**Stress Worksheets**

***Activity 1:***

**My Daily Schedule**

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| **Type of Activity** | **Time Spent** | **Too much or not enough?** |
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***Activity 2:***

**What happens to me when I’m stressed?**

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| **Stressful Event** | **What happens to me?** |
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***Activity 3:***

**How can you cope with stress?**

Sometimes you need a break from a stressful situation in order to return refreshed and ready to handle a problem. Here are some stress safety valves that may be helpful:

* Spend time on yourself- take a long bubble bath or shower; pamper yourself
* Take a walk- especially in the early morning
* Listen to music
* Work in the garden or yard
* Work on your favorite hobby, or start one (such as knitting or starting an aquarium)
* Sing with a group of people
* Play a musical instrument- it’s never too late to learn
* Bake something special
* Talk or play with kids
* Jog, dance, or participate in some other physical activity you enjoy
* Watch the sun rise or the sun set, or the night sky
* Play just for fun
* Smile at someone
* Tackle one task at a time; make a list of what you want to do and then start with the first task
* Talk to someone- when stress and tension are out of hand, find someone to talk to. Try to find someone to talk with who will listen, not someone who will give you his/her solution but someone who will provide a communicative environment in which you can explore your own alternatives. Talking with someone who is willing to listen may give you the perspective and confidence you need to cope with the stress more effectively.

What are some of the ways you cope with stress?

Go through the list of safety valves again. Write down any that you don’t usually use but would like to try.

What are some ways that don’t help you cope with stress?

Write your own prescription for stress.

Name:

Take:

Times a day until symptoms disappear.

***Activity 4:***

**The relaxation response**

The relaxation response is a term used by Dr. Herbert Benson to describe a physical state of reduced body tension. Although Dr. Benson has coined the term, the idea has been around for centuries. The essence of the relaxation response has been practiced through various methods including mediation. The attainment of the relaxation response is an important technique for counteracting the harmful effects of stress-overload on the body.

 Learning to achieve the relaxation response is a skill. Learning a new skill takes practice. With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice a day. Since the digestive process seems to interfere with the elicitation of the relaxation response, do not practice within two hours after a meal.

 Here are some suggestions for achieving the relaxation response. This procedure may be used as a relaxation technique in and of itself, and it may also be used as a set of guidelines for the relaxation exercises that follow (diaphragmatic breathing, deep muscle relaxation, quick release techniques, and visual imagery).

1. *Find a quiet place.* Take the phone off the hook and let everyone know that you will be unavailable for about 15 minutes. It is probably unrealistic to expect to find a place that is totally free from distractions. Just try to eliminate as many as you can and ignore the rest.
2. *Assume a comfortable position.* Your eyes should be loose at your sides. Uncross your feet. When sitting in the chair, remember to uncross your legs and let your arms rest loosely at your sides.
3. *Maintain a passive attitude.* Don’t worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. Do not try to work at relaxing. Disregard distracting thoughts and sounds for the time you have set aside.
4. *Concentrate on a pleasing phrase or image.* For some people, a word formula such as “in” and “out” or “one” works well. Other people find visual images such as cloud formations useful for this purpose. Repeat the word or image effortlessly.
5. *Breathe easily and naturally.* Breathe through your nose, with your mouth open slightly.
6. *Keep your muscles loose, limp, and relaxed.*

***Activity 5:***

**Deep muscle relaxation**

 This technique involves tensing specific muscle groups and then relaxing them. For each muscle group, a method is described for creating tension and achieving relaxation.

Assume a comfortable position for relaxation (eyes closed, comfortable sitting position, quiet, passive attitude). Go through the following for each muscle group twice.

1. *Forehead-* Wrinkle your forehead. Try to make your eyebrows touch your hairline for five seconds. Relax.
2. *Eyes and nose-* Close your eyes as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.
3. *Lips, cheeks, and jaw-* Draw the corners of your mouth back and grimace for five seconds. Relax. Feel the warmth and calmness in your face.
4. *Hands-* Extend your arms in front of you. Clench your fists tightly for five seconds. Relax. Feel the warmth and calmness in your hands.
5. *Forearms-* Extend your arms out against an invisible wall and push forward with your hands for five seconds. Relax.
6. *Upper arms-* Bend your elbows. Tense your biceps for five seconds. Relax. Feel the tension leave your arms.
7. *Shoulders-* Shrug your shoulders up to your ears for five seconds. Relax.
8. *Back-* Arch your back off the floor for five seconds. Relax. Feel the anxiety and tension disappearing.
9. *Stomach-* Tighten your stomach muscles for five seconds. Relax.
10. *Thighs-* Tighten your thigh muscles by pressing your legs together as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.
11. *Feet-* Bend your ankles towards your body as far as you can for five seconds. Relax.
12. *Toes-* Curl your toes under as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.

*Guidelines for group relaxation*

* Realize that the benefits of relaxation are not as dramatic as we would like them to be but occur gradually over time.
* Clothing should be comfortable and loose fitting.
* The sounds are a natural part of the environment, and as you relax, you will always be completely aware of everything that’s going on although you may not be particularly concerned about it. There is not much you can do to decrease sound, but keeping it at a minimum is helpful.
* The light should be low. Looking up into bright light with closed eyes becomes annoying when one is relaxed.
* It is important that the person relaxing does not feel that he/she will be bumped or touched while relaxing. The sense that someone is relaxing too close to another person is often disturbing.
* Sometimes people fall asleep during these experiences. The person may feel embarrassed, so it is best to remember that this may happen and it’s ok. However, the goal of relaxation exercises is usually not to fall asleep.

***Activity 6:***

**Sensory awareness**

This exercise encourages you to use your imagination to experience your senses.

1. The best environment for this activity is a comfortable room with carpeting and soft lighting.
2. Assume the position for relaxation (eyes closed, quiet, passive attitude).
3. Read the following to the group very slowly. Pauses at least five seconds at the dots and at the end of each paragraph to allow time to focus on each image.

Allow yourself to feel as comfortable as you can…As you relax begin to focus on your breathing…Continue to breathe in a very natural, very regular way…As you inhale, picture your lungs expanding like a balloon and contracting as you exhale…Allow yourself to feel more relaxed with each breath…Each time you exhale, imagine the tensions flowing from your body…Continue to focus on your breathing for a moment or two…(Pause for one or two minutes)

As you continue to relax, imagine that it is a cool, crisp autumn day…You are walking through the woods…What colors do you see?...Look closely at the leaves…Someone has been burning leaves. Imagine the smell as you inhale…Someone you care about joins you on your walk through the woods…Silently the two of you continue…What do you hear?...

Now imagine that you are in the city…It is rainy at night…What do you see?...What do you hear?...What does it smell like?...

As you walk along through the city you see a gift you would like to buy for someone in a store window…Imagine yourself giving this gift to someone special…How does that person look when you present your gift?...

Now you are in a warm bubbly bath…Your body floats in the warm, gentle water…Soft music is playing…The bubbles smell sweet like wildflowers…Your body floats and rocks as you relax…

As you leave your imagery world, bring your thoughts and feelings back with you to this room…Slowly and gently open your eyes and join the group.

*Conclusion questions*

* How do you feel now?
* What colors did you see and when?
* What sounds did you hear and when?
* What scents did you smell and when?
* Did you have any other sensations?
* Did you experience any emotions? If so, when?