence and allows the body to return to the normal, non-stress state.
 - **Negative stress or mismanaged stress**, keeps the physical reaction of the body turned on and does not let the body completely recover to the non-stress state¹.

What causes stress reaction in the workplace?²

- Task demands – having to repeatedly learn new processes, meeting unrealistic deadlines.
- Time demands – frequent deadlines, schedule conflicts, “too much to do”, interruptions and unpredictable schedules (particularly for employees that have daily rhythms in shift work).
- Physical demands – environment (weather, noise, vibration) and activity (standing, walking, bending, lifting).
- Role demands – added responsibility in supervision or leadership.
- Interpersonal demands – interacting with public, customers, co-workers.

What are the consequences of negative stress?

Negative stress or mismanaged stress reactions to workplace demand can be grouped as:

- Behavioral – may include alcohol or drug abuse, accidents, violence, and eating disorders.
- Psychological – may include family problems, sleep disturbance, depression,

What are the consequences of negative stress?

Negative stress or mismanaged stress reactions to workplace demand can be grouped as:

- Behavioral – may include alcohol/drug abuse, accidents, violence, and eating disorders.
- Psychological – may include family problems, sleep disturbance, depression, and burnout syndrome.
- Medical – may include heart disease, stroke, headache, and some cancers.

Long-term effects of negative stress can lead to exhaustion, reduced ability of the immune system to fight off illness and disease and put staff members at risk for health problems and work performance issues.

Your worksite wellness committee can initiate programs and activities to help staff members manage their stress and gain skills to manage the demands of the work environment.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress³:

Stress can affect you physically, behaviorally, and cognitively or emotionally. However, the signs and symptoms of stress vary from person to person. Below are a few common signs and symptoms of stress.

Physical signs and symptoms:

- Headaches
- Chest pain or rapid heartbeat
- Exhaustion or fatigue
- Insomnia or other sleep problems
- Muscle aches, muscle tension, or even back pain
- Clenching or grinding teeth
- Weight gain or loss
- Digestive concerns such as diarrhea, constipation, stomach upset or nausea

Behavioral signs and symptoms:

- Over or under eating
- Use or abuse of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- Decreased productivity or neglecting responsibilities
- Isolating oneself or social withdrawal
- Relationship and interpersonal conflicts

Cognitive and emotional signs and symptoms:

- Forgetfulness and memory problems
- Moodiness or mood swings
- Depression, sadness, or sense of loneliness/isolation
- Anger, irritability, anxiety, short temper, or impatience
- Job dissatisfaction or burnout

References:

1. Whitney, E., Hamilton, E. 1984. *Understanding Nutrition*. 183-191.
2. Quick, J.C. and Quick, J.D. 1984. 'Preventing Distress Through Better Working Relationships'. *Management Review*. 30(4).
3. Mayo Clinic. Accessed at http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-symptoms/SR00008_D



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SECTION I

**Health *Start*
Activity**

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Manage Stress HealthStart Activity

The HealthStart Manage Stress Activity includes ready-to-use materials including announcements, posters, and handouts that can be used by the school worksite wellness committee to jumpstart a wellness program at their worksite. Success with this short-term activity will help in increasing management support and staff interest in future, longer term activities and programs.

The following pages outline the purpose, materials needed and action steps for completing the HealthStart activity. The “Extra” section of the activity identifies some items that

are not required for the activity to be successful but will greatly assist in improving staff member morale for participation in wellness activities.

Even though this specific activity promotes participation of individual staff, the committee should strive to make changes in worksite policies and environments that will support a healthy lifestyle. These changes will make it easier for staff members to adopt healthy behaviors, make healthier lifestyle choices at work and reduce their risk for chronic diseases.

LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN

Purpose

The LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN activity will encourage staff to identify their personal reaction to stress and utilize stress reduction techniques as a means to manage stress and achieve good health.

Materials Needed

- Notice to announce the activity (**Appendix A**)
- LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Sign In Sheet (**Appendix B**)
- MANAGE STRESS Motivational posters (**Appendix C**)
- MANAGE STRESS Motivational quotes (**Appendix D**)
- LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Pledge Card (**Appendix E**)
- Signs and Symptoms of Stress handout (**Appendix F**)
- LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Log (**Appendix G**)
- LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Certificate of Achievement (**Appendix H**)

Because I care about my health, I pledge to take steps to
MANAGE STRESS for the next _____ days/weeks.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

COMING SOON!

LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN

This activity will help you reduce workplace stress and learn effective ways to manage stress.

Sign up for LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN begins on: _____

The activity will begin on: _____

LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Log

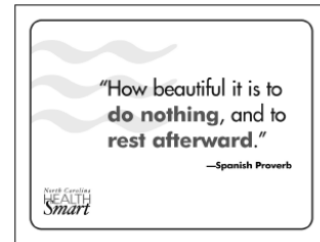
Directions: Use this stress management log to record your daily signs and symptoms of stress in addition to the techniques used to help manage stress. After several days or weeks review the log to determine if there are specific signs and symptoms that you experience regularly or stress reduction techniques that you are most likely to use. The first row has been completed as an example.

Date	Signs and Symptoms of Stress					Stress Reduction Technique(s)				
	headaches	stomach issues	fatigue	anxiety	irritability	exercise	meditation	deep breathing	positive thinking	relaxation
Ex 11/8										
1 month										
2 months										
3 months										
4 months										
5 months										

Coordinator _____

Action Steps

1. Select the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Coordinator(s)
Activity Coordinator(s): _____
2. Determine a time period for the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN activity (recommended duration is 6-8 weeks). It may be helpful to choose a time period that could be described as stressful in your worksite, such as the weeks surrounding the beginning of the academic year, End of Grade Testing, other examination or testing periods, or the end of the academic year.
3. Announce the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Activity to staff. Announcements should be made and notices posted about two weeks before the start of the activity. Notices should be posted in several places at the worksite including the staff bulletin boards, restrooms, and break rooms. Clearly specify the start and end dates of the event and where to sign up. (**Appendix A**)
4. Post sign up sheet for the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Activity at least one week before the start date of the event. (**Appendix B**)
5. Display motivational posters and signs at several locations to encourage and support the staff in their efforts to manage stress. Several posters and signs are provided in **Appendices C and D**; you can choose to use these or create your own.



MSQuote12Nothing.pdf

Support Materials For Staff Who Sign Up for LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN:

The LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Activity Coordinator(s) should provide the following support materials to all staff members who sign up to participation in the challenge.

- Provide staff with information about the possible signs and symptoms of stress and a description of several stress reduction techniques can help them determine if and when they are experiencing stress and which techniques could be beneficial to managing their stress. A sample handout of signs and symptoms is provided in **Appendix F. (Examples of individual stress reduction techniques can be found on pages 6 through 8.)**
- LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Log (**Appendix G**) to maintain a daily record of their signs and symptoms of stress in addition to the technique(s) they used to help manage their stress. Remind staff to complete their logs daily and to report their results to the Activity Coordinator at the end of the activity period.
- Keeping a LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Pledge Card in their purse, wallet, or desk may be beneficial for some staff members to encourage and remind them of their commitment to manage stress. (see **Appendix E**)

Signs and Symptoms of Stress:

Stress can affect you physically, behaviorally, and cognitively or emotionally. However, the signs and symptoms of stress vary from person to person. Below are a few common signs and symptoms of stress.

Physical signs and symptoms:

- Headaches
- Chest pain or rapid heartbeat
- Exhaustion or fatigue
- Insomnia or other sleep problems
- Muscle aches, muscle tension, or even back pain
- Clenching or grinding teeth
- Weight gain or loss
- Digestive concerns such as diarrhea, constipation, stomach upset or nausea

Behavioral signs and symptoms:

- Over or under eating
- Use or abuse of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- Decreased productivity or neglecting responsibilities
- Isolating oneself or social withdrawal
- Relationship and interpersonal conflicts

Cognitive and emotional signs and symptoms:

- Forgetfulness and memory problems
- Moodiness or mood swings
- Depression, sadness, or sense of loneliness/isolation
- Anger, irritability, anxiety, short temper, or impatience
- Job dissatisfaction or burnout

On the day the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Challenge ends:

- Review the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Log results reported by staff members who participated in the activity.
- Present a Certificate of Achievement (**Appendix H**) to all participants that submitted their results. The staff wellness committee may choose to host a post-activity event for the participants where the Certificates can be presented and the participants can share their experiences with managing stress such as which techniques they found to be most helpful and which were more challenging.



- Further recognition may be given to staff members that showed exemplary success in managing their stress by posting their names on a highly visible bulletin board in common areas, in the staff newsletter, or by making an announcement at staff meetings, etc. Worksites may also choose to recognize staff achievement at events with students. Staff can be role models for healthy lifestyles in addition to academic success.
- Remind the staff members that even though it is the end of the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN activity it should not be the end of their efforts to manage stress and improve their health.

EXTRA:

Depending upon the level of support from your administration and the availability of resources for wellness activities at your worksite, the wellness committee may incorporate the following as an add-on to the activity.

- **Administration Input**— Challenge administration to participate in the activity or request that administration (superintendent, school principal, etc) personally sign the Certificate of Achievement that is presented to the Activity participants.
- **Incentives**— Staff members who participate for the entire activity period may be given incentives such as a stress ball, CD of relaxing music, gift certificate to a local business, or some other incentive. Funding for incentives can be secured in several ways, including contributions from local businesses or community groups, applying for local or state mini-grants, or using existing wellness programming budget funds, if available.

SECTION II

**Individual
and Group
Resources**

Manage
STRESS

Individual Activities

Staff members at your worksite may benefit by participating in individual activities conducted by the worksite wellness committee. Some examples are included in this section, but feel free to create your own!

Personal Mission Statement

The worksite wellness committee may want to plan a workshop to assist staff members in creating a personal mission statement. Creating a personal mission statement is one method for individuals to gain a sense of control in stressful changing environments. The personal mission statement is a written proclamation of who you are and what you are about. It should express the contributions you want to make during your lifetime, the things you want to do, and the kind of person you want to be. Your personal mission statement is an affirmation of your highest priorities. Creating and reviewing your personal mission statement reaffirms your priorities and keeps you on track, despite the stressors of your workplace.

Laugh Day

Laughter is positively associated with reducing stress. Create a Laugh Day such as a Wacky Wednesday or Fun Friday, to reduce stress in the workplace and among staff members. Post humorous posters or jokes on the staff bulletin board, break room, or other appropriate place.

Individual Questionnaires

Staff can complete a personal survey/questionnaire to assess their ability to deal with stress in different types of situations. Sample questionnaires to assess listening

skills and humor quotient are provided in **Appendix I**. These can be photocopied from the workbook or printed from the toolkit CD and distributed among staff for individual use.

More questionnaires can be found at

- www.stressless.com
- www.krames.com

Social Support

Social support is a recognized way for people to deal with stress. Peer groups are composed of people with similar interests (cooking, quilting, cycling, reading, community service, bridge, etc.) who provide an opportunity to share common experiences. Staff members who share similar stress challenges may voluntarily come together to provide mutual support and skill building. Here are a few suggestions for increasing social support:

- Join a club or group that interests you.
- Make a date with a positive person. Negative people zap energy out of others. Seek out positive people who can motivate, inspire, and support you.
- Be a good neighbor. Try to meet those who live near you. Plan a block party, invite neighbors over for a cookout, take cookies to a new neighbor, offer to care for a pet or children, or pick up mail or newspapers while neighbors are away.
- Speak kind words to family and friends. Those we love most are often those we treat the worst.
- Confide in others. This opens up the

door for sharing feelings and exchanging experiences and ideas.

- Send a note to someone recognizing a special talent or a time in which they were particularly helpful. So often we think positive thoughts, but do not communicate them.
- Practice being a good listener. Others will appreciate it and it will allow for more open communication.

Recover, Refocus, Regenerate (*Parlay International, 1990*)

Major life changes occur in all of our lives: promotions, relocations, parenthood, lay offs, divorces, and deaths are just a few of the many major stressors we experience throughout our lives. Whether these events can be positive or negative, they can all be very stressful. To help us thrive, it is important to take time to recover, refocus, and regenerate following major life changes.

- Recovering— New situations are often stressful, challenging, and unfamiliar. Step back from your new situation. Plan a weekend getaway or just take some time for yourself. Take small breaks to go to the movie, exercise, or share your feelings with others. These activities can reduce your stress level and help you get back on track.
- Refocus— By looking at the "big picture" you can gain a greater peace of mind about the change in your life. Think about what has happened, why, and what it might mean for your life. You may find you have mixed emotions. For example, a promotion may increase your salary, but give you new and excessive responsibilities. You may feel frustrated, sad, or angry about having to let go of familiar people or routines. In time, these feelings will change. Talking to a trusted friend, family member, or counselor may speed the healing process.

- Regenerate— Change can be stressful to your body. Your body needs time to heal after a stressful event. Make sure you get plenty of rest, avoid alcohol and tobacco, and eat healthfully. Focus on increasing your circle of social support. Reinforce old friendships or connect with new people by enrolling in a class or starting a new hobby. Your city Parks and Recreation Department may offer a variety of low-cost classes including pottery, painting, photography, and many others. Taking a class at a community college or university may also allow you to connect with new people who share your interests.

As with all physical activity, consult with your physician prior to engaging in any new activity.

Relaxation Response

The following is a quick and easy activity that can be used by individuals or a group to allow the physical changes of a stress reaction to subside and return to a non-stress state.

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position in a quiet environment with eyes closed.
2. Begin with your feet and relax each muscle group moving up to the head – toes, calf, thigh, waist, stomach, arms, chest, neck, face, and forehead.
3. Breathe in through your nose gently pushing your stomach out.
4. Breathe out through your mouth and let your stomach relax.
5. Continue for 10-20 minutes. Setting a timer may cause a stress reaction when it alarms, so open your eyes as needed to check time.
6. When finished, open your eyes but remain in a comfortable position for several minutes before moving.

Progressive Relaxation

The following is a physical activity that can be used by individuals or a group for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.

1. Lie flat on a soft surface or floor with your eyes closed and knees bent.
2. Beginning with your right foot, press foot firmly to the floor for 5 seconds, relax for 5 seconds; repeat with the left foot.
3. Straighten legs out and press back of lower right leg firmly to the floor for 5 seconds, relax for 5 second; repeat with left leg.
4. Press each of the following areas, one at a time, firmly to the floor for 5 seconds, then relax for 5 seconds, and move to the next area:
 - Back of thighs and buttocks
 - Lower back and shoulder blades
 - Arms
 - Back of head
5. Breathe normally as you press and relax.

Simple Yoga Stretch

The following physical activity can be used by individuals or a group for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.

1. Stand relaxed, arms hanging at sides and feet about one foot apart.
2. Tilt head to the right and hold for 5 seconds.
3. Roll head to the left and hold for 5 seconds.
4. Keeping knees slightly bent, curl chest and stomach forward as you bend at the waist and allow your arms to dangle freely for 5 seconds.
5. Inhale slowly through nose as you straighten up. Raise arms overhead; drop arms slowly to sides as you exhale slowly through your mouth.

Controlled Breathing

The following activity can be used by individuals or a group for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.

1. Lie down with your back flat on the floor; place a book on your stomach.
2. Bend your knees and close your eyes.
3. Push your stomach up 2-3 inches and hold for 5 seconds, then exhale. Repeat several times. Each time you exhale, say "I am relaxed." Avoid lifting your chest.

As with all physical activity, consult with your physician prior to engaging in any new activity.

Group Classes

The worksite wellness committee may choose to offer scheduled classes for staff members to support and encourage them in effectively managing stress.

The educational sessions may be presented in a series of Lunch & Learn, staff development, or staff meeting presentations. This is a popular means of providing basic or advanced level information on a selected topic of interest. A **guest speaker** may be invited to share the information or a **video presentation** may be scheduled during a convenient time period for staff members such as before or after school, or at staff meetings.

GUEST SPEAKERS

- One advantage of having a guest speaker present information to staff members is

that questions can be answered during or after the session.

- The guest speaker should know the audience he/she will be addressing. Different presentations might be suitable for female groups, male groups or staff who are interested in a particular topic. When marketing the session, provide a brief explanation of the topic and include a description of the target group for that session if necessary. Other participants may choose to attend, but at least they will be aware of the subject matter and why the content may be focused on a narrow audience.
- The speaker should also be aware of time constraints. If the presentation is not designed to take the entire meeting time then staying on schedule becomes important.

Potential Guest Speakers for Stress Management:

- Public Health Department Staff or Health Promotion Coordinator
- Health Educator (local and state consultant)
- Nurse
- Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Coordinator
- Healthy Carolinians Task Force Member
- NC Cooperative Extension Agent
- National Mental Health Association www.nmha.org
- American Cancer Society www.cancer.org
- American Heart Association www.americanheart.org
- Local university and college faculty
- Local school counselors
- Office of State Personnel, Human Resource Development Group www.osp.state.nc.us/trancata/hrd-oe/InstructorBios.htm

County-specific contact information for some of the above listed professionals can be found at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/contactdir/index.html

- Ask the guest speaker if the introduction to the topic can be brief and more time allotted to practicing skills or reviewing handout materials that may be helpful to the participants. Let the speaker know in advance that an interactive session is preferred.
- Seek out a guest speaker that is a recognized authority with appropriate credentials and experienced in stress management or general health topics. For example, a social worker, psychologist or mental health professional would be an appropriate speaker to invite.

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

- Presenting information to staff members using videotape is an easy and convenient means of conducting educational sessions.
- Select videos that fit the available time frame and are designed for adults.
- Before scheduling the session, review the video to ensure that it is from a reputable source and the information contained is appropriate for the audience.
- The following resources may be used to order stress management videos. You may view and order products online or call and request a product catalog.
 - www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/stress
 - www.krames.com (1-800-333-3032)
 - www.hopehealth.com (1-800-334-4094)
 - www.welcoa.org (1-402-827-3590)
 - www.parlay.com (1-800-457-2752)
 - www.collagevideo.com(1-800-433-6769)
 - NC Industrial Commission Safety Education Section
www.comp.state.nc.us/ncic/pages/vidtitle.htm

Some examples are:

Ergonomics: Back Exercises—10 min.

Ergonomics: Materials Handling—10 min.

Ergonomics: Computer Usage—10 min.

Hypothermia: Cold Weather Prevention—12 min.

Ergonomics: Workstation Adjustment—10 min.

Back Safety: Exercise and Ergonomics— 16 min.

Office Ergonomics: It's Your Move— 16 min.

Ergonomics: Lifting—10 min.

Ergonomics Awareness—10 min.

Attitudes in Action— 15 min.

Heat Stress—16 min.

Heat Stress Prevention—14 min.

Stress And Safety—13 min

Stretch Out – 13 min

Suggested Topics for Guest Speakers/Video Presentations

- Stress management
- Time management
- Planning and organization
- Elder Care Issues
- Using Humor to Manage Stress
- Conflict Resolution
- Positive Attitude
- Mediation
- Parenting Skills (PET - Parent Effectiveness Training)

SECTION III

**Resources
for Worksite
Policies**

Manage
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Manage Stress Policies for Worksites

What is meant by a policy?

A policy can be a law or a regulation. It can be a written rule, or a common practice. Policies can support healthy behaviors and lead to healthy reactions to the psychological and physical demands of living.

We can write policy at any level. The State Legislature, State Board of Education, school

districts, or schools can create policy. Policies can produce change in our surroundings that help us improve our overall outlook on life.

For example, a worksite policy could require that ergonomic assessments are completed for all staff on a yearly basis.

Why do we need policies for managing stress in the workplace?

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999) review of surveys from insurance companies and universities revealed:

- 40% of workers reported their job was very or extremely stressful;
- 25% view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives;
- 75% of employees believe that workers have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago;
- 29% of workers felt quite a bit or extremely stressed at work;
- 26 % of workers said they were "often or very often burned out or stressed by their work";
- Job stress is more strongly associated with health complaints than financial or family problems.

The 2000 annual "Attitudes in the American Workplace VI" Gallup Poll sponsored by the Marlin Company found that:

- 80% of workers feel stress on the job, nearly half say they need help in learning how to manage stress and
- 42% say their coworkers need such help;

- 14% of respondents had felt like striking a coworker in the past year, but didn't;
- 25% have felt like screaming or shouting because of job stress, and
- 10% are concerned about an individual at work they fear could become violent.

In the following year, the 2001 annual "Attitudes in the American Workplace VII" Gallup poll found similar results:

- 82% of workers reported that they are at least a little stressed at work,
- 50% reported that they and their coworkers have a more demanding workload that a year ago,
- 48% stated they have too much work to do and unreasonable deadlines,
- 42% said that job pressures interfere with family or personal life,
- 40% reported that conditions at work are at times unpleasant and even unsafe, and
- 26% said they rarely or never receive recognition or rewards for good performance.

More recent survey results are consistent with previous findings about stress. A January 2007 Gallup poll revealed that four in 10

Americans often feel stressed. In addition:

- 46% of 30- to 49-year-olds reported frequent stress,
- 43% of full-time workers and 46% of part-time workers, but only 29% of unemployed Americans reported frequent stress, and
- 55% of people states that they do not have enough time to do the things they want to do.

Stress in school worksites is an additional concern:

A review of literature related to stress in school employees found:

- Teachers exhibit higher levels of cynicism and exhaustion (core dimensions of burnout) when compared to other professions,¹
- At any given time, 5-20% of all teachers are burned out², and
- During the first 3 years, one-third of new teachers leave the profession. By the fifth year, almost half of new teachers leave.³

What are informal policies?

Some staff members may agree to implement “informal” policies to support addressing the demands of the workplace and promote using positive coping skills in response to stress. These policies may or may not be written but should be publicly supported and widely communicated to staff members during staff meetings or through other forms of communication, such as newsletters, e-mail, announcements, or other viable means. Participation and compliance to informal policies is voluntary.

An example of an informal workplace policy for stress management might be the use of the break room for stretching or relaxing during breaks to relieve stress. Another informal policy regarding stress reduction may be the creation of support groups among co-workers to exchange encouragement, experiences, and ideas related to dealing with job stress.

What are formal policies?

An informal policy may lead to a formal, written policy. A formal policy includes a statement of intent by the employer and is applicable to all staff members.

For instance, some staff members might be using a portion of their planning period for relaxation and body stretching. Administration may see that this informal policy should become a formal, written policy to offer resources for relaxation and stress reduction to all staff members. Examples of some formal policies are:

- Effective (date) , it is the policy of (this worksite) to recognize that workplace demands may at times exceed an employee’s ability to meet those demands. To reduce workplace stress and effectively manage workplace demands, employees will be informed of existing personnel policies that relate to environment and health, and management performance.
- Effective (date) , it is the policy of (this worksite) to provide staff with four (4) hours of professional development to build coping skills that may help them more effectively deal with stress in the workplace and at home.

- Effective _____ *(date)* _____, it is the policy of _____ *(this worksite)* _____ to support two (2) events each semester to help staff cope with stress through the use of relaxation response, humor and physical activity.
- Effective _____ *(date)* _____ it is the policy of _____ *(this worksite)* _____ to create a meditation room which encourages staff to incorporate stress management into their daily routine and which values staff wellness as an essential part of both personal and professional well-being.

References:

1. Maslach C, Jackson SE, Leiter MP. *Maslach burnout inventory manual*. 3rd edition. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1996.
2. Farber BA. *Crisis in education: Stress and burnout in the American teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991.
3. Vail K. Climate Control: Ten ways to make your schools great places to work and learn. *American School Board Journal* 2005; 192(6):16-19.

SECTION IV

**Resources
for Worksite
Environments**

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Work Space

Ergonomic Review of Work Space

The official definition of ergonomics, adopted by the International Ergonomics Association, is: the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data, and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance. In simpler terms, ergonomics is an applied science concerned with designing and arranging things so that the people and things interact most efficiently and safely. It can also be considered as the application of scientific information concerning objects, systems, and environment for human use. The goal of ergonomics in the workplace is to make workspace more comfortable and to improve both the health and productivity of the worker. To meet these goals, the capabilities and limitations of workers and their tools, equipment, and furniture are considered in relation to particular tasks.

PHYSICAL ERGONOMICS

This area of ergonomics is concerned with human anatomical, anthropometric, physiological, and biomechanical characteristics as they relate to physical activity. Topics relevant to this area include working postures, materials handling, repetitive movements, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, workplace layout, safety, and health.

Your School Worksite Wellness Committee can bring physical ergonomics to your workplace by hiring an ergonomics specialist to evaluate the fit between staff members and their workstations. Achieving a good fit between the two can make the work experience more comfortable and may allow the staff to be more productive. In addition, minimizing repetitive movement by varying tasks throughout the day may help to staff minimize fatigue and avoid injury.

See **Appendix I** for ways to assess individual workspace and simple steps that can reduce health risks by changing posture, process, workspace, or movement. The School Worksite Wellness Committee may choose to photocopy or print from the Toolkit CD and distribute these among the staff at the worksite.

Workspace Evaluation

Use the following checklist to identify whether your workspace is ergonomically suitable for reducing the risks for musculoskeletal disorders and repetitive motion strain. If you answer "no" to any item follow the corresponding suggestions given after the checklist.

1. Are you able to change position throughout the day (e.g. alternate sitting or standing)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	10. If you often talk on the phone for long periods of time, or while keying or writing, do you have access to headsets or speakerphones? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Do you adjust your keyboard and/or monitor position as appropriate when you change posture? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	11. Are your shoulders relaxed with elbows close to your torso while keying? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Do you incorporate variety into your daily schedule (e.g. keying, talking on the phone, photocopying, moving around or changing postures)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	12. Are your elbows relaxed and resting by your torso when you key or use a mouse? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Does the back of your chair provide good lumbar support to the arch in the small of your back? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	13. Do you key and mouse with your hands and wrists in a neutral position? (Forearm, wrist and hand form a fairly straight line) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. When you sit in your chair with your back against the backrest, is there clearance between the backs of your knees and the edge of your chair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	14. Would you describe your typing style as a "light" touch on the keys? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. When you sit in your chair, are your thighs approximately parallel to the floor? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	15. Is your viewing distance to your monitor 20 inches (50 cm) or more? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Are your feet supported by the floor or a footrest when you sit in your chair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	16. Are there any reflections or glare on your monitor for screens or is light shining into your eyes? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. When seated at your workstation is there sufficient room underneath the work surface or keyboard tray for your legs and knees? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	17. Do you have appropriate illumination when reading printed materials or when reading from your monitor? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. Are your monitor and documents located directly in front of you and in the recommended viewing area? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	18. Have you had an eye exam in the last two years? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	19. If you wear bifocals or trifocals, can you see the monitor comfortably? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

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COGNITIVE ERGONOMICS

This area of ergonomics is concerned with mental processes, such as perception, memory, reasoning, and motor response, since these affect interactions among humans and other elements of a system. Topics relevant to this area of ergonomics include mental workload, deci-

sion-making, skilled performance, human-computer interaction, human reliability, work stress, and training.

The School Worksite Wellness Committee can be important in establishing an informal policy to bring cognitive ergonomics to the workplace. An example of this might be an informal policy that supports occasional breaks taken throughout the day for stretching and deep breathing, which helps staff to restore their energy and increase productivity.

ORGANIZATIONAL ERGONOMICS

This area of ergonomics is concerned with the optimization of sociotechnical systems, including their organizational structures, policies, and processes. Topics relevant to this area of ergonomics include communication, crew resource management, work design, design of working times, teamwork, participatory design, community ergonomics, cooperative work, new work paradigms, virtual organizations, telework, and quality management.

School Worksite Wellness Committee may be able to influence administration to change policies regarding organization ergonomics. If flexible schedules are not allowed in the workplace and there is no reason for a set schedule, such as shift work, then the School Worksite Wellness Committee can survey employees to determine if flexible schedules would be preferred and then provide the compiled survey results to management. If it is an informal worksite policy that employees do not take their allowed breaks at all, then the worksite wellness committee could encourage employees to take this time during work to include stress management techniques during the day, such as stretching, deep breathing, or walking.

Physical Space

Use the following suggestions for creating relaxing physical spaces at your worksite.

- **Identify an area** where staff members can take a break from their assigned duties to de-stress. This could be the staff break room or another available area, such as an unused office. Decorate this space with posters that remind staff members of healthful choices for dealing with stress. See **Appendix D** for sample posters. Provide comfortable chairs and soft lighting in this space.
- **Address noise** in the workspace. Background noise can impair an employee's ability to concentrate, resulting in reduced performance, and can also cause tension, headaches, and increased irritability. Installing acoustic tiles, partitions, or room dividers can help deaden sound. Availability of meeting rooms and quiet rooms that are separate from the main work area can improve productivity. If all else fails, provide ear plugs!
- **Check for adequate lighting.** Poor lighting can cause eye strain and increase fatigue, while light that is too bright can also have a similar effect. The quality of light is also important. Most people are happiest in bright daylight. Sunlight may trigger a release of chemicals in the body that bring on positive emotions. Artificial light does not have the same impact on mood. Suggest that staff members work by a window, or use full-spectrum bulbs in their desk lamps. This should improve the quality of the working environment by having a positive impact on staff mental health.
- **Evaluate temperature settings** for both heating and cooling the workspace. Adjust as necessary. If areas of the office tend to be much hotter or colder than the setting, address these issues. The staff members in the warmer areas may need desk fans to help circulate the air or the heating and cooling unit may need to be repaired or improved.
- **Examine entries and exits** to the building and office space. Consider tripping hazards, such as ripped carpet or broken pavement, slippery areas, exterior and interior lighting, and visibility. Plan to make repairs, add door mats, provide additional lighting, and create signage as necessary to improve the appearance of the building and office space.
- **Incorporate artwork** on walls. Staff members may be willing to bring in a piece of artwork for an "employee showcase", or if funds allow, the worksite wellness committee can purchase paintings from local artists for the walls, stained glass or sun catchers for the windows, or fabric wall hangings to add color to the space.
- **Create a photo display.** Ask staff members to bring in photos of themselves, or take photos at work and at work-related events and display them on a bulletin board or wall. Make sure you get permission from staff members before displaying the photos.
- **Add plants.** Purchase or have staff members donate plants. Live plants are preferable, since they raise the amount of oxy-

gen in the air and reduce stuffiness, and also help to improve air quality by absorbing pollutants from the air. If live plants are not an option, high quality artificial plants may be used. Any form of nature is a powerful stress reliever.

- **Incorporate an aquarium** at your worksite. This also acts to bring a little piece of nature into the workspace. Make sure that there is an agreement regarding who will care for the aquarium and its contents prior to setting up the aquarium.
- **Improve the air quality** of your workspace. Poor air quality can damage the ability to concentrate. Lack of ventilation can deplete the amount of oxygen in the air, leading to headaches, tiredness, and reduced concentration. Plants are a wonderful addition to workspace, as mentioned above. They increase the oxygen concentration in the air and absorb pollutants. If plants are not an option in your workspace, air quality can be improved by opening windows, using an ionizer, or using a dehumidifier if humidity is high. In addition, providing drinking water to staff members will help them stay hydrated, since dehydration can also lead to headaches, tiredness, and poor concentration.
- **Provide bulletin boards** where staff members can participate in quizzes or contests. For example, place five childhood pictures of staff members on the board and see who can identify them correctly. You may want to provide small prizes to those who answer the most correctly or put those who answer correctly into a drawing for a larger prize. Change out the quizzes regularly to keep interest going among staff members.
- **Create a staff spotlight.** Each month, spotlight an individual staff member and address something significant about that person, such as a recent vacation, hobby, advanced education, or birth of a grandchild. A small space in the staff break

area may be appropriate for this type of recognition.

- **Set up a graffiti board.** This type of bulletin board should include a starting statement or question for staff members to respond to and should be changed regularly. Questions such as “What is your favorite flower and why?” or “What is your dream vacation?” may get staff members talking about positive things outside of the workplace, which can be a stress reliever and mood lifter. The worksite wellness committee should establish guidelines for statements or questions that are suitable for posting prior to set-up and may want to ask staff members for suggestions of topics they would like to see on the board.
- **Post humorous quotes, cartoons, or jokes** on the staff bulletin board or other area where staff members will see them regularly. If the worksite wellness committee chooses to request these from other staff members, appoint one committee member to receive them in a specific location and screen them prior to posting them on the board.
- **Improve the landscape** near entrances and exits to the building and outside of public windows. The worksite wellness committee may want to host a “volunteer work day” to do this. Views of blooming flowers, plants changing color with the seasons, or birds at bird feeders may be relaxing to staff members who are inside a building for the majority of the work day.
- **Create an inspirational book list.** Staff members can recommend books that were inspirational to them in some way with a brief statement posted on a designated area of the bulletin board or included as a part of a monthly newsletter or e-mail announcement. The worksite wellness committee may choose to create a template for the submitted recommend-

ation, including the title, rating on a 1-5 scale, topic, a brief description, and the reason the staff member found this book inspirational.

- **Implement a stairwell initiative.** Check out the Eat Smart, Move More website at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com to view *A Guide to Stairwell Initiatives*. This booklet includes step-by-step instructions for improving the look and feel of stairwells in your worksite building(s), making them a comfortable place for staff members to be physically active, which can reduce stress.

Social Culture

Apart from individual workspace and the general physical space at the workplace it is also important that worksites also have a supportive social culture. The worksite wellness committee may use the following suggestions for creating supportive social cultures at the worksite:

- Select a carpool coordinator for the worksite. Traffic is a major stressor for many individuals. Carpooling is one way that staff member can reduce their own stress and reduce their impact on the environment as well. Carpooling is more successful if there is a coordinator to facilitate the effort. This coordinator can manage a sign-up board where individuals can post requests for others interested in carpooling.
- Select a community care coordinator for your worksite. This is someone who can publish staff member events, such as marriages, births, deaths, graduations, promotions, and others, through e-mail announcements, bulletin boards, or newsletters.
- Recognize birthdays. This can be an inexpensive but nice way to make staff members feel valued at work. Keep it simple – a happy birthday wish makes anyone feel good on their birthday. Other ideas include: decorating the staff member's workspace on their birthday or hosting a once-a-month birthday celebration to celebrate all employees' birthdays in that month. Again, a birthday coordinator or social events chair should be selected in advance.
- Establish a staff recognition program. This type of program may already be in place at the school, district, or state level, but recognition coming directly from co-workers or administration may have a more immediate and greater positive impact on staff. Some examples of ways to recognize staff members include:
 - Employee of the Month: This becomes more meaningful if accompanied by a perk. Some possibilities include: a reserved parking space, having priority over other staff members for the most comfortable chair in the break room, a free pass on cafeteria duty or hall monitoring, or being excused from an office duty that rotates monthly, such as making the coffee or watering the plants.
 - Staff Spotlight: Provide a bulletin board or monthly newsletter that features one staff member each month and shares some personal information or experience, such as a recent event or vacation, news about their children or grandchildren, or a new hobby.
 - Yearly Recognition Program: Once a year, time set aside for staff members to spend together while their achievements are recognized can increase staff morale. An annual picnic or holiday party might be combined with this recognition event.
 - Staff Appreciation Week: Designate one week as Staff Appreciation Week. Talk with local businesses prior to the event to solicit coupons or giveaways.

Posters

Health messages displayed in high traffic areas can inform staff of facts and reinforce healthy behaviors.

The posters should be changed regularly depending upon the number of times staff members pass by the message. **Generally, after seeing the same message 10-20 times, people become desensitized to it and no longer 'see' it.** A good rule of thumb would be to change posters once a month. Leaving the poster spot empty for a couple of weeks may also increase response to a new poster message.

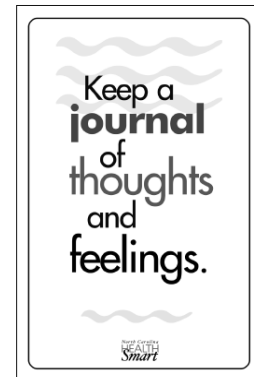
See **Appendix C** for sample posters that can be printed from the CD-ROM provided with the toolkit.

Appendix D contains samples of motivational quotes related to stress and relaxation. These quotes are provided as a ready-to-print size in the CD-ROM. Post different quotes throughout your worksite and switch them around each week or post the same quote at several places and change it after a week or two.

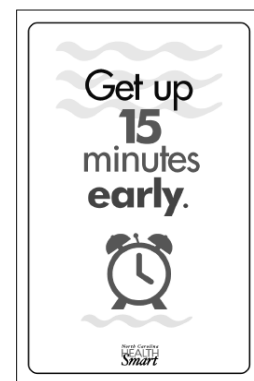
Posters relating to stress management can also be downloaded or ordered for charge from the following online sources:

Related Links

- www.krames.com
- www.parlay.com
- www.hopehealth.com



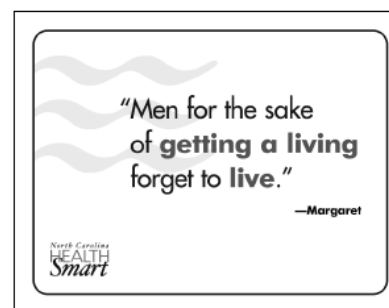
MS.Poster18Journal.pdf



MS.Poster20Early.pdf



MSQuote3Ovid.pdf



MSQuote4Live.pdf

Lending Library

Establishing a lending library of books and videos for staff members is one way to support their efforts to manage stress both at work and at home.

The following are suggestions for stocking your lending library.

Public Library

Many public libraries carry an extensive collection of books, videos and audio books on topics including stress management and relaxation. Contact the public library in your area for more information.

Staff Members

Staff member in your worksite may own stress management or relaxation books, videos or audio books and might be willing to 'dust them off' and share them with co-workers. Trading materials can add variety as well as help employees discover which stress relievers work best for them.

Library Book Sale or Used Book Store

If funds are available, visit a library book sale or a used book store for great deals on pre-owned books, videos, or audio books related to stress management or relaxation.

SECTION V

Additional Resources

Manage STRESS

Additional Resources

The following is a listing of some organizations and programs that provide useful information related to stress management.

American Psychological Association

The American Psychological Association is a scientific and professional organization that represents psychology in the United States. This website offers information on many psychology-related topics including stress.

Website:

www.apa.org/topics/topicstress.html

Job Stress Network

The purpose of this site is to provide a source for relevant information to job stress research and to facilitate communication between researchers and the public.

Website: www.workhealth.org

Mindtools

The stress management section of Mind Tools provides information about surviving and thriving under the intense stress that comes with a challenging career. This website offers a range of stress management techniques and tools, including articles, a stress diary, a newsletter and other resources. Stress management products are available for a fee along with an online counseling service.

Website:

www.mindtools.com/smpage.html

National Institute of Mental Health

The National Institute of Mental Health, a part of the National Institutes of Health, is the largest scientific organization in the world dedicated to research focused on the understanding, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders and the promotion of mental health. This organization works to improve mental health through biomedical research on mind, brain, and behavior. This website provides fact sheets about stress related topics and a variety of other information related to mental health.

Website: www.nimh.nih.gov

NIOSH

The 'Stress At Work' section of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health website provides several resources for managing workplace stress, including a video, booklet, publications, and links to other resources.

Website: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/stress

Stress Less

Stress Less offers a wide selection of high quality stress reduction products and programs for use in coping with the devastating mental, emotional and physical effects of excess stress. The website offers a free Stress Assessment Questionnaire that can be used online by individuals. Other products include a comprehensive stress reduction program, body and mind relaxation tapes, an on-line anxiety

program, relaxation music, a weight reduction program, and newsletters. An on-line counseling service is also available which allows you the privacy and convenience of talking to a Licensed Psychologist, Registered Dietitian, Exercise Physiologist, or Counselor from the comfort of your home or workplace.

Website: www.stressless.com

The American Institute of Stress

The American Institute of Stress provides information to enhance the understanding of the role of stress in health and illness. The website provides general information related to stress. Newsletters that provide information about the latest advances in stress research and informational packets that focus on specific stress-related topics are also available for purchase.

Website: www.stress.org



APPENDICES

Manage STRESS

COMING SOON!

LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN

This **activity** will help you **reduce workplace stress** and learn effective ways to **manage stress**.

Sign up for LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN begins on: _____

The activity will begin on: _____

And end on: _____

NOTHING TO LOSE...BUT YOUR STRESS

Don't be left out! Join the FUN

For more information about LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN, contact the coordinator

At _____

APPENDIX C: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Posters



MS.Poster1Apologize.pdf



MS.Poster2StandUp.pdf



MS.Poster3Change.pdf



MS.Poster4Count.pdf

APPENDIX C: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Posters



MS.Poster5Blessings.pdf



MS.Poster6Caffeine.pdf



MS.Poster7OneThing.pdf

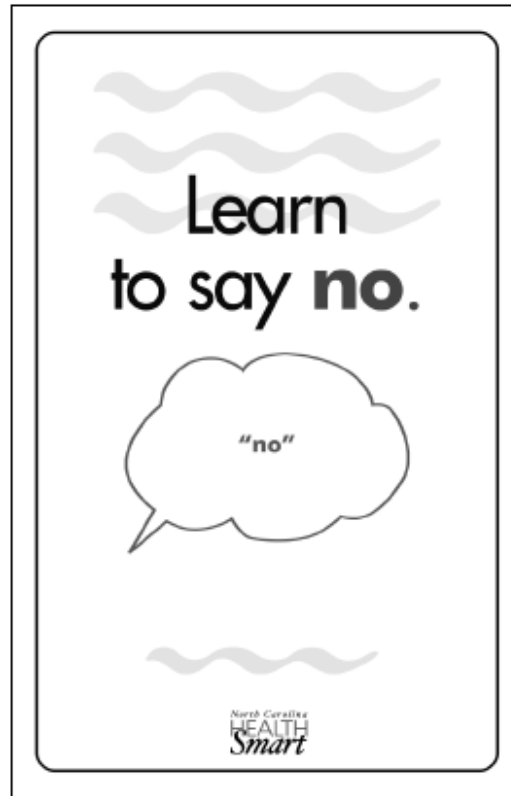


MS.Poster8Grateful.pdf

APPENDIX C: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Posters



MS.Poster9Clasp.pdf



MS.Poster10No.pdf

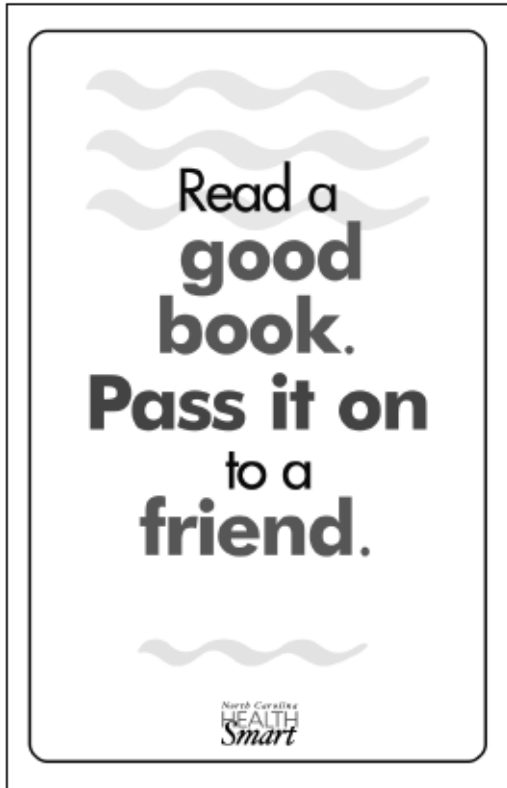


MS.Poster11Read.pdf



MS.Poster12Play.pdf

APPENDIX C: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Posters



MS.Poster13GoodBook.pdf



MS.Poster14List.pdf



MS.Poster15Practice.pdf

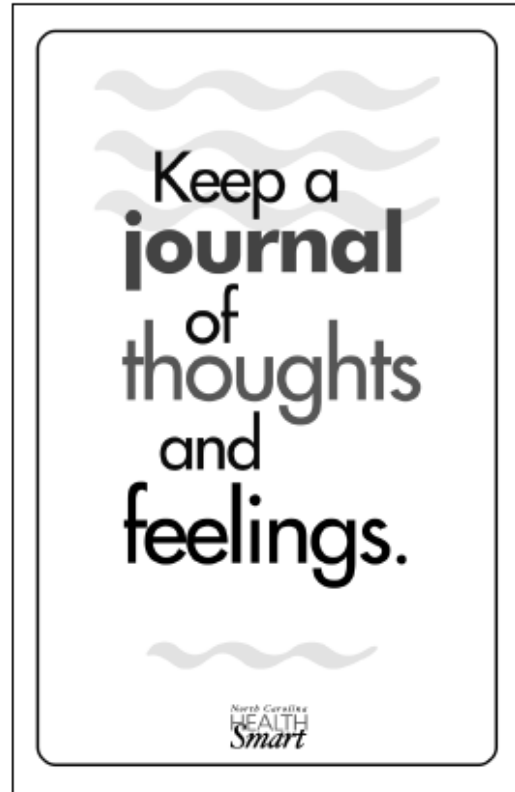


MS.Poster16Walk.pdf

APPENDIX C: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Posters



MS.Poster17Different.pdf



MS.Poster18Journal.pdf



MS.Poster19Laugh.pdf



MS.Poster20Early.pdf

APPENDIX C: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Posters



MS.Poster21TV.pdf



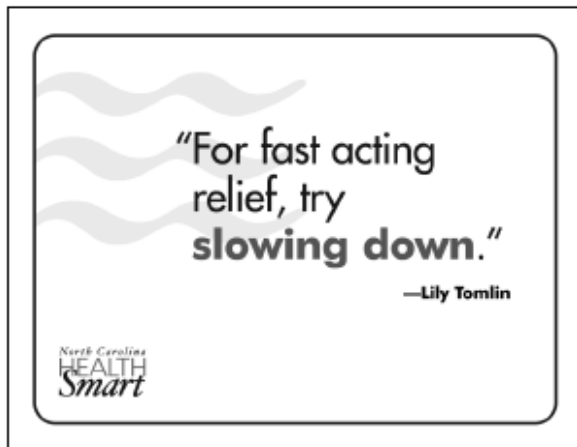
MS.Poster22Breath.pdf



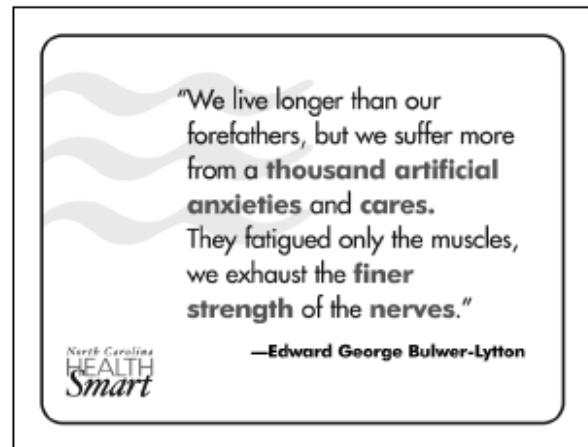
MS.Poster23Bike.pdf

APPENDIX D: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Quotes

The following motivational quotes can be printed as single copies from the CD-ROM.



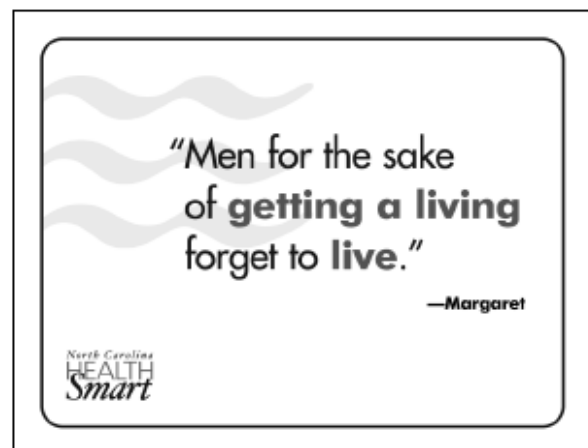
MSQuote1Relief.pdf



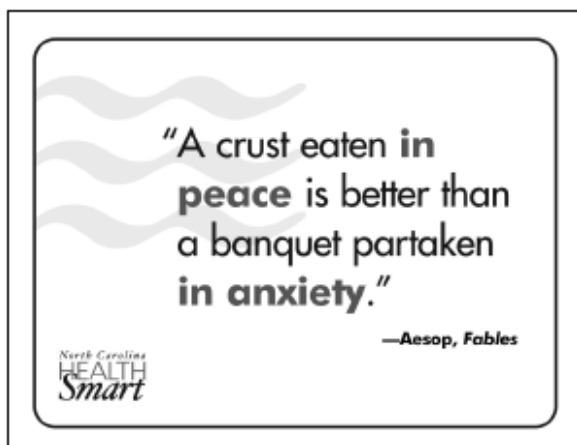
MSQuote2Nerves.pdf



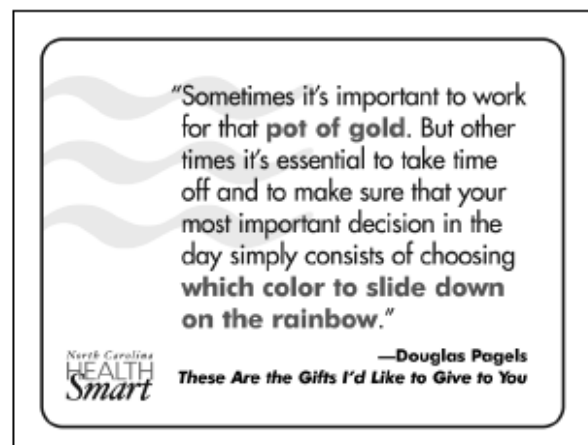
MSQuote3Ovid.pdf



MSQuote4Live.pdf

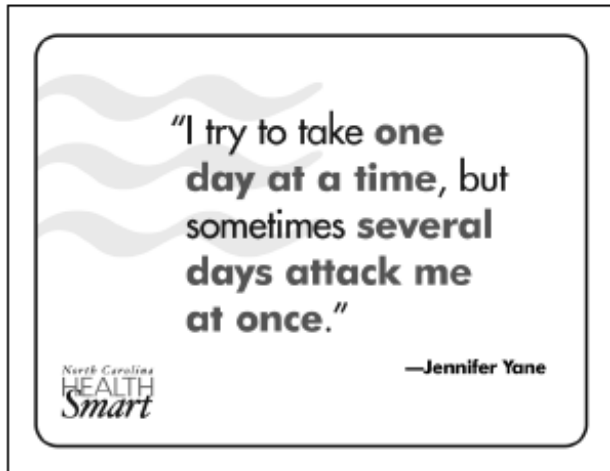


MSQuote5Aesop.pdf

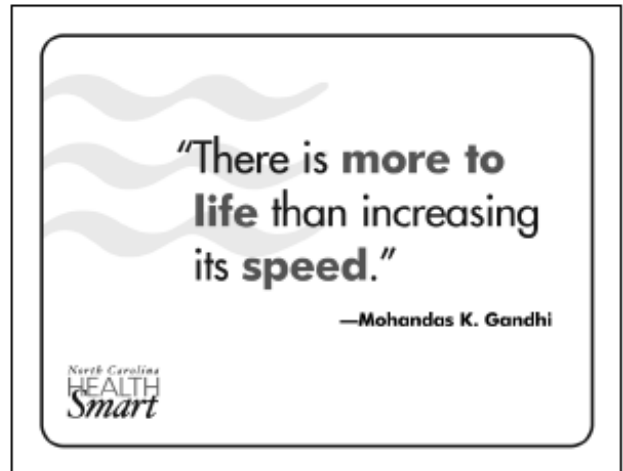


MSQuote6Rainbow.pdf

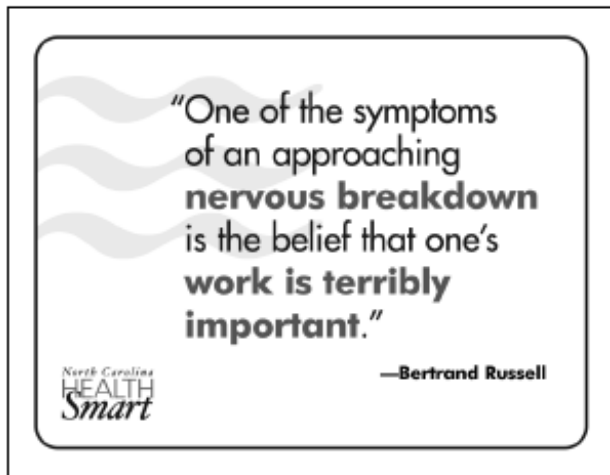
APPENDIX D: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Quotes



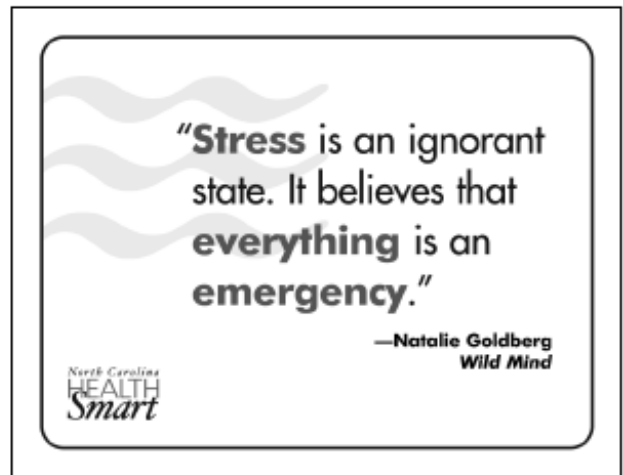
MSQuote7Attack.pdf



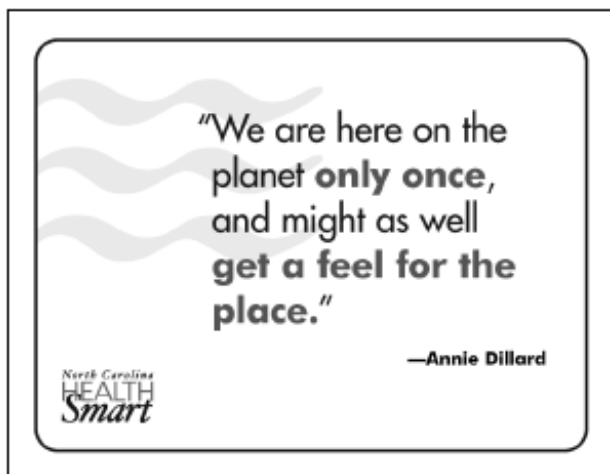
MSQuote8Ghandi.pdf



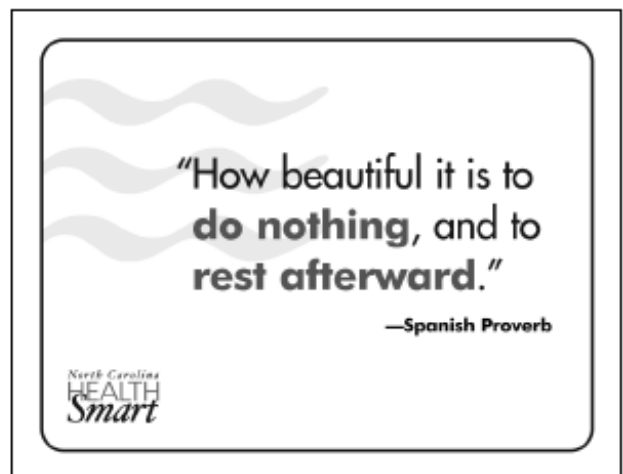
MSQuote9Breakdown.pdf



MSQuote10Stress.pdf

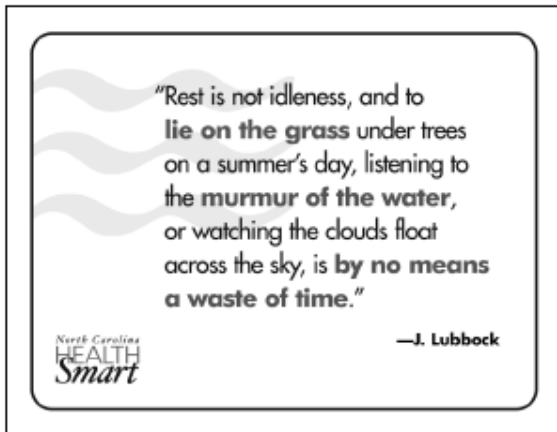


MSQuote11Planet.pdf

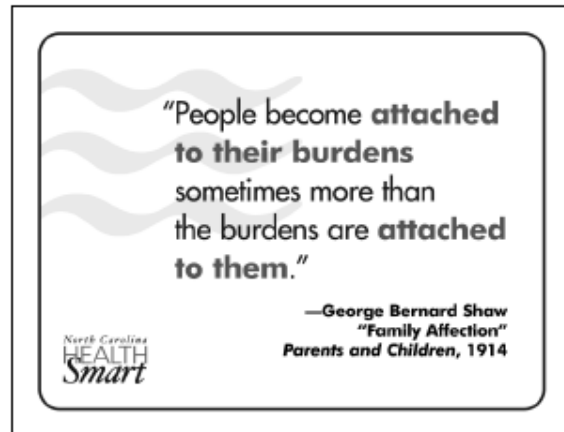


MSQuote12Nothing.pdf

APPENDIX D: MANAGE STRESS Motivational Quotes



MSQuote13Idleness.pdf



MSQuote14Burdens.pdf

APPENDIX E: LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Pledge Card

Because I care about my health, I pledge to take steps to
MANAGE STRESS for the next _____ days/weeks.



Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signs and Symptoms of Stress:

Stress can affect you physically, behaviorally, and cognitively or emotionally. However, the signs and symptoms of stress vary from person to person. Below are a few common signs and symptoms of stress.

Physical signs and symptoms:

- Headaches
- Chest pain or rapid heartbeat
- Exhaustion or fatigue
- Insomnia or other sleep problems
- Muscle aches, muscle tension, or even back pain
- Clenching or grinding teeth
- Weight gain or loss
- Digestive concerns such as diarrhea, constipation, stomach upset or nausea

Behavioral signs and symptoms:

- Over or under eating
- Use or abuse of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- Decreased productivity or neglecting responsibilities
- Isolating oneself or social withdrawal
- Relationship and interpersonal conflicts

Cognitive and emotional signs and symptoms:

- Forgetfulness and memory problems
- Moodiness or mood swings
- Depression, sadness, or sense of loneliness/isolation
- Anger, irritability, anxiety, short temper, or impatience
- Job dissatisfaction or burnout

Reference:

Mayo Clinic. Accessed at http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-symptoms/SR00008_D

APPENDIX G: LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Log

LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Log

Directions: Use this stress management log to record your daily signs and symptoms of stress in addition to the technique(s) used to help manage stress. After several days or weeks review the log to determine if there are specific signs and symptoms that you experience regularly or stress reduction techniques that you are most likely to use.

The first row has been completed as an example.

	Date	Signs and Symptoms of Stress						Stress Reduction Technique(s)					
		Headache	Muscle ache	Mood swings	Job burnout	Social withdrawal	Other	Relaxation techniques	Use of humor	Breathing techniques	Social support	Exercise	Other
Ex.	3.8			✓		✓			✓		✓		
Week 1													
Week 2													
Week 3													
Week 4													
Week 5													

APPENDIX H: LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Certificate of Achievement

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

This Certificate is being presented to _____
for the successful completion of the LESSEN YOUR STRESSEN Activity
for the period of _____ to _____.

Presented by _____

Worksite _____

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APPENDIX I: Questionnaires

Determine Your Humor Quotient

Circle **7** if the statement is very **characteristic** of you.

Circle **1** if the statement is very **uncharacteristic** of you.

1. My boss would describe me as a "Humor Asset"	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. My co-workers & family would list my sense of humor as one of my best assets.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I avoid sarcasm, ethnic or negative humor except in private conversations with close friends.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I can laugh at my own mistakes and enjoy occasionally being poked fun at.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I laugh alone when I feel something is funny.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. As a humor consumer, I easily laugh and enjoy laughing at jokes and stories others share.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. I seek out cartoons, comedy shows, comedians and other humor stimulants.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. I write down humorous stories and keep cartoons and articles that promote humor.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. When stressed on the job, my sense of humor helps me keep my perspective.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
11. I spontaneously look for the funny side of life and share it with others.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
12. I send humorous notes and cartoons to friends, co-workers and customers.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
13. My sense of humor makes it hard for people to stay mad at me.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14. I love to tell humorous stories to make my point in on-the-job communication.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
15. I sometimes act silly at unexpected times.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
16. I am comfortable laughing out loud with co-workers.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
17. I use humor to help myself and others recall important things.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Add up your score: _____

120-140 You are lying or can't read!

91-119 You're a Humor Pro, keep up the good work.

71-90 You're fertile ground, just need humor cultivation.

45-70 Very serious condition, you suffer from AADS (Acquired Amusement Deficiency Syndrome)

Below 45 Drastic measures needed. You have TS (Terminal Seriousness)



Source: Paulson, Terry. 1989. Making Humor Work.

APPENDIX I: Questionnaires

How Well Do You Listen?

Rate the following 10 statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with **1 = lowest** and **5 = highest**.

1. I always attempt to give every person I speak to equal time to talk.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I really enjoy what other people have to say.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I never have difficulty waiting until someone finishes talking so that I can have my say.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I listen even when I do not particularly like the person talking.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I listen even when I do not agree with what the person who is talking is saying.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I put away what I am doing while someone is talking.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I always look directly at the person who is talking and give that person my full attention.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I encourage other people to talk by my nonverbal messages, such as gestures, facial expressions and posture.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I ask for clarification of words and ideas I do not understand.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I respect every person's right to his or her opinions, even if I disagree with them.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring:

Add all the points above to arrive at your score _____

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 40-50 | Terrific listener |
| 30-39 | Pretty good listener |
| 20-20 | Not listening well to others |
| 19 or under | Very poor listener |



APPENDIX J: Workspace Evaluation and Suggested Solutions

Workspace Evaluation

Use the following checklist to identify whether your workspace is ergonomically suitable for reducing the risks for musculo-skeletal disorders and repetitive motion strain. If you answer “no” to any item follow the corresponding suggestions given after the checklist.

1. Are you able to change position throughout the day (e.g. alternate sitting or standing)?
 Yes No
2. Do you adjust your keyboard and/or monitor position as appropriate when you change posture?
 Yes No
3. Do you incorporate variety into your daily schedule (e.g. keying, talking on the phone, photocopying, moving around or changing postures)?
 Yes No
4. Does the back of your chair provide good lumbar support to the arch in the small of your back?
 Yes No
5. When you sit in your chair with your back against the backrest, is there clearance between the backs of your knees and the edge of your chair?
 Yes No
6. When you sit in your chair, are your thighs approximately parallel to the floor?
 Yes No
7. Are your feet supported by the floor or a footrest when you sit in your chair?
 Yes No
8. When seated at your workstation is there sufficient room underneath the work surface or keyboard tray for your legs and knees?
 Yes No
9. Are your monitor and documents located directly in front of you and in the recommended viewing area?
 Yes No
10. If you often talk on the phone for long periods of time, or while keying or writing, do you have access to headsets or speakerphones?
 Yes No
11. Are your shoulders relaxed with elbows close to your torso while keying?
 Yes No
12. Are your elbows relaxed and resting by your torso when you key or use a mouse?
 Yes No
13. Do you key and mouse with your hands and wrists in a neutral position? (Forearm, wrist and hand form a fairly straight line)
 Yes No
14. Would you describe your typing style as a “light” touch on the keys?
 Yes No
15. Is your viewing distance to your monitor 20 inches (50 cm) or more?
 Yes No
16. Are there any reflections or glare on your monitor screen or is light shining into your eyes?
 Yes No
17. Do you have appropriate illumination when reading printed materials or when reading from your monitor?
 Yes No
18. Have you had an eye exam in the last two years?
 Yes No
19. If you wear bifocals or trifocals, can you see the monitor comfortably?
 Yes No

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APPENDIX J: Workspace Evaluation and Suggested Solutions

Suggested Solutions



If you answered “no” for any item in the checklist, it means that you can take simple steps to reduce the risk and improve your workspace.

- 1. Change Positions:** You should stand up to perform a stretch or two each hour while working on your computer. Alternate tasks during the day (e.g., from keying to copying to making phone calls, etc.). Incorporating movement into your day improves circulation and helps prevent fatigue and discomfort.
- 2. Adjust Workstation:** Changing postures may require you to readjust your chair, keyboard or monitor for overall comfort, circulation and fatigue reduction. For example, moving from the upright to the reclined posture may require you to lower your seat height to maintain foot support.
- 3. Varied Activities:** Alternate tasks during the day (e.g., keying to copying to making phone calls, etc.). Incorporating movement into your day improves circulation and helps prevent fatigue and discomfort.
- 4. Lumbar Support:** If possible, adjust the back of your chair to reposition the lumbar area to better fit your lower back. Use a lumbar support (cushion or pillow).
- 5. Seat Depth:** If possible, adjust your chair seat depth so you can sit fully back in your chair. Sometimes this is accomplished by moving the seat back and forth, and sometimes by repositioning the back of the chair. Obtain a lumbar accessory that will position you farther forward in your chair and still provide good back support.
- 6. Seat Height:** Raise or lower your chair seat until your thighs and buttocks are evenly supported. If raising your chair, make sure your feet remain supported. If your chair doesn't adjust low enough, use a foot rest.
- 7. Foot Support:** Lower your chair until you feel the floor supporting your feet. Maintain proper orientation to the keyboard/mouse. If not possible, obtain a footrest.
- 8. Leg Room:** An adjustable keyboard tray may provide more thigh clearance. Lower your chair. Raise your work surface. Clear out materials, wires, equipment, and papers stored within your leg space.
- 9. Monitor Position:** Move your monitor directly behind your keyboard. The only exception to this rule is if you view your copy more than your monitor. Then, consider placing the copy directly behind your keyboard and the monitor slightly off to one side. Use a copy holder which accommodates the printed material you are reading (e.g., double wide or extra sturdy for heavy items). Position copy within easy view.
- 10. Phone Use:** If you *infrequently* cradle the phone between your head and shoulder, consider attaching a phone hand cradle. If you *frequently* cradle the phone between your head and shoulder, consider obtaining a phone head set.
- 11. Relaxed Shoulders:** Adjust the armrests on your chair so your arms are gently supported. Adjust the height of your keyboard, mouse or other input devices to closely match your seated elbow height.
- 12. Arms by Your Side:** Relocate your keyboard and mouse so you can reach them with your upper arms relaxed by your side. Sit closer to your keyboard and mouse. This may require you to adjust your armrests, work surface height, and other equipment. Make sure you maintain adequate thigh clearance.
- 13. Keying:** Adjust your chair or keyboard tray so your wrists and forearms are in a neutral position, where forearm, wrist and hand form a straight line. Install an articulating keyboard tray. Obtain a wrist rest.
- 14. Keying:** Develop a “light” touch when keying and using the mouse. Enlist the aid of a coworker to help you notice when you are “attacking” the keys. Be especially watchful when working

TIPS TO Ease Tension

Work on your attitude. How you react to stress is determined by how you perceive a particular event. Reframe your response by acknowledging that the stress event is outside of you. You are the center and controller of your response.

Think about something else. Distract yourself to break whatever chain of thought is producing the stress.

Think positively. Think about a success or past achievement.

Take a mental vacation. Visualize or gaze at a postcard or poster of somewhere you would like to be and feel safe.

Recite an anti-stress litany. “This too shall pass.” “Tomorrow is another day.”

Use affirmations. “I can handle this.” “Everyone makes mistakes.” “We are all human.” “Staying calm helps me solve problems.”

Count to 10. Use the pause to breathe and relax. It will allow a more relaxed response and lower tension in muscles.

Look away. Focus on something at least 20 feet away to let eye muscles change tension.

Get up and leave. If appropriate, leave the stressful situation for a little while. Go out to lunch. Walk around the block. The exercise and space gives you time to recover from the stress response.

Take several deep breaths. Stress and tension tighten muscles. Breathe by pushing out with stomach muscles to bring oxygen and energy into your body. Exhale and let go of the stress.

Yell or cry. If the environment is private and safe, emotional release can be healing.

Stretch. Stretching muscles reduces the sensation of stress even when we can’t do anything about the source of the stress.

Massage your target muscles. Recognize which muscle groups you tense up when feeling stress. Massage those muscles to break the stress-tension cycle.

Press on your temples. Ancient application of acupressure using your fingertips moving in small circles over your temples relaxes muscles elsewhere in your neck.

Drop your jaw and roll it left and right. Notice if you clench your teeth when feeling stress. Yawning and jaw stretches release tension.

Stretch your chest for better breathing. Press your shoulder blades together expanding your chest as you inhale. Relax as you exhale. Repeat 4-5 times.

Relax all over. Use progress relaxation techniques to start with your feet and move progressively to your head (feet, legs, chest, arms, neck, head) relaxing each major muscle group one at a time.

Listen to relaxation tapes (natural sounds) or music. Both can promote relaxation and be inspiring.

Give someone a compliment or thank-you.

Share a joke with someone.

Smile at someone or even yourself.

Take a minute to gaze at the photo of a loved one on your desk, wall or in your wallet.

Comb your hair.

Get a drink of water.

Review an item from your happy file—this is a file where you put birthday cards, thank you notes, letters of appreciation, photos, etc.

TIME Management

The following four steps can help individuals manage their time.

KEEPING A LOG

Analyze how you spend your time. Keep a log of your major daily activities for several days. Note any delays or interruptions. It can be eye opening to see where your time goes.

DELEGATING

Are there tasks you currently do that someone else could handle? Ask your children to help out or find a co-worker who wants a new challenge. Remember, how you ask can be as important as what you ask.

PRIORITIZING

Make two lists:

- Make a list of **activities** that need to be done and how much time you normally spend on each activity—it could be a daily or weekly list. For example:
 - meetings, 1 hour
 - shopping, 45 minutes
 - phone calls, 30 minutes
 - paper work, 3 hours
- Make a second list of **values** that are most important to you along with the amount of time you spend on each. For example:
 - faith/spiritual, 5 hours per week
 - marriage, 5 hours per week
 - children, 4 hours per day
 - entertainment, 2 hours per week
 - physical activity, 20 minutes per day
 - hobbies, 1 hour per week
 - work, 8 hours per day

PLAYING

Be sure to make time for play. Schedule breaks, down-time, or play-time in your day. Taking time for yourself can help relieve stress and refresh you so you can accomplish more.

1. Whitney, E., Hamilton, E. 1984. *Understanding Nutrition*. 183-191.

2. Quick, J.C. and Quick, J.D. 1984. "Preventing Distress Through Better Working Relationships." *Management Review*. 30(4).

Let Go THE STRESS

RELAXATION RESPONSE

The following is a simple, brief activity that can be used to allow the physical changes of a stress reaction to subside and return to a non-stress state.

1. Sit (or lie) in a comfortable position in a quiet environment with eyes closed.
2. Begin with your feet and relax each muscle group moving up to the head—calf, thigh, waist, stomach, arms, chest, neck, face, and forehead.
3. Breathe in through your nose gently pushing your stomach out.
4. Breathe out through your mouth and let your stomach relax.
5. Continue for 10-20 minutes. Open your eyes as need to check time, but do not set a time.
6. When finished, open your eyes but remain seated for a couple of minutes.

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

The following is a physical activity that can be used for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.

1. Lie flat on a soft surface or floor with your eyes closed and knees bent.
2. Beginning with your right foot, press foot firmly to the floor for five seconds, relax for five seconds; repeat with the left foot.
3. Straighten legs out and press back of lower right leg firmly to the floor for five seconds, relax for five seconds; repeat with left leg.
4. Press each of the following areas firmly to the floor for 5 seconds, relax for five seconds (one at a time):
 - Back of thighs and buttocks
 - Lower back and shoulder blades
 - Arms
 - Back of head
5. Breathe normally as you press and relax.

Release THE TENSION

SIMPLE YOGA STRETCH

The following physical activity can be used for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.

1. Stand relaxed, arms hanging at sides and feet about one foot apart.
2. Tilt head back and hold for five seconds
3. Roll head forward and hold for five seconds.
4. Curl chest and stomach forward as you bend at the waist; arms dangling for five seconds.
5. Inhale slowly through mouth as you straighten up. Raise arms overhead; drop arms slowly to sides as you exhale slowly through your mouth.

CONTROLLED BREATHING

The following activity can be used for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.

1. Lie down with your back flat on the floor; place a book or large magazine on your stomach.
2. Bend your knees and close your eyes.
3. Push your stomach up 2–3 inches and hold for five seconds, then exhale. Repeat several times. Each time you exhale, say “I am relaxed.” Avoid lifting your chest.

