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ACHIEVING BALANCE AND LETTING GO OF STRESS

Participant Notebook



SOMETHING NEW TODAY

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Take Action

Start	Stop	Continue

Learn How to Manage Stress

Our Goals

- Recognize the choices you make that may be driving you out of balance.
- Learn tips and strategies that help create healthier outcomes.
- Develop an action plan that will result in a lifestyle that can be managed and enjoyed.

Key Phrases

1. Enjoy every season.
2. You own your attitude.
3. Do it now.

What Drives You to Stress Overload?

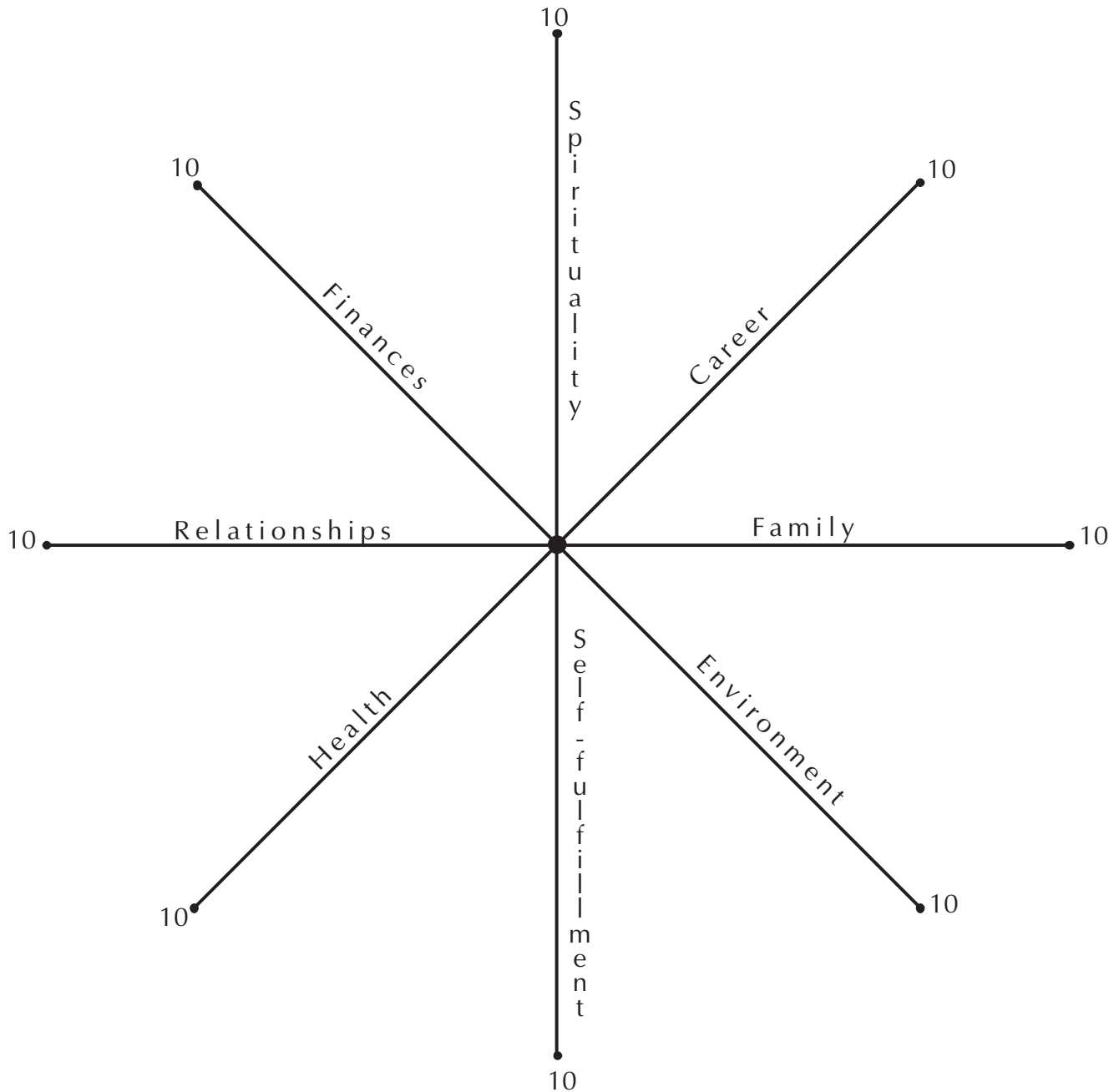
Five Major Causes

1. Overwork
2. Taking care of others
3. Absorbing the pain of those we love
4. Stressful situations
5. Unresolved conflicts in relationships

Enjoy Every Season

The Life Balance Wheel

Evaluate yourself on a scale of 1–10 (in which 10 represents the highest score) indicating how balanced and satisfied you are with each of the spokes on the wheel. Put a dot on each line that reflects where you see yourself. When you are finished evaluating each item, connect the dots.



The Women's Disease

Recognize the Danger Signals of Over-Stress — the Red Flags

1. Physical symptoms

- Ulcers
- Skin irritations or rashes
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Racing heart
- Heartburn

The more serious symptoms:

- Heart attacks
- Stroke
- Autoimmune diseases

2. Difficulty concentrating

- Can't stay focused
- Impatient easily
- Mind wanders

3. Abuse of drugs, alcohol, or food

- Use as a numbing agent
- Abuse daily or even more frequently

The Women's Disease, continued

4. Changes in behavior
 - Emotional behavior changes
 - Mood swings
 - Irrational reactions
5. Depression, constant sadness, pessimism, or an inability to experience joy and happiness
 - What used to please you doesn't matter anymore
 - No laughing or smiling
6. Panic or anxiety attacks
 - Unreasonable fear or "what ifs"
 - Racing heart
 - Sweating; feeling faint, or sick to your stomach

How Your Stress Impacts Others

Why Stress Is Contagious

1. It creates negative energy.
2. It creates tension.
3. It creates frustration, anger, and conflict.

What to Do

1. Understand that it isn't personal.
2. Breathe.
3. Follow the *Sundown Rule*.

Own Your Own Attitude

Strike a Healthy, Happy Balance Among Your Many Priorities

Self-Examine

1. Stop defining yourself by what you do. Instead focus on things that endure.
2. Stop putting yourself last on the priority ladder. Make time for yourself.
3. Stop “shoulding” yourself and letting other people’s expectations determine your identity.

Know Yourself — Ask These Three Questions:

1. Who are you and what’s your attitude...
 - About yourself?
 - About your job?
 - About your family?
 - About your responsibilities?
2. How healthy are your relationships?
3. Do you allow yourself any down time?

Do It Now

Stress-Reducing Strategies That Will Fuel You With More Energy

1. Identify what works for you — know who you are and what you want.
2. Do things you love.
3. Do something crazy and have fun.
4. Host a pity party.
5. Challenge yourself to take care of unresolved or unhappy relationships.
6. Learn to live in the moment ... right now ... this minute.
7. Don't forget to laugh.

Reflect on the Following Questions

1. If you could do anything you wanted with the full knowledge that you wouldn't fail, what would you do?
2. If you could be anybody you wanted to be, with the full knowledge that you would be successful, how would you be different from what you are now?
3. What would a "perfect" balanced life look like — to YOU?

Do It Now, continued

Relaxation Techniques That Will Help Calm You When Everything Is in Chaos

- Consciously find ways to relax.

- Consider physical exercises.

- Use mind-body exercises such as meditation.
 1. Assume a comfortable posture.
 2. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.
 3. Focus your attention on your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall or recede on the out-breath.
 4. Once you have the rhythm of the air flowing in and out, concentrate on the air flowing in and flowing out.
 5. When you notice your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away, and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.
 6. Practice this exercise for 15 minutes at a convenient time every day — whether you feel like it or not, for one week.

Do It Now, continued

Prevent Stress Build-Up From Getting to Flat-Out Burnout

- Leave your work AT work.
 - Leave at the same time every day.
 - Don't take work home.
 - Put music on in the car.
 - Pick a half-way point on the way home.
- Learn to put yourself first.
- Stop micromanaging.
- Let other people make their own mistakes.
- Say "No."
- Start sweating.

Make a Change

1. Dream big.
2. Have goals and plans.
3. Check your progress periodically and make new plans or adjust accordingly.
4. Know your values.
5. Understand who you are.

Bonus Materials

Dear Customer,

You are a valued customer and to say “thank you,” we have included the following as a bonus for you. We believe you’ll find it helpful as a job aid or to further your knowledge beyond today’s broadcast.

Thank you,

Sara Valins
Director, Curriculum Development

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Bonus Materials: THE PERSONAL STRESS- REDUCTION TOOL KIT



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Personal Stress Inventory

Before you can start eliminating your stress, you first have to define your current stress level in order to make changes accordingly. Please answer *true* or *false* to the following statements.

- ___ 1. I feel energetic most of the time.
- ___ 2. I know how to eat healthfully, and I follow a balanced diet.
- ___ 3. I usually get between seven and eight hours of sleep each night.
- ___ 4. I get at least half an hour of exercise at least three times per week.
- ___ 5. I feel in control of my daily activities.
- ___ 6. My/our family income is adequate to keep us out of debt.
- ___ 7. I am healthy (do not smoke or drink excessively, am the appropriate weight for my height, have been given a clean bill of health by a doctor).
- ___ 8. I have a strong support group of friends, family, and co-workers.
- ___ 9. I thoroughly enjoy my job.
- ___ 10. I thoroughly enjoy my home life.
- ___ Total number of true responses.

Scoring

8–10 *true* responses

You are doing a good job of managing your life.

5–7 *true* responses

You are doing many things right when it comes to controlling your life. You need to build on that success to be even more stress-free.

Fewer than 5 *true* responses

You need to help yourself soon or you risk your health and happiness. You are in the right place!

Even those who score 8–10 *true* responses can benefit from examining their lives and picking up some new stress-management ideas. Any you can't use can be passed on to someone who can.

Personal Goal Format Sheet

Goal: _____

Projected Achievement Date: _____

Steps to Be Taken

52 Proven Stress Reducers

Over the next year, choose one of the following 52 Proven Stress Reducers from the National Headache Foundation to try each week. Using each for a week will help ingrain the technique as a habit, and one a week is a small commitment to make.

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
2. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
3. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc. (The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory — Old Chinese Proverb)
4. Do nothing which, after being done, leads you to tell a lie.
5. Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
6. Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart "at the worst possible moment."
7. Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.
8. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
9. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full; keep a well-stocked "emergency shelf" of home staples; don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more, etc.
10. Don't put up with something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers — whatever — are a constant aggravation, get them fixed, or get new ones.

52 Proven Stress Reducers, continued

11. Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to all appointments.
12. Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.
13. Always set up contingency plans, “just in case.” (“If for some reason either of us is delayed, here’s what we’ll do . . .” kind of thing. Or, “If we get split up in the shopping center, here’s where we’ll meet.”)
14. Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn’t get mowed this weekend.
15. Pollyanna Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings. Count ‘em!
16. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours. (The old “the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get,” idea)
17. Say “No!” Saying “no” to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don’t have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, every day, needs quite time to relax and be alone.
18. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil.) Or use an answering machine.
19. Turn “needs” into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don’t get attached to preferences.
20. Simplify, simplify, simplify.
21. Make friends with nonworriers. Nothing can get you into the habit of worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.
22. Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.

52 Proven Stress Reducers, continued

23. Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.
24. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
25. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.
26. When feeling stressed, most people tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. When you breathe like this, stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissues is incomplete, and muscle tension frequently results. Check your breathing throughout the day, and before, during, and after high-pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. Note how, when you're relaxed, both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe.
27. Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal or on paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.
28. Try the following yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax: Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then, with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 16, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.
29. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Example: Before speaking in public, take time to go over every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you will wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what the questions will be and how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be. You'll likely find that when the time comes to make the actual presentation, it will be "old hat" and much of your anxiety will have fled.

52 Proven Stress Reducers, continued

30. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion — a voluntary change in activity or environment — may be just what you need.
31. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.
32. One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure) that is in line with your personal needs or desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job that requires that you sit at a desk all day. If you hate politics, don't associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.
33. Learn to live one day at a time.
34. Every day, do something you really enjoy.
35. Add an ounce of love to everything you do.
36. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in summertime) to relieve tension.
37. Do something for somebody else.
38. Focus on understanding rather than on being understood; on loving rather than being loved.
39. Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.
40. Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments; allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.

52 Proven Stress Reducers, continued

41. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are well to compromise upon.
42. Eliminate destructive self-talk: "I'm too old ...," "I'm too fat ...," etc.
43. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your workweek is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your workweek is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off. Feel as if you aren't accomplishing anything at work? Tackle a job on the weekend which you can finish to your satisfaction.
44. "Worry about the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves." That's another way of saying: Take care of the todays as best you can and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.
45. Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one and nothing else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.
46. Allow yourself time — every day — for privacy, quiet, and introspection.
47. If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with; then the rest of your day will be free of anxiety.
48. Learn to delegate responsibilities to capable others.
49. Don't forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it's just for 15 or 20 minutes.
50. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
51. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
52. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.

Used with permission of the National Headache Foundation. For more information on headache causes and treatments, visit www.headaches.org or call toll-free 1-888-NHF-5552 (English) or 1-800-819-4510 (Spanish).