

# Stress Management Workbook



William Frey  
Training & Talent Development  
Office of Human Resources  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

919-962-9685  
Will\_Frey@unc.edu



## Objectives of this workshop

- Learn practical skills and attitudes for reducing stress that draw upon your inner resources and natural capacity for healing and health so that you can model stress management for your patients
- Identify many other resources for your use and the use of your patients

## What are some ways you experience stress (in your body or mind)?

### The most common symptoms of stress are ones many of us see or feel every day:

Fatigue	Nervousness
Irritability	Headache
Sleep disturbance	Feel like crying

### Other symptoms and disorders might possibly be related to stress:

Anger	Cardiovascular disease
Disturbed relationships	Diabetes
Low morale	More frequent illnesses
Gastrointestinal disorders	Asthma
Metabolic syndrome	Accidents & injuries

**When we react to stress**, what happens to the body and the mind? Stress hormones and muscle tension automatically increases, and rational thinking decreases. The sympathetic nervous system is activated.

**When we relax**, the parasympathetic nervous system is activated. Stress hormones and muscle tension decrease, and the opportunity for rational thinking increases. Not only do we think clearer, but our immune system seems to function more efficiently.

<b>Automatic pilot:</b>	Stimulus → <i>Reaction</i>
<b>Mindfulness:</b>	Stimulus → AWARENESS → Choose Your <i>Response</i>

## Breath Awareness

Simply focus your attention on the way the breath feels in the body, without having to change anything. Do this for as short or as long as you'd like. What are the qualities of your breath each moment?

## Abdominal Breathing

Let your belly expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale. If this is hard to do, place one hand over your navel and imagine inhaling into your hand. Or imagine your belly is a balloon that you fill with air, then allow to empty.

**Stretches:** Move slowly, with the breath, with total awareness, respecting your body's limits

Stretch neck and head forward and back, side to side.  
Lift shoulders up to ears and slowly down.  
Extend hands and gently flex and rotate.  
Lift hands overhead and stretch to either side.  
Place left hand on right knee and gently twist right; repeat on opposite side.  
Point, flex, and rotate each foot.

## Observation of Thoughts

Let your body settle and bring your awareness to your breath. When you're set, notice thoughts as they naturally arise and disappear, much like we'd watch clouds pass overhead. Simply observe the thoughts without trying to control or to judge them. When you find you've been carried away by a thought, gently come back to the breath, then continue observing the thoughts. Do this for as short or as long as you'd like. We may not be able to control our thoughts, but we can choose how to respond to them.

### Example of practicing mindfulness during a workday

Sit with your breath and thoughts every morning to set the tone of the day.  
At your workspace, pay attention to your body sensations and breathing.  
Use a common cue (one small routine) as a reminder to "center" yourself.  
Pay attention to walking to and from your transportation.  
Before entering your home, briefly pause and breathe.

1. **Be Open:** mindful awareness of sensory experience
2. **High Quality Connections:** respect, support, trust, and play
  - Surround yourself with positive thinkers.
  - Talk with others who can really listen – family, friends, professionals.
3. **Kindness:** do and be what others need
4. **Distractions:** fully absorbed by a healthy activity
  - Take short breaks throughout the day.
  - Visualize calming scenes.
  - Kick your feet up at least once a day.
  - Find an enjoyable hobby.
  - Take a vacation, a *real* vacation.
  - Volunteer for charitable or social causes you believe in.
5. **Dispute Negative Thinking:** quickly dispute your inner critic
6. **Find Nature:** locate several nearby natural spots
7. **Learn and Apply Your Strengths:** design your life to use your strengths daily
8. **Meditate Mindfully:** sit quietly for at least a few minutes daily
  - Mindfulness of breath: Simply feel the sensation of breathing, just the way it is now.
  - Mindfulness of thoughts: Simply notice thoughts as events, arising and passing away, without judgment or evaluation. If you find yourself carried away by a thought, anchor your attention on the breath, then gently return to noticing thoughts.
9. **Meditate on Loving Kindness:** use emotional imagery to generate positive feelings
10. **Gratitude:** create routine rituals to express gratitude
11. **Savor Positivity:** recognize and appreciate when good things happen
12. **Visualize Your Future:** create your personal vision and mission statements
  - Practice time management: Have a purpose, set goals, prioritize, take action.

## Resources

**Mindfulness-Based Program** for Stress & Pain Management: 966-8586 or <http://pim.med.unc.edu>  
**Campus Health Services:** 966-6586 or <http://campushealth.unc.edu/>  
**Employee Assistance Program:** 877-327-7658

Jeffrey Brantley. *Calming Your Anxious Mind*. 2007.  
Richard D. Carson. *Taming Your Gremlin*. 2003.  
Stephen Covey. *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. 1989.  
Barbara Fredrickson. *Positivity*. 2009.  
Jon Kabat-Zinn. *Full Catastrophe Living*. 1990.  
Jon Kabat-Zinn. *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. 2005.  
Kerry Patterson et al. *Change Anything*. 2011.

## Improve the Odds: make change possible

1. **Identify** your issue clearly: What is one thing you want to focus on changing?
2. **Crucial moments:** When are you most likely to be challenged or to fail?
3. **Vital behaviors:** What might help you meet the challenge of your crucial moments?
4. Use all of the **six sources of influence** to support your vital behaviors:

	<b>MOTIVATION</b>	<b>ABILITY</b>
<b>PERSONAL</b>	What are the most convincing benefits to you?	What do you know and what do you need to learn how to do?
<b>SOCIAL</b>	Who are your allies and cheerleaders?	How can you harness the power of teamwork?
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>	What are your rewards and accountabilities?	How can you make your environment supportive?

5. **Write** your plan in detail, tell someone you trust, and ask for professional help if needed.
6. **Be a scientist:** be willing to experiment and to pay attention to feedback.

Source: *Change Anything* by Kerry Patterson et al

## Factors contributing to stress at work: How can we cope?

### Situational Factors

#### **Design of tasks**

*Problems:* heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long work hours, hectic and routine tasks with little inherent meaning, underutilized skills, little sense of control

*Solutions:* match work and workload with worker capabilities, skills, and resources; meaning of work and opportunities to use skills; flex time; temporary help; prioritize; schedule breaks

#### **Management style**

*Problems:* lack of worker participation in decision making, poor organizational communication, lack of family-friendly policies

*Solutions:* clearly define worker roles and responsibilities; let workers participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs; build teamwork; allow flex time

#### **Career concerns**

*Problems:* job insecurity, lack of growth or advancement opportunities, rapid workplace changes without adequate preparation

*Solutions:* reduce uncertainty about career development and employment prospects; update resume; ask for what you need; attend training for career growth

#### **Interpersonal work relationships**

*Problems:* poor social environment, lack of support from coworkers and managers

*Solutions:* allow appropriate social interaction among workers; establish work schedules that are compatible with demands outside work; be role model; develop communication skills

#### **Environmental conditions**

*Problems:* unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions

*Solutions:* create safe & healthy working conditions

### Individual Factors

<p><b>Work/life balance</b> Time management, priorities (first things first)</p>	<p><b>Support network</b> Family, friends, social connections</p>
<p><b>Health management</b> Exercise and stretch, relaxation and sleep, diet</p>	<p><b>Attitude and outlook</b> Attitude of gratitude, realistic optimism, acknowledge true levels of control, mindfulness</p>

## STRESS TEST

### **Add 2 points for each of the following items:**

- \_\_\_ You exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes three days a week.
- \_\_\_ You wake up feeling reasonably rested at least 5 days a week.
- \_\_\_ You have an income adequate to meet basic needs.
- \_\_\_ You are reasonably comfortable with your body weight.
- \_\_\_ You have one or more friends with whom you can talk about personal matters.
- \_\_\_ You eat at least one balanced meal a day.
- \_\_\_ You give and receive affection regularly.
- \_\_\_ You feel that you are in good health.
- \_\_\_ You feel supported by your social network.
- \_\_\_ You usually communicate effectively in your interpersonal relationships.
- \_\_\_ You do something fun at least once a week.
- \_\_\_ You drink fewer than three caffeine drinks (coffee, tea, or cola) a day.

\_\_\_ **Subtotal so far**

### **Add 1 point for each of the following items:**

- \_\_\_ You have a quiet place in which you can relax on a regular basis.
- \_\_\_ You take quiet time for yourself during the day.

\_\_\_ **Subtotal so far**

### **Subtract 1 point for each of the following items (up to 7 points for each item):**

- \_\_\_ Every time during the week that you use alcohol to relieve stress.
- \_\_\_ Every time during the week that you smoke cigarettes to relieve stress.
- \_\_\_ Every time during the week that you use a substance other than alcohol or cigarettes to relieve stress.

\_\_\_ **Subtotal so far**

### **Subtract 2 points for the following item:**

- \_\_\_ You feel you lack a consistent sense of purpose, connectedness, or life meaning.

\_\_\_ **Total Score** (see next page for interpretation of your stress test score)

## INTERPRETATION OF YOUR STRESS TEST SCORE

### <8 points

Your test score shows that not only are you living under a lot of stress, but you may also be compromising your health by the ways in which you deal with this stress. But don't panic; there are many healthy skills you can learn to more effectively handle your stress.

### 8 - 16 points

It appears that you currently do some good things to relieve your stress. If you are satisfied with how you manage the stress in your life, great. Keep taking care of yourself. You need more practice with stress management.

### >16 points

While you may sometimes feel the effects of too much stress, it appears that you are doing an effective job of handling the stress in your life. Please feel welcome to keep on learning.

Source: Campus Health Services at <http://campushealth.unc.edu/>

## Notes

## Mindfulness During the Workday

1. Take a few minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate or pray, to listen to the sounds of nature, or to take a slow quiet walk.
2. While your car is warming up, take a minute to quietly pay attention to your breathing.
3. While driving, become aware of body tension; e.g., hands tight on the steering wheel or raised shoulders.
4. Decide not to play the radio, and be with yourself.
5. When stopped at a red light, pay attention to your breathing and to the quality of your mind.
6. Once you park your car at the workplace, use the walk across the parking lot to step into your life, to know where you are and where you are going.
7. While sitting at your work space, pay attention to body sensations, consciously attempting to relax and to rid yourself of excess tension.
8. Use your breaks to truly relax rather than “pausing.” For instance, instead of having a coffee, a cigarette, or reading, take a short walk or sit at your desk and renew yourself.
9. Take some time at lunch (or other moments in the day) to speak with close associates about topics that are not necessarily work-related.
10. Decide to STOP for a minute every hour during the workday. Become aware of your breathing and body sensations, allowing the mind to settle, to regroup and recoup.
11. Use the everyday cues in your environment as reminders to center yourself, e.g., the ringing of the telephone, sitting down to the computer, walking through a doorway, etc.
12. Pay attention to the short walk back to your car, breathing in the crisp or warm air. Listen to the sounds outside your work place.
13. At the end of the workday, while your car is warming up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home. Take a moment to simply be. Enjoy it for a moment.
14. When you pull into the driveway or park your car, take a minute to orient yourself to being with your family members or to entering your home.
15. Change out of work clothes when you get home. If possible, take a few minutes to be quiet and still.
16. At the end of the day, retrace today’s activities, acknowledging what you’ve accomplished. Then make a list for tomorrow – you’ve done enough for today!

## Control Your Stress in the Workplace

Pressure situations are present during both good and bad economic times. However, when times are tough the situations can be magnified. Problems at home can directly influence issues in the workplace. It is important as a manager to recognize that your team might have outside stressors affecting their job performance. It is your job to create an environment that reduces stress and promotes engagement. In a workplace environment like this, employees will be more apt to reach their full potential and drive results. Here are 8 tips to help you and your team control stress and worry in tough situations.

### **1. Live in a compartment of the present.**

The professional with a commitment to service seals off each interaction with a customer so that negative experiences don't poison future interactions. Don't allow past successes or failures or future anticipated success or difficulties influence your current performance. When it comes to customer service, live in the moment.

### **2. Don't fuss about trifles.**

A "trifle" is something that is insignificant in comparison to other things in your life. When you focus on trifles, you lose perspective. Keep the big picture in mind. Doing so will help you objectively sort out the small stuff from the important issues.

### **3. Cooperate with the inevitable.**

Realize when your situation is inevitable. If you can learn to recognize situations where you have no control, you can gain some control over the emotional aspects of the situation. By cooperating with the outcome, you are making a conscious choice about how to respond to an inevitable situation.

### **4. Decide just how much anxiety a situation is worth and refuse to give it any more of your energy.**

Once you make this decision, it is easier to find ways you can improve on the situation or let it go and move on.

### **5. Create happiness for others.**

This principle appeals to your nobler motives. It is difficult to sustain a negative attitude when you are doing something good or helpful for someone else. Simply put: Doing good for others makes you feel better.

### **6. Expect ingratitude.**

In your job, you provide many diverse services. When you do so, you probably expect in return some signal of gratitude for your assistance. This expectation is rarely met. If you do receive heartfelt thanks from someone, you should count yourself lucky; you are dealing with a grateful person. Most people are simply not accustomed to being grateful, even when you provide them with excellent service. You shouldn't let ingratitude deter you from providing top-quality service.

### **7. Put enthusiasm into your work.**

Enthusiasm is the positive energy and sustained effort that keeps you driving toward your goals. Making a decision to have a positive outlook can be critical in enjoying your job and working with your internal and external customers.

### **8. Do the very best you can.**

It can be difficult to deal with criticism, especially if you feel it is undeserved or if it hurts your self-esteem. One way to put criticism in perspective is to ask yourself if you are doing the very best you can with what you know and are able to do. If you are, then you can avoid taking the criticism personally. If there is room for improvement in your performance, you can look at the criticism objectively and take responsibility for improving your performance.

## Reduce Work Stress by Prioritizing and Organizing

When you face job and workplace stress, there are a few simple steps you can take to regain control over yourself and the situation. Your growing sense of self-control will be perceived by others as the strength it is, leading to better relationships at work. Here are some suggestions for reducing job stress by prioritizing and organizing your responsibilities.

### Time management tips for reducing job stress

- **Create a balanced schedule.** Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.
- **Don't over-commit yourself.** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the "shoulds" and the "musts." Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or, eliminate them entirely.
- **Try to leave for work earlier in the morning.** Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing to your desk and having time to ease into your day. Don't add to your stress levels by running late.
- **Plan regular breaks.** Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to sit back and clear your mind. Also try to get away from your desk for lunch. Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help you be more, not less, productive.

### Healthy ways to relax and recharge

- Go for a walk.
- Do something fun with your family.
- Call a good friend.
- Sweat out tension with a good workout.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Enjoy a bike-ride with friends or family.
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy.

### Start a stress journal

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes. Write down:

- What caused your stress (make a guess if you're unsure)
- How you felt, both physically and emotionally
- How you acted in response
- What you did to make yourself feel better

Source: [http://helpguide.org/mental/work\\_stress\\_management.htm](http://helpguide.org/mental/work_stress_management.htm)