Manage Stress
WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a physical, mental and emotional response to life’s changes and demands. The level of stress experienced varies widely among individuals. A low level of stress may not be noticeable at all. Occasional, moderate stress can be positive and can challenge individuals to act in creative and resourceful ways. High levels of stress can be harmful, leading to chronic disease.

The stress response is a set of physical and emotional changes the human body makes in response to a perceived threat. It is sometimes referred to as the “fight or flight” response. In a stressful situation, the body releases chemicals that trigger a number of reactions, including:

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Increased sweating
- A sudden rush of strength
- Slowed digestion
- Dilated pupils

Some stress is normal and even useful. If a person needs to work hard or react quickly, the stress response can be helpful. For example, the stress response can help you finish a race or complete a project on time.

However, if stress happens frequently or is long-lasting, it can have negative effects. Stress is linked to headaches, upset stomach, back pain, trouble sleeping, and weakened immune systems. If a person has had health problems, chronic stress may have a negative impact on their condition. Stress can also make a person moody, tense or depressed, affecting relationship and performance at work and school.
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SECTION I

MANAGE STRESS ACTIVITY
ALL WORK AND NO PLAY... IS NOT THE HEALTHY WAY

PURPOSE
The “All Work and No Play...Is Not the Healthy Way” activity will help employees experience less stress and learn effective ways to manage stress at the workplace.

MATERIALS
• Notice to announce the activity (Appendix A)
• Motivational signs/posters (Appendices B and C)
• Stress management handouts (Appendix D)
• Television, video/DVD and video/DVD player

ACTION ITEMS
1. Select “All Work and No Play” Coordinator(s)

(May be more than one person depending upon the size of the worksite.)

2. Adopt one day of the week as the “Laugh Day.” Invite employees to bring their own lunch and join others during a movie show of a funny movie during the lunch break. Plan to continue the activity for 4-6 week period.

3. Announce the show dates, time and location to the employees well in advance (at least two weeks prior to the start of the event). This will give employees time to adjust their schedule so that they can be a part of the fun.

4. Display posters and motivational signs at several locations in the worksite that address stress management. Some sample posters are provided in Appendices B and C. You may choose to use these or get your own from other sources.
5. On the assigned “Laugh Day(s)” arrange for the movie show in a comfortable room; this may be an auditorium, the lunchroom or an empty office with enough space to accommodate people. Make sure that the required equipment to show the movie is in place and working before the show time. Choose to show funny movies/cartoons (Three Stooges, Laurel and Hardy, Marx Brothers, Tom and Jerry). Have the wellness committee develop criteria of “approved” programs/movies.

6. Depending upon the available resources at your worksite, the worksite wellness committee may be able to arrange for some small refreshments such as 100% fruit juice, fresh fruits, pretzels, etc.

7. Distribute a different stress management handout every week after the show. (Appendix D)

EXTRA:

Depending upon the level of support from upper management 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.

- **Management Input**—Request someone from top management to join employees during the movie to show their support for the activity and management’s interest in enhancing the health of the employees.

- **Incentives**—Employees who participate in the activity each week during the entire activity period may be given incentives such as a t-shirt, relaxation music CD, gift certificate to a local spa or cash bonus depending upon the availability of funds.

“For fast acting relief, try slowing down.” —Lily Tomlin

“Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.” —Ovid
SECTION II

MANAGE STRESS CHALLENGE
PURPOSE
This activity will encourage employees to identify their reactions to stress and utilize stress reduction techniques as a means to manage stress.

MATERIALS
- Notice to announce the activity (Appendix E)
- Stress Management sign-in sheet (Appendix F)
- Motivational signs/posters (Appendices B and C)
- Stress Management pledge card (Appendix G)
- Stress Management Log (Appendix H)
- Certificate of Achievement (Appendix I)

ACTION ITEMS
1. Select one or more Stress Management Coordinators

   (May be more than one person depending upon the size of the worksite.)

2. Determine a time period for the “Manage Stress Challenge” activity (recommended duration is 6–8 weeks). It may be helpful to choose a time period that is usually stressful at your worksite (for example, the holidays, close to project deadlines, etc.)

3. Announce the “Manage Stress Challenge” activity to employees. Announcements should be made and posted about two weeks before the start of the activity. Announcement poster is available in Appendix E. Clearly specify the start and end dates of the event and note where to sign up to participate.

4. Post a sign-in sheet for the “Manage Stress Challenge” activity at least one week before the start date of the event. A sign-in sheet is available in Appendix F).

5. Display motivational posters and signs (Appendices B and C) at several locations to encourage and support employees in their efforts to manage stress.
SUPPORT MATERIALS

The “Manage Stress Challenge” activity coordinator should provide the following support materials to all employees who sign up to participate in the challenge:

- Provide employees with information about the possible signs and symptoms of stress and a description of several stress reduction techniques to help them determine their own stress level and techniques to manage stress (Appendix D).

- Provide each participating employees with a “Manage Stress Challenge” log (Appendix H) to maintain a daily record of the signs and symptoms of stress in addition to techniques they used to manage stress. Remind employees to complete their logs daily and to report the number of days they used the log to the Activity Coordinator at the end of the activity period.

- Keeping a “Manage Stress Challenge” personal pledge card (Appendix G) in their purse, wallet or desk may be beneficial for some employees to remind them of their commitment to manage stress.

AFTER THE ACTIVITY

- The Activity Coordinator should review employees’ reports on the number of days they completed the “Manage Stress Challenge” log.

- The Activity Coordinator should present a Certificate of Achievement (Appendix I) to all employees who submitted their results. The wellness committee may want to host a post-activity event for all participants. At this event, the certificates can be presented and participants can share their experience with managing stress. Ask them to share which techniques they found helpful.

- Remind employees that although this is the end of the activity, this should not be the end of their efforts to manage stress.

EXTRA:

Depending on the level of support from management 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:

- Management Input—Challenge management to participate in the activity, or request that a member of management sign the Certificate of Achievement presented to activity participants.

- Incentives—Provide Incentives to employees who participate in the activity each week during the entire activity period. These could include a stress ball, relaxation music CD, gift certificates to a local spa, or a work specific bonus. Funding for incentives can be secured in several ways, including soliciting contributions from local businesses or by using existing wellness programming budget funds, if available. Low or no-cost incentives like management recognition or recognition in newsletters, emails or on a bulletin board may also inspire employees to manage stress.
SECTION III

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP RESOURCES

MANAGE STRESS
Employees at your worksite may benefit by participating in individual activities conducted by the worksite wellness committee. Examples of such one-time/short-term activities are:

**PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

Creating a personal mission or vision statement is one way for individuals to gain a sense of control in stressful changing environments. Print and frame a personal mission statement and keep it in your workspace. When stress becomes evident, review your personal mission statement to center yourself outside of the external stresses of the workplace. Include three things in a personal mission/vision statement that are unchanging for you:

- what you want to be (what character you want to have)
- what you want to do (your personal contributions and achievements)
- what you value (principles on which being and doing are based)

**LAUGH DAY**

Laughter is positively associated with reducing stress. Create a Laugh Day such as a “Fun Friday” or “Once A Month Humor Day”, to reduce stress in the workplace and among employees. The wellness committee may show a funny G rated video (Three Stooges, Laurel & Hardy, Marx Brothers, etc.) during the lunch break period on the Laugh Day. Post humorous posters or jokes on the notice board or other appropriate place.

**INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRES**

Individual employees 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 J. These can be printed from this guide or downloaded at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html.

**RELAXATION RESPONSE**

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

The following is a simple, brief 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.

- Sit (or lie) in a comfortable position in a quiet environment with eyes closed.
- Begin with your feet and relax each muscle group moving up to the head—calf, thigh, waist, stomach, arms, chest, neck, face, and forehead.
• Breathe in through your nose gently pushing your stomach out.
• Breathe out through your mouth and let your stomach relax.
• Continue for 10-20 minutes. Open your eyes as needed to check time, but do not set a time.
• 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 by individuals or a group for releasing muscle tension triggered as a response to stress.
• Lie flat on a soft surface or floor with your eyes closed and knees bent.
• Beginning with your right foot, press foot firmly to the floor for five seconds, relax for five seconds; repeat with the left foot.
• Straighten legs out and press back of lower right leg firmly to the floor for five seconds, relax for five second; repeat with left leg.
• Press each of the following areas firmly to the floor for five seconds, relax for five seconds (One at a time):
  —Back of thighs and buttocks
  —Lower back and shoulder blades
  —Arms
  —Back of head
• 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.
• Stand relaxed, arms hanging at sides and feet about one foot apart.
• Tilt head back and hold for five seconds
• Roll head forward and hold for five seconds.
• Curl chest and stomach forward as you bend at the waist; arms dangling for five seconds.
• Inhale slowly through mouth as you straighten up. Raise arms overhead; drop arms slowly to sides as you exhale slowly though 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.
• Lie down with your back flat on the floor; place a book or large magazine on your stomach.
• Bend your knees and close your eyes.
• Push your stomach up 2-3 inches and hold for five seconds, then exhale. Repeat several time. Each time you exhale, say “I am relaxed.” Avoid lifting your chest.

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 can share and provide a sound board for common experiences. Educational intervention groups are designed to meet for a specific number of times to cover specific educational or skills building content. Employees 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 with similar interests to your own.
• Make a date to do something with a positive person. Negative people zap your energy—seek out positive people who can motivate, inspire, and support you.
• Be a good neighbor. Try to meet those who live near you. Have a block party, invite neighbors over for a cookout, take cookies over, offer to care for a pet, the yard, or pick up mail 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.
• Send a note to someone recognizing a special talent or time they were particularly helpful. So often we think positive thoughts, but do not communicate them.
• Practice being a good listener. Strive to be “other-centered.”

MANAGE STRESS
RECOVER, REFOCUS, REGENERATE

Major life changes occur in all of our lives: promotions, relocations, parenthood, lay offs, divorces, deaths, etc. Whether these events are welcomed or unwelcomed, 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 some time for yourself. Take small breaks to go to the movies, 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 in the realm of your life. You may find you have mixed emotions.

For example, a promotion may increase your salary, but give you uncomfortable or 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, counselor, or human resource professional may speed the healing process.

• **Regenerate**—All change is stressful to your body. Your body needs time to heal after a stressful event. Be sure to get plenty of rest, avoid alcohol and cigarettes, and eat properly. Try to increase your circle of social support—connect with new people or reinforce old friendships. Enroll in a class or start a new hobby. Often the city Parks and Recreation Department offers low-cost classes in pottery, painting, etc. A class at a community college or university may be a way to connect with new people.
The worksite wellness committee may offer scheduled classes for employees to support and encourage them to effectively manage their workplace stress.

The educational sessions may be presented as a series of Lunch & Learn 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 with the employees or a video presentation may be scheduled during the lunch break period.

GUEST SPEAKERS

• One advantage of having a guest speaker come and talk to employees is that questions can be answered during or after the session.

• The speaker needs to know the audience. Different presentations may be appropriate for all women groups, or all men groups, or employees who are interested in specific topics. When marketing the session, provide a brief explanation of the target groups the session is trying to reach. Other participants can attend, but at least they will understand why the content is presented to a narrow audience.

• The speaker needs to know the time frame. If the Lunch & Learn presentation is not designed to take the entire meal break, then staying on schedule is important.

• Ask the guest speaker if skills can be practiced or handout materials can be provided. Encourage the speaker to include interactive sessions appropriate for adult learners.

• The guest speaker should be a recognized authority with appropriate credentials and experience on managing stress or general health topics. For example, a social worker, psychologist or mental health professional.

POTENTIAL LUNCH & LEARN SPEAKERS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT MIGHT INCLUDE:

Public Health Department Staff
• 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

American Cancer Society

American Heart Association

Local university and college faculty

Local school counselors

County-specific contact information for some of the above listed professionals can be found at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com
FILM PRESENTATIONS

• Presenting information to employees using a DVD or film is an easy and convenient means of conducting Lunch & Learn sessions.

• Before using the DVD or film make sure that it is from a reputable source and the information contained in it is accurate.

• Select DVDs or films that fit the Lunch & Learn time frame and are designed for adults.

• Preview the DVD or film to assure that it is appropriate for your worksite and the audience. Remember health issues are seen differently by different cultures and materials chosen should respect diversity.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR GUEST SPEAKERS/VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

Stress management
Time management
  • Being organized, reducing clutter
  • Setting priorities
  • Creating “to do” lists
Planning and organization
Parenting Skills (PET—Parent Effectiveness Training)
Elder Care Issues
Using Humor to Manage Stress
Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy as Stress Management Tool
Conflict Resolution
Positive Attitude
Mediation
SECTION IV

RESOURCES FOR WORKSITE POLICIES
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 daily living.

We can write policy at any level. Organizations such as worksites, and communities such as a school district, can have policy. On a higher level, state law can be policy. Policies can create change in our surroundings that help us improve our overall outlook on life. For example, an informal worksite policy could be to keep employees informed of and provide opportunities to build coping skills that may help them deal more effectively with stress in the workplace and at home.

WHY DO WE NEED POLICIES FOR MANAGING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE?

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;
• 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.

More recent survey results from a 2007 Gallup poll reveal that four in ten Americans feel stressed. In addition:
• 46% of 30-49-year-olds reported frequent stress
• 43% of full-time and 46% of part-time workers reported frequent stress

WHAT ARE INFORMAL POLICIES?

Some employees may agree to implement “informal” policies to support addressing the demands of the workplace and promoting positive stress reactions by employees. These policies may or may not be written but should be publicly supported and widely communicated to employees during staff meetings, etc. Participation and compliance to these policies would be voluntary.

An example of an informal workplace policy for stress management might be the use of lunchroom for stretching and relieving stress by individual employees during coffee breaks. Another informal means of reducing stress may be the creation of support groups among co-workers to get support and encouragement to deal with job pressures.
WHAT ARE FORMAL POLICIES?

An informal policy often times leads to a formal written policy. A formal policy would include a statement of intent by the employer and would be applicable to all employees. For instance, some employees might be using their coffee breaks for relaxation and body stretching. Senior management may see that this informal policy should become a formal, written policy for all employees that offers them resources for relaxation and reducing stress. Examples of some formal policies are provided below:

• 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 work place stress and effectively manage work place 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 keep employees informed of and provide opportunities 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 recognize and support healthy ways for employees to 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 workplace environment that encourages employees to incorporate stress management into their daily routine and that values employee wellness as an essential part of both personal and corporate well-being.
SECTION V

RESOURCES FOR WORKSITE ENVIRONMENTS
ERGONOMIC REVIEW OF WORK SPACE

Ergonomics is an applied science concerned with designing and arranging things in the workplace so that people and things interact most efficiently and safely. 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 includes working postures, materials handling, repetitive movements, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, workplace layout, safety, and health. Your 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 minimize fatigue and avoid injury.

See Appendix K for ways to assess individual workspace and simple steps that can reduce health risks by changing posture, process, workspace, or movement.

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

The 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.

The Wellness Committee may be able to influence management 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 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.
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 B 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 oxygen 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 recommendation, 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.
Apart from individual workspace and the general physical space at the workplace it is also important that employees are offered enough and supportive cultural space. The worksite wellness committee may use the following suggestions for creating relaxing cultural space at the worksite:

- Suggest flexible time scheduling for employees—this reduces stress by enabling people to cope with traffic, childcare, etc.

- Select a carpool coordinator for the worksite—traffic is a major stressor for many individuals. Carpooling is more successful if there is a designated “office coordinator” to facilitate. For example, your local transit authority can work with local offices to facilitate carpools.

- Select a Community Care coordinator for your worksite—this is someone who can “publish” (email/bulletin board or combination) employee events such as marriages, births, deaths, illness, surgery, etc. (with permission of the individual of course). It is a good idea to ask what people prefer—“no mention, please share, cards welcome but no visitors, email appreciated but no phone calls,” etc.

- Recognize employee birthdays—this can be a very inexpensive but nice way to make employees feel valued. Keep it simple—a “happy birthday” wish affirms the individual just for being born! Another example for birthday recognition is for individual offices to hold a celebration once per month for employee birthdays. Again, it is suggested to select a coordinator.

- Establish an employee recognition program—this may already be in place at a local, regional or state level. Employees can never receive too much praise. Giving employees opportunities to be recognized helps to spread good feelings all around. Examples include:
  
  — **Employee of the Month:** this becomes meaningful if accompanied by a perk and these do not have to cost money. Worksites should be creative with what is valued at their space. Some possibilities might include a reserved parking space near the door, having the “rocking chair” or recliner in their office for the month or at least having first “dibs” on it in the break or lounge area, being excused from making the coffee for the month (if that is an office duty that rotates), etc.

  — **Employee Spotlight:** provide a bulletin board or monthly newsletter that features a member of the staff and shares some personal information about the employee.

  — **Yearly Recognition Program:** a “brag” program for services well performed.

  — **Appreciation Week:** some local businesses may be willing to give “coupons” for 10% off, a free visit, buy one-get one free, etc.
Health messages displayed in high traffic areas can inform employees of facts and reinforce healthy behaviors.

The poster needs to be changed regularly depending on the number of times employees pass by the message. After seeing the same poster 10-20 times, people become desensitized to it and no longer “see” it. A good rule of thumb would be to change posters (messages) about once a month. Leaving the poster “spot” empty for a couple of weeks will also increase response to a new poster message.

See Appendix B for sample posters/messages. Appendix C contains samples of several motivating quotes related to stress and relaxation. These can be downloaded at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html. Post different quotes at different places at your worksite and switch around every week or post the same quote at several places and change it after 1–2 weeks.
LITERATURE RACKS AND BULLETIN BOARDS

Literature racks can be a convenient way to keep the idea of managing and reducing stress visible in the workplace. Commercial literature racks are available from office and library supply stores. Simple literature holders can be made from attractive plastic or ceramic flowerpots, baskets or other household items.

Use an attractive holder in a highly visible location to hold handouts/one-pagers, brochures and pamphlets on managing or reducing stress. Some sample handouts are provided in Appendix D. These handouts are available for download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Stress management messages displayed on bulletin boards in high traffic areas can encourage employees to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors. Ask management to place a bulletin board in a prominent place at the worksite for wellness information. Examples of posters and motivational quotes are available in Appendices B and C. Additionally, handouts are available in Appendix D. These can be downloaded at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html.

Be sure to change messages regularly so that employees do not become desensitized. Generally, after seeing the same message 10-20 times, people no longer “see it.” A good rule of thumb would be to change posters, messages and handouts once/month.
Establishing a lending library of videos and books for employees is one way to support efforts to manage stress on and off the job site.

The following are suggestions on how and where to get stress management video and audio materials for the lending library:

PUBLIC LIBRARY
Many public libraries carry an extensive collection of books and videos on topics including stress management and relaxation. Contact the public library in your area for information. Then make the list available via the internet or on bulletin boards at your worksite.

EMPLOYEES
Employees may own books, videos or audio recordings and would be willing to “dust them off” or bring them in to share with others. Sharing comedy, relaxation or motivational recordings with a group using employee owned videos gives employees a chance to contribute to the activity. Trading books, videos, or audio recordings 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 managing stress.
COMING SOON!

All Work and No Play...
Is Not the Healthy Way

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

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE LESS STRESS?
Bring your lunch and join your co-workers for a show full of laughter every ________________.

NOTHING TO LOSE...BUT YOUR STRESS

Mark your calendars

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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Don’t be left out! Join the FUN!

For more information about All Work and No Play, contact the activity coordinator at ________________________________

This activity is presented by your Worksite Wellness Committee

WORKWell NC
APPENDIX B: POSTERS

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html

Apologize for a mistake.

Stand up and stretch.

Change your coffee break to a physical activity break.

Count to ten—or 1000—before exploding.
APPENDIX B: Posters

Count your blessings—make a list.

Cut back on caffeine.

Do one thing at a time.

Find someone you are grateful for and thank them.

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html
APPENDIX B: POSTERS

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html

Clasp your arms behind your back and stretch your shoulders.

Learn to say no.

Read something funny every day.

Make time for play.
APPENDIX B: POSTERS

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html

Read a good book. Pass it on to a friend.

Make a list. Then follow it.

Practice laughing out loud.

Go for a brisk walk.
APPENDIX B: POSTERS

Go to work a different way.

Keep a journal of thoughts and feelings.

Laugh at something you did.

Get up 15 minutes early.

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html
APPENDIX B: Posters

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html

Spend an evening without TV.

Take a deep breath and let it all out.

Ride your bike to work.

WORKWell NC
APPENDIX C: MOTIVATIONAL QUOTES

“For fast acting relief, try slowing down.”
—Lily Tomlin

“We live longer than our forefathers, but we suffer more from a thousand artificial anxieties and cares. They fatigued only the muscles, we exhaust the finer strength of the nerves.”
—Edward George Bulwer-Lytton

“Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.”
—Ovid

“Men for the sake of getting a living forget to live.”
—Margaret Fuller

“A crust eaten in peace is better than a banquet partaken in anxiety.”
—Aesop, Fables

“Sometimes it’s important to work for that pot of gold. But other times it’s essential to take time off and to make sure that your most important decision in the day simply consists of choosing which color to slide down on the rainbow.”
—Douglas Pagels

These Are the Gifts I’d Like to Give to You

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html
APPENDIX C: MOTIVATIONAL QUOTES

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html

“**I try to take one day at a time, but sometimes several days attack me at once.**”
—Jennifer Yane

“**There is more to life than increasing its speed.**”
—Mohandas K. Gandhi

“One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one’s work is terribly important.”
—Bertrand Russell

“**Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency.**”
—Natalie Goldberg

“We are here on the planet only once, and might as well get a feel for the place.”
—Annie Dillard

“How beautiful it is to do nothing, and to rest afterward.”
—Spanish Proverb
“Rest is not idleness, and to lie on the grass under trees on a summer’s day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.”

—J. Lubbock

“People become attached to their burdens sometimes more than the burdens are attached to them.”

—George Bernard Shaw

“Family Affection”

Parents and Children, 1914

Available for individual download at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Worksites.html
**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.
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

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.

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.
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 though your mouth.

CONTROLLED BREATHING
The following is 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.
WHAT CAUSES A Stress Reaction AT THE WORKPLACE

Job stress comes in many forms and affects people in different ways. Minor sources of stress may include such things as a broken copier or a malfunctioning computer. While minor stressors at work are annoying, it is the major stressors that often cause job burnout, leading people to become unhappy and less productive in their work. Job stressors can also impact other areas of life, such as health and home life. Major stressors at work fall into seven distinct categories.

1. **Control**: This factor is the most related to job stress. Studies show that workers who believe they have a great deal of responsibility but little control or decision making power in their jobs are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease and other stress-related illnesses.

2. **Increased responsibilities**: Taking on additional responsibilities in your job can be stressful. This can be worse if you have too much work to do and are unable to say no to new tasks or projects.

3. **Competence**: Are you concerned about your ability to perform well? Are you challenged enough, but not too much? Do you feel secure in your job? Job insecurity is a major source of stress for many people.

4. **Clarity**: Feeling uncertain about what your duties are, how they may be changing, or what your department or organization’s goals are can lead to stress.

5. **Communication**: Workplace tension often results from poor communication, which in turn increases job stress. An inability to express your concerns, frustrations or other emotions can also lead to increased stress.

6. **Support**: Feeling unsupported by your coworkers can make it harder to resolve other problems at work that are causing you stress.

7. **Significance**: If you don’t find your job meaningful or take pride in it, you may find it stressful.

In summary, job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.
Managing JOB SRESS

SOME OPTIONS FOR LOWERING YOUR STRESS ON THE JOB INCLUDE:

• **Meet with your supervisor at least once per year** (every 3-6 months is preferable) to talk about your performance and your job. If a performance review is already part of your job, treat it as a challenge to clear up issues that may be causing you stress.

• **Manage your time well.** It’s important to leave your job at the office, even if your office is a room in your home. If you give up free time to get more work done, you may pay for it with stress-related symptoms. If your employer offers a flexible work schedule, take advantage of it to fit your own work style.

• **Unplug.** Technologies such as cellular phones and the Internet have made it possible to be available to everyone, including clients and coworkers, at all times. Do not allow technology to eliminate the boundaries between your time and your employer’s time. Leave your work cell phone behind when having it with you is not absolutely necessary, or decide not to answer it during times you have set aside for your family and you. Avoid checking work email at home.
Stress can affect you physically, behaviorally, and cognitatively 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

**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

**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
ANNOUNCEMENT POSTER FOR MANAGE STRESS CHALLENGE

COMING SOON!

MANAGE STRESS Challenge

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

Sign up for Manage Stress Challenge begins on:

____________________________

NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR STRESS!

The activity will begin on:

____________________________

And end on:

____________________________

Don’t be left out! Join the FUN!

For more information about the Manage Stress Challenge, contact the coordinator ____________________________ at ____________________________

MANAGE STRESS
**Challenge SIGN-IN SHEET**

The **Manage Stress Challenge** will encourage staff to identify their reaction to stress and utilize stress reduction techniques as a means to manage stress and achieve good health.

Participating staff will receive a log to track their signs and symptoms of stress in addition to the technique(s) they used to help manage their stress. Participants will report their results to the Challenge Coordinator(s) at the end of the activity period.

Activity Starting Date: _____________  Activity End Date: ______________

Activity Coordinator(s): _____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Email and/or Phone</th>
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Because I care about my health, I pledge to take steps to MANAGE STRESS for the next ___________ days/weeks.

I will choose to make choices that help to manage my stress.

Signature: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

WORK Well NC
**Challenge 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.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signs and Symptoms of Stress</th>
<th>Stress Reduction Technique(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex. 3.8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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- **Week 1**
- **Week 2**
- **Week 3**
- **Week 4**
- **Week 5**
APPENDIX I: Certificate of Achievement

Certificate of Achievement

This Certificate is being presented to ______________________________________________

for the successful completion of the Manage Stress Challenge for the period of time from

__________________ to __________________.

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

(Name of Worksite)

WORKWell NC

51
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
8. I write down humorous stories and keep cartoons and articles that promote humor.
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1
9. When stressed on the job, my sense of humor helps me keep my perspective.
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1
10. I spontaneously look for the funny side of life and share it with others.
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
11. I send humorous notes and cartoons to friends, co-workers and customers.
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
12. My sense of humor makes it hard for people to stay mad at me.
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
13. I love to tell humorous stories to make my point in on-the-job communication.
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
15. I am comfortable laughing out loud with co-workers.
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
16. 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)

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 ____________

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<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>40-50</td>
<td>Terrific listener</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Pretty good listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-20</td>
<td>Not listening well to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 or under</td>
<td>Very poor listener</td>
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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
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 headset.

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.
in a stressful situation, such as working under a deadline. Shake your hands, stretch, or massage them to relax your fingers and hands.

15. **Viewing Distance:** Adjust your viewing distance so there is at least 20” between you and your monitor. Make sure you can clearly see the characters on your monitor. Adjust your monitor brightness and contrast settings to display characters clearly. Clean your screen.

16. **Monitor Glare:** Here are ways to reduce glare on your monitor: Decrease overall background lighting, relocate overhead and task lighting, install or adjust window curtains and blinds, install a glare screen on your monitor, change the colors on your monitor. Lighter background colors tend to reflect less. Change the brightness and contrast settings on your monitor to maximize contrast and make the characters easier to see. Your monitor is best viewed when it is at a right angle to your window, not in front of the window. If your monitor is tilted upward, tip the screen down. Clean your screen.

17. **Lighting:** Reduce background lighting to a level suitable for reading the monitor. Add task lighting where more illumination is required to read printed materials.

18. **Vision Correction:** Schedule an eye exam and tell your eye care professional how much time you spend working at a computer. Measure the distance from your eyes to your monitor and inform your eye care professional. Talk with your eye care professional about vision correction options for computer use.

19. **Bifocals/Trifocals:** Talk with your eye care professional about vision correction options for computer use.

(Source: 3M Office Ergonomics Self-Help Site. Workspace Evaluation. Available at http://www.3m.com/cws/selfhelp/audit.html)