



## **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

### **OPENING ACTIVITY– Stress Test**

This is a simple opening activity to get the group talking about stress. The directions are easy:

- Everyone get pen and paper. Tear the paper into 6 pieces
- On each piece of paper, everyone should write about 6 situations that stress them out. (One per paper)
- Gather the papers and pick them one by one. As a paper is picked, the stressor should be read aloud. Then everyone in the group should vote, by show of hands, if they find that situation stressful in their personal viewpoint or not.
  - Discuss after each vote: Why do some people find this situations stressful, while others do not? In other words, why doesn't this issue bother some people? (Get opinions and discuss)
- Continue for as long as you want or until the cards are done.

### **Final Discussion Questions (Review at the end of the activity):**

- What situations seemed to stress out the most people? Why?
- What situations were most unique and why?
- What seems to be the key reason why some things stress some people out but not others? (A lot of what has to do with stress management is based on the answer to this challenging question)



**STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLS:** There are a lot of ways that people use to try to manage stress that may not be so good on a long term basis (Even if they may seem effective in the short run) – Let’s consider a few:

**Poor Coping Mechanisms** (These may not work in the long run or may even cause more stress later): Try to come up with reasons why these poor coping mechanisms may feel good in the short term and then identify why they may not be such good long term solutions:

The first one below is partially complete. **Try to fill out the rest** - (Questions are **CAPITALIZED IN BOLD**)

<b>Poor Coping Mechanism</b>	<b>Why It May Work Short Term</b>	<b>Possible Long Term Complications</b>
Drug or alcohol use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Feels good</li> <li>➤ Relaxing,</li> <li>➤ Gets your mind off of things</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHY IS THIS USUALLY NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION?(Examples -)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dependence – Eventually “needing” substances to reduce stress</li> <li>➤ Tolerance – Need more and more over time for the same effect</li> <li>➤ Inconvenient – Can’t get high at work, for example</li> <li>➤ Consequences – Arrests, Family problems, etc.</li> <li>➤ Expensive</li> </ul> <p><b>OTHERS? (List Below) -</b></p>
Suppression (Holding it in/Ignoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sometimes if we ignore it the stress goes away</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHY IS THIS USUALLY NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION?</b></p>
Passivity (Waiting for others to help)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Thankfully sometimes other people do help</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHY IS THIS USUALLY NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION?</b></p>
Acting Out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Revenge</li> <li>➤ Verbal or Physical Aggression</li> <li>➤ Destruction of Property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It may feel good while you are doing it</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHY IS THIS USUALLY NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION?</b></p>
Blaming/Complaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Gets things off your chest temporarily</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHY IS THIS USUALLY NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION?</b></p>



**Stress Management (continued) – Effective Coping Skills** – (These may take more persistent practice than “quick fixes” but over the long term they can be very effective) – **DISCUSS:**

1. RELAXATION:

- Counting (Believe it or not, counting to 10 before reacting can make a huge difference if you practice it)
- Deep Breathing
- Squeeze a Stress Ball
- Relaxation Audio/Video
- Scheduled relaxing activities: take bath, go for a walk, positive and relaxing hobbies, etc. (“Me” time)
- Learn to take one minute vacations – (Knowing when to take a break can be critically helpful when stress arises)
- Visual/Mental Imagery (i.e. Put yourself on the beach)

2. POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE (PMA)

- Learn to be grateful for what you have – (You can lower stress by putting things in perspective – It could be worse!)
- Enjoy your achievements – (You can lower stress by appreciating what you have accomplished so far)
- Plan good things for your future (Trips, goals, etc.)
- Acceptance – (Learn to accept the things you cannot change)
- Cognitive Reframing – (Is it really that bad? Are you possibly blowing things out of proportion based on emotion?)
- Positive Self Talk – (Instead of listening to negative thoughts, how can you replace these with positive messages?)
- Resolve Cognitive Dissonance – (Do you need to clear your conscience? Secrets, lies and guilt can cause stress)
- Conflict Resolution/Letting go – (Holding on to resentments is stressful. Do you need to learn to forgive?)
- Anger management – (Anger and stress can go hand in hand, Learn to cope with anger and watch stress decrease)

3. SUPPORT:

- What supports are available to you when you feel stress or anxiety? Are there people who can fill that “crisis helper” role for you that will willingly be there for you when you may be overwhelmed with stress?

**Which of the above stood out the most to you as areas you need to work on? Do you have any specific examples from your own life?**

**What can you start working on today or in the near future to begin using these tools for stress management in your life?**

Peace is the result of  
retraining your mind to  
process life as it is, rather than  
as you think it should be.

~ Dr. Wayne W. Dyer