

Stress Management

Without a certain level of stress to motivate and challenge us, life would be boring and unrewarding. However, when stress builds to extreme levels and we are unable to cope, it reduces our physical and mental capacity to enjoy life. We do not need to eliminate stress entirely, but we should maintain it at a level where it can act as a positive force. So much human stress is brought about by our perceptions, but we can change these perceptions and lessen its effects on us. This storyboard uses a four step process to do that: **CONSIDER, ASSESS, LEARN, AND MONITOR** (shown in the circles to the right). The steps are easy to remember: they spell the word "CALM".

1. CONSIDER



Understand the nature of stress.

2. ASSESS



Assess your well-being.

3. LEARN



Learn to control stress.

4. MONITOR



Continually monitor yourself.



1.

CONSIDER

Types of stress

- ◆ Recognize that we need positive stress (Eustress) as a source of motivation and health.
- ◆ Understand that negative stress (Distress) usually arises from our perception of our external world.
- ◆ All levels of stress are **always** context-sensitive.



Sources/symptoms of stress

- ◆ Distress mainly arises from an inability to cope with long term anxiety.
- ◆ Symptoms of stress are:
 - sleep disturbance
 - health problems
 - mood swings
 - difficulty concentrating
 - depression and/or anger
 - relationship conflict



The impact of predisposition

- ◆ Recognize that **Type "A," Type "B,"** and **Type "C"** personalities are all likely to experience stress differently.
- ◆ Perceptions of individual influence and control over your environment will affect the amount of stress experienced.



Changing levels of stress

- ◆ Deliberately alter your expectations to reduce levels of stress significantly.
- ◆ Become more aware of your own emotional responses to situations. This normally helps to reduce distress.
- ◆ Natural "fight or flight" responses are likely to increase stress levels.



2.

ASSESS

Your physical well-being



- ◆ Make sure that your physical well-being is balanced and appropriate by reviewing:
 - **Your diet** (regularity and type of meals)
 - **Your exercise regime**
 - **Your habits** (smoking, drinking, etc.)
- ◆ Moderate each of these according to your real needs.



Your mental well-being



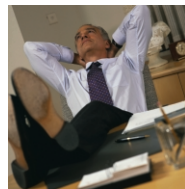
- ◆ Make sure that your mental well-being is balanced and appropriate by reviewing:
 - **Your sleep and relaxation habits**
 - **Your levels of self-esteem**
 - **Your recreational and social activities**
- ◆ Moderate each of these according to your real needs.

3.

LEARN

Re-framing and relaxation

- ◆ Recognize that re-framing or re-shaping your perceptions is the best way to relax and calm yourself.
- ◆ Try to relax your body (muscles and breathing) when you feel stressed.
- ◆ Try to relax your mind by idly imagining/day dreaming.



Self-management and control

- ◆ Develop or enhance positive feelings about yourself and your skills and abilities.
- ◆ Draw on the skills you have in order to set realistic standards for yourself.
- ◆ Avoid comparing yourself unfavorably to others or to other situations.



4.

MONITOR

Demands on your time; priorities



- ◆ Schedule and organize your time to minimize the stressors that have to be confronted.
- ◆ Establish your personal priorities, and put these first.
- ◆ Schedule some time to relax or pursue calm recreation.

Your emotional energy



- ◆ Learn to recognize all stress responses as emotional anxiety that can be controlled.
- ◆ Design special mental "short-cut" mechanisms for stress responses (change the context or do something that moderates the response)..
- ◆ Develop the ability to change your emotional energy at will.

The development of bad habits



- Do not **"bottle-up"** negative feelings. Talk to someone who will listen.
- Do not **fill up your life with too much urgent activity**
- Do not **miss any opportunity to prepare or plan ahead.**

Managing Pressure and Stress: Template

Review:

Habits
Urgent activity
Poor planning



HOW?

Consider:

Types of stress
Sources
Symptoms



HOW?

ACTION PLAN

- 1** How much pressure do you feel or do you put on yourself? Are you a Type A personality, a Type B, or a Type C, and what implications does this have for you?
- 2** How physically fit are you and what can you do to improve?
- 3** How healthy is your dietary regime and what can you do to make it more balanced?
- 4** How well do you look after yourself and your overall personal well-being?
- 5** How much do you feel in control of your life? How can you increase this level of control?
- 6** How well managed and in control is your work life? Can you increase your overall level of job satisfaction?

Evaluate:

Tenseness
Tiredness
Energy levels



HOW?

Assess:

Physical well-being
Mental well-being
Balance



HOW?

Monitor:

Time
Resources
Priorities



HOW?

Learn:

Re-framing
Relaxation
Control



HOW?

