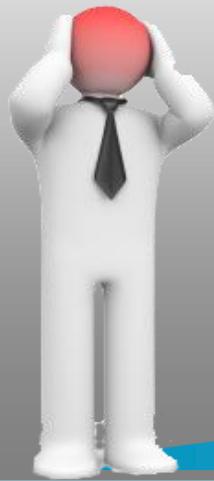




# Stress Management

Training Manual



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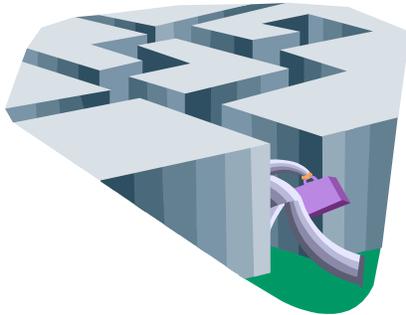
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*When stress is at its highest, just know it can only go down.*

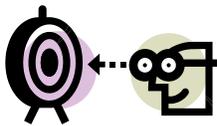
**Tom Rataj**

## Module One: Getting Started

Welcome to the Stress Management workshop. Positive and negative stress is a constant influence on all of our lives. The trick is to maximize the positive stress and to minimize the negative stress. This workshop will give participants a three-option method for addressing any stressful situation, as well as a toolbox of personal skills, including using routines, relaxation techniques, and a stress log system.



### Workshop Objectives



Research has consistently demonstrated that when clear goals are associated with learning, it occurs more easily and rapidly. With that in mind, let's review our goals for today.

At the end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- Identify the best approach to a stressful situation (Alter, Avoid, or Accept)
- Understand what lifestyle elements you can change to reduce stress
- Use routines to reduce stress
- Use environmental and physical relaxation techniques
- Better cope with major events
- Use a stress log to identify stressors and create a plan to reduce or eliminate them

## Pre-Assignment

The purpose of the Pre-Assignment is to get you thinking about the stress management strategies you are already using and where you would like to improve.



As a pre-assignment, you were asked to answer the following questions:

- On a scale of one to ten, rate your current stress level. (One is no stress at all, five is moderately stressed, and ten is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.)
- Where would you like your stress level to be?
- What are the major stressors in your life?
- What do you see as the major challenges to resolving your stress?
- What are you currently doing to manage and reduce stress? What would you like to be doing?

## Pre-Test

- 1.) Who coined the term “eustress”?
  - a) Alexander Graham Bell
  - b) Sigmund Freud
  - c) Richard Lazarus
  - d) Thomas Jefferson
  
- 2.) How many main ways are there to approach stress?
  - a) A dozen
  - b) One
  - c) Seven
  - d) Three
  
- 3.) Set \_\_\_\_\_ goals for yourself.
  - a) Impossible
  - b) Easy
  - c) Small
  - d) Difficult
  
- 4.) Exercise makes you \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Tired
  - b) Stronger
  - c) Angry
  - d) Hungry
  
- 5.) Complete this sentence. Make sure your actions are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to all involved.
  - a) Sneaky, unnoticed
  - b) Smart, witty
  - c) Helpful, kind
  - d) Devious, mean
  
- 6.) Make sure that benefit will be \_\_\_\_\_ the effort in the long term.
  - a) Greater than
  - b) Equal
  - c) Worth
  - d) Less

7.) Avoiding will cause more stress when?

- a) Today
- b) Yesterday
- c) In the long-term
- d) Never

8.) What does a positive no enable you to say?

- a) Yes
- b) Sure
- c) Absolutely
- d) No

9.) Which of these is an example of a positive attitude?

- a) Unpleasantness
- b) Irritability
- c) Stress
- d) Respect for others

10.) Which of the following is not a lesson learned from this module?

- a) Cope with those things that cannot change
- b) Deal with those things in life that may be unpleasant
- c) Intimidate people to get your way
- d) Change your attitude to a more positive attitude

11.) In the store you should take advantage of non-processed shortcuts like \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Ice cream
- b) Canned meats
- c) Pre-grated cheese
- d) Sugary cereals

12.) Which of these is not an example of how to make proper meals a part of your household?

- a) Theme nights
- b) Experimenting with slow cookers
- c) Stocking up on frozen fruits
- d) Ordering out nightly

13.) If you are not musically inclined, which one of these can you do to relieve stress?

- a) Get upset because you never had music lessons
- b) Destroy your radio
- c) Eat a bowl of ice cream
- d) Put on your favorite song and sing along

14.) Which of these is not an example of using humor as a stress reliever?

- a) Reading a funny story or joke
- b) Keeping a humorous calendar in your cubicle
- c) Sharing a laugh with friends
- d) Laughing at someone's pain

15.) Which of these is the proper first step to doing a neck roll?

- a) Relax your shoulders
- b) Roll your head
- c) Stand with your left hand on your left hip
- d) Let your chin hang down to your chest

16.) Which of these is in the proper order for doing a lumbar stretch?

- a) Stand, both hands in small of back, arch your back, feel the stretch
- b) Both hands in small of back, arch your back, stand, feel the stretch
- c) Stand, feel the stretch, arch your back, hands in small of back
- d) Hands in small of back, stand, feel the stretch, arch your back

17.) Remember that stress is \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Too much to handle
- b) Better than humor
- c) Good for your health
- d) Individual

18.) It is never a bad idea to \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Avoid work
- b) Ask for help
- c) Try to solve problems alone
- d) Increase your stress levels

19.) Recording events is in which stage of using a stress log?

- a) Week two
- b) Week three
- c) Week one
- d) Week four

20.) In order to be successful, your final stress management plan should set \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Large, stress-inducing goals
- b) Small, achievable goals
- c) Small, unnecessary goals
- d) Large, impossible goal

## Action Plan Form

MODULE	GOAL	SPECIFIC?	MEASURABLE?	ACHIEVABLE?	RELEVANT?	TIMED?	NEXT STEPS
ONE							
TWO							
THREE							
FOUR							
FIVE							
SIX							
SEVEN							
EIGHT							
NINE							
TEN							
ELEVEN							
TWELVE							

# Evaluation Form

Workshop Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Please rate the following items on a scale of one to ten, with one being abysmal, five being acceptable, and ten being perfect.</i>										
<b>WORKSHOP ROOM</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Comments:</i>										
<b>WORKSHOP FACILITIES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Comments:</i>										
<b>INSTRUCTOR KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Comments:</i>										
<b>INTERACTIVITY OF WORKSHOP</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Comments:</i>										

*Would you recommend this course to others? Why or why not?*

*Other thoughts you would like to share?*

*Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.*

***Hans Selye***

## Module Two: Understanding Stress



To begin, let's look at what stress is. We'll also explore how stress can be positive and negative, and we'll look at the Triple A approach that will form the basis of this workshop.

### What is Stress?



The Random House Dictionary defines stress as, “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension,” and, “a situation, occurrence, or factor causing this.” The word “stress” actually comes from a Latin word meaning, “distress.”

Stress can be difficult to pin down because it is a very individual thing. For me, public speaking is very stressful – but it may be one of your great joys in life. Remember this during this workshop: since stress is different for everyone, your approach must be personalized, too. Typically, we interpret stress as a negative thing, but it doesn't have to be that way.

## What is Eustress?

“Eustress” means stress with a positive effect. It was coined by psychologist Richard Lazarus in 1974. How can stress be positive, you ask? Think of the emotional strain caused by these positive events:

- Winning a race
- Being a new parent
- Riding a rollercoaster
- Watching a scary movie



In these situations, the physical, mental, or emotional strain actually produces positive emotions, rather than the negative emotions usually associated with stress. Without distress or eustress, life would be a pretty boring ride!

## Understanding the Triple “A” Approach

In this workshop, we will give you three main ways to approach stress. It is important to remember that you have a choice! You can choose to:

- **Alter** the situation or your approach to it.
- **Avoid** the situation.
- **Accept** the situation.



Before we explore this approach, however, let’s look at the foundation of a low-stress lifestyle.

## Practical Illustration



Jim was up to his ears with work. Lily, Jim's coworker, found him hiding in the break room feeling down in the dumps about his work load. Lily lent him her ear. Jim explained how anxious he was because he was drowning in work. Lily helped him understand that avoiding the stress wasn't going to solve his dilemma. In fact, avoiding it would make his work load even heavier. Lily offered suggestions to help him get out from under his stress in a more positive light. Lily showed Jim that if he tackled his to do list one item at a time that he could chip away at his work load and the burden wouldn't feel so heavy. Lily showed Jim how to prioritize his tasks and he began to make a dent in his work load and could feel the stress falling off of his shoulders.

## Module Two Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these would be stressful?
  - a) Eating a banana
  - b) Taking a test
  - c) Listening to soothing music
  - d) Being organized
  
- 2.) Which of these could be defined as a eustress?
  - a) Losing sleep
  - b) Interviewing for a job
  - c) Missing a deadline
  - d) Winning a race
  
- 3.) Which of these could be both positive and negative?
  - a) Being a new parent
  - b) Stress
  - c) Riding a roller coaster
  - d) Watching a scary movie
  
- 4.) Which of these is not a way to approach stress?
  - a) Yell at your coworkers
  - b) Alter the situation or your approach to it
  - c) Accept the situation
  - d) Avoid the situation
  
- 5.) Which of these is a definition of stress?
  - a) A fit of laughter
  - b) A job well done
  - c) A physical, mental, or emotional strain
  - d) A new puppy
  
- 6.) Complete this sentence. Stress is a very \_\_\_\_\_ thing.
  - a) Individual
  - b) Attractive
  - c) Funny
  - d) Approachable

7.) Which one of these would be considered stressful?

- a) A great movie
- b) A night out on the town
- c) Public speaking
- d) Reading a book

8.) Since stress is different for everyone, your approach must be \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Harsh
- b) Fast
- c) Sneaky
- d) Personalized

9.) Who coined the term “eustress”?

- a) Alexander Graham Bell
- b) Sigmund Freud
- c) Richard Lazarus
- d) Thomas Jefferson

10.) How many main ways are there to approach stress?

- a) A dozen
- b) One
- c) Seven
- d) Three

*Tension is who you think you should be.  
Relaxation is who you are.*

**Chinese Proverb**

## Module Three: Creating a Stress-Reducing Lifestyle



To begin, let's explore the foundation of a positive, low-stress lifestyle. This foundation is made up of three building blocks: diet, sleep, and exercise. No stress reduction program will be successful in the long term unless you have this solid foundation.

### Eating Properly



For many people, meals have become an afterthought, made up of fast food, and frozen items in boxes. Most adults know what they should eat – they just don't eat it. Recently the Centers for Disease Control in the United States estimated that less than a quarter of adults get their recommended serving of fruits and vegetables each day.

Sticking to a healthy diet is key to managing stress. Giving your body the proper fuel will give you the energy you need to battle the harmful effects of stress. Remember, garbage in, garbage out!

Any changes in diet, sleep, and exercise must be lifestyle-oriented. There are no quick fixes. With this in mind, set small goals for yourself. Perhaps this week your goal will be to eat a piece of fruit every day. Or, perhaps you'll swap out that lunchtime burger for a salad.

Remember that progress is very individual. Don't expect yourself to start eating like an Olympic athlete as soon as you make the decision to improve your lifestyle. Celebrate each healthy choice: every time you say no to that bag of chips, every time you choose vegetables, every time you eat a smaller portion. Don't be too hard on yourself when you make an unhealthy choice; just focus on doing better the next time.

## Exercising Regularly

Finding time to take care of our bodies is another challenge many of us face. Exercise is an important part of stress reduction for many reasons:



- Exercise makes you stronger, and therefore more resilient to stress.
- Exercise helps clear your mind, reducing the harmful effects of stress.
- Exercise can help you work out the negative emotions that can result from stress, such as anger and frustration.
- Exercise can also give you time alone to think through stressful situations.

There are two main approaches to exercise: thirty minutes per day, or three to five one-hour sessions per week. If possible, try to find some activities that you enjoy. If you are having trouble finding the time to exercise, try these tips.

- Take a walk at lunch.
- Walk or bike to or from work, if possible.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. (You will be surprised at how many extra calories you burn!)
- When watching television, use commercial breaks to do quick exercises, such as crunches, planks, or stretches.
- Stand when talking on the phone. (This will also help your muscles stretch and prevent muscle tension.)

Remember: diet, sleep, and exercise are all lifestyle changes. Start slowly, build your commitment steadily, stay positive and focused, and you've got a recipe for success!

## Sleeping Well



The last building block of a healthy lifestyle is sleep. We know it is one more thing that you may not have time for. Trust us; you don't have time *not* to sleep!

Here are some scary statistics taken from a recent Sleep in America poll (performed by the National Sleep Foundation, based in the United States).

- 43% of adults stated that they had a good night's sleep almost every night. An additional 25% say that they get a good night's sleep a few nights a week.

- The average person needs 7 hours and 18 minutes for a good night's sleep, but manages only 6 hours and 40 minutes. That doesn't sound like a big difference, but over the course of the year that's about 230 hours of sleep debt!
- 28% of adults stated that sleepiness interfered with their daily activities at least a few days a month. 5% reported that it does so almost every day.
- About a quarter of adults have driven while drowsy.

Try these tips to help you get a good night's sleep.

- Use your bed just for sleeping – not for reading, watching TV, working, etc. Likewise, try to sleep just in your bed, not on the couch or in the armchair.
- Make your bedroom a comfortable place, with curtains to keep light out, an appropriate number of blankets, and no noise or distractions.
- Try to go to bed and get up around the same time each day.
- Have a routine before you go to bed. A cup of tea, a few stretches, a few moments of meditation, a warm bath, and quiet music are all great ways to relax.

## Practical Illustration



Pete was asleep at his desk. Lori walked by and had to climb over a mountain of junk food to get to him and wake him up before their boss saw him. She told Pete he needed to quit being a bump on a log and get into gear. Pete had a monstrous deadline and had been skipping meals and sleep to beat the clock. Lori warned him that the junk food and the lack of sleep would be the death of him. She reached in her snack drawer and pulled out a garden of healthy snacks and encouraged Pete to get up and walk around. Following her advice, Pete felt more energetic immediately and was inspired to get more exercise and eat healthier treats to keep fuel in his engine and promised to sleep at home and not at his desk.

## Module Three Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these is not a foundation of a low-stress lifestyle?
  - a) Diet
  - b) Sleep
  - c) Skipping meals
  - d) Exercise
  
- 2.) Which of these is not a benefit of exercise?
  - a) Helps you clear your mind
  - b) Can help you work out negative emotions
  - c) Give you time alone
  - d) Reduces your need for sleep
  
- 3.) Which of these is the recommended amount of sleep for the average adult?
  - a) 10 hours every night
  - b) 4 hours and 15 minutes
  - c) 6 hours and 40 minutes
  - d) 7 hours and 18 minutes
  
- 4.) What must you have as a base for a stress-reducing lifestyle?
  - a) Wood
  - b) A chair
  - c) Foundation
  - d) Ceiling
  
- 5.) How many building blocks make up that foundation?
  - a) One
  - b) Two
  - c) Five
  - d) Three
  
- 6.) In 2010, the centers for disease control in the United States estimated that less than how many adults get their recommended serving of fruits and vegetables?
  - a) A quarter
  - b) Two-thirds
  - c) One half
  - d) Three-quarters

- 7.) Sticking to a \_\_\_\_\_ is a key part of managing stress.
- a) Healthy diet
  - b) High-fat diet
  - c) Meatless diet
  - d) Liquid diet
- 8.) Any changes in diet, \_\_\_\_\_, and exercise must be lifestyle-oriented.
- a) Hair color
  - b) Height
  - c) Work
  - d) Sleep
- 9.) Set \_\_\_\_\_ goals for yourself.
- a) Impossible
  - b) Easy
  - c) Small
  - d) Difficult
- 10.) Exercise makes you \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Tired
  - b) Stronger
  - c) Angry
  - d) Hungry

*The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.*

**William James**

## Module Four: Altering the Situation



Now that we have the basic building blocks of a stress-reduced lifestyle, let's talk about how we deal with stress.

We've heard the saying, "A leopard can't change its spots," but we'd like to disagree. When dealing with stress, there are often many ways in which you can change your approach or the situation to make it less stressful.

### The First A

As we have mentioned, your first option when dealing with stress is to alter the situation or your approach to it.

You can alter your approach by:

- Thinking positively and having a positive attitude
- Improving specific skills that will help you manage the situation
- Doing something differently



Some examples:

- You always find going to the dentist stressful. You decide to think positively about it: "Well, if I get this over with, it will be done for a whole year." You also decide to bring along some relaxing music to help you cope with the appointment.
- You find interacting with a particular co-worker stressful because they tend to be very aggressive. You decide to take some communication and assertiveness training.
- Traffic has become heavy on your morning commute. You decide to take a different route.

## Identifying Appropriate Situations



Altering the situation is one of the most effective steps you can take towards managing your stress. By taking control of the situation and changing it to be less stressful, you are putting the power back in your hands.

However, there are a few instances where altering the situation is not appropriate, including situations where:

- Altering the situation is not safe. (For example, you find wearing your seatbelt claustrophobic, so you don't wear it.)
- Altering the situation means transferring the stress to someone else. (That's just mean!)

## Creating Effective Actions



There are also some appropriate and inappropriate actions to consider when altering a situation. Make sure that the benefit will be worth the effort in the long term. For example, you may want to take a different route to avoid traffic, but if that route will take you 40 minutes out of your way and cause more stress, it may not be worth it.

Make sure that your actions are helpful and kind to all involved. Adding negativity to your life will not help reduce stress.

## Practical Illustration



Sally was about to lose her head. Her neighbor in the next cubicle was a chatter box. He interrupted her all day long. Sally had enough and lodged a complaint to her boss, John. He was no stranger to the constant humming of Sally's neighbor. John suggested that Sally should point the finger at herself and fix how she reacted to the long-winded neighbor and nip the problem in the bud. Sally decided to give it a shot and marched back to her cubicle determined to turn the tables on her neighbor and laid down the law and informed him that the noise disturbed her and that she would be happy to chat on lunch breaks but not during work hours. The neighbor agreed and they were allowed to work in peace.

## Module Four Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these is not an appropriate way to alter a stressful situation?
  - a) Think positively
  - b) Do something differently
  - c) Improve specific skills
  - d) Transferring stress to someone else
  
- 2.) What do you need to consider when altering a situation?
  - a) If the benefit will be worth it
  - b) Avoiding traffic
  - c) Creating a list of priorities
  - d) How claustrophobic a seat belt makes you feel
  
- 3.) Which of these is your first option when dealing with stress?
  - a) Run
  - b) Hide
  - c) Alter
  - d) Cry
  
- 4.) You can alter your approach by \_\_\_\_\_ positively.
  - a) Thinking
  - b) Singing
  - c) Laughing
  - d) Hiding
  
- 5.) \_\_\_\_\_ skills will help you manage the situation.
  - a) Disregarding
  - b) Giving up
  - c) Improving
  - d) Forgetting
  
- 6.) What is the one of the most effective steps you can take toward managing stress?
  - a) Staying home
  - b) Passing it off on someone else
  - c) Never trying
  - d) Altering the situation

7.) Not wearing a seatbelt would be an example of which of these?

- a) A smart move
- b) A safe choice
- c) An unsafe move
- d) A lazy move

8.) Transferring the stress to someone else is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Great
- b) Smart
- c) Mean
- d) Expected

9.) Complete this sentence. Make sure your actions are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to all involved.

- a) Sneaky, unnoticed
- b) Smart, witty
- c) Helpful, kind
- d) Devious, mean

10.) Make sure that benefit will be \_\_\_\_\_ the effort in the long term.

- a) Greater than
- b) Equal
- c) Worth
- d) Less

*The activity of worrying keeps you immobilized.*

*Wayne Dwyer*

## Module Five: Avoiding the Situation



In the previous module, we talked about taking power over the situation and changing it to make it less stressful. In this module, we will explore another way to take power over stressful situations: by avoiding them entirely.

### The Second A



The second A stands for Avoid. If drinking coffee gives you indigestion, and causes you stress and embarrassment at work, don't drink coffee!

This A is all about identifying the things that you needlessly stress about, and how to remove those items from your life.

### Identifying Appropriate Situations

Avoiding the situation is appropriate if:

- Repercussions are non-existent or extremely minor
- Other people are not negatively impacted

Do not use this approach if:

- Avoiding will cause more stress in the long term than the short term (for example, avoiding the dentist or doctor's office)



- Avoiding will transfer stress to someone else
- Avoiding will negatively impact your health and/or safety

## Creating Effective Actions



One of the most powerful tools for avoiding a stressful situation is the Positive No. This tool enables you to say no in a way that maintains control over the situation, but does so in a constructive, assertive way.

The Positive No comes in several forms.

- Say no, followed by an honest explanation, such as, “I am uncomfortable doing that because...”
- Say no and then briefly clarify your reasoning without making excuses. This helps the listener to better understand your position. Example: “I can’t visit our neighbor right now because I promised Jenny I would take her to the playground.”
- Say no, and then give an alternative. Example: “I don’t have time today, but I could schedule it in for tomorrow morning.”
- Empathetically repeat the request in your own words, and then say no. Example: “I understand that you want everyone to partake in the roast beef supper, but I do not eat beef.”
- Provide an assertive refusal and repeat it no matter what the person says. This approach may be most appropriate with aggressive or manipulative people and can be an effective strategy to control your emotions. Example: “I understand how you feel, but I will not [or cannot] ...”  
Remember to stay focused and not become sidetracked into responding to other issues.

Remember; only use this approach in appropriate situations, as discussed in the previous topic.

## Practical Illustration



Frank was walking all over Eddie by putting more on Eddie's plate. Eddie already had a growing list of tasks to complete and Frank had harpooned him into doing more work. Eddie was feeling worn down. As long as Eddie allowed Frank to pile on the chores, Eddie would sink into the abyss. Eddie decided to assert himself following the advice of other coworkers and hailed Frank over to witness the mountain of tasks that were taking over his office. Eddie told Frank that although he'd like to help, he had his own hill to climb and couldn't let Frank drag him down anymore. Frank saw that he had pushed Eddie too far and decided to tighten his own reins and do his own work.

## Module Five Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these is a way to take power over a stressful situation?
  - a) Let the work pile up for later.
  - b) Pass it off to someone else
  - c) Only do enough to make it look good
  - d) Avoid it if it's appropriate
  
- 2.) When is avoiding a stressful situation appropriate?
  - a) If repercussions are non-existent or extremely minor
  - b) If someone else takes the blame
  - c) If no one will notice
  - d) If it puts someone in harm's way
  
- 3.) Which of these is a positive tool you can use to avoid a stressful situation?
  - a) Hiding under your desk
  - b) Sleeping less
  - c) Dumping the work on someone else
  - d) Using the positive no
  
- 4.) What does the second A stand for?
  - a) Arrogance
  - b) Aroma
  - c) Arithmetic
  - d) Avoid
  
- 5.) The second A is all about \_\_\_\_\_ the things that you needlessly stress about.
  - a) Avoiding
  - b) Identifying
  - c) Helping
  - d) Quitting
  
- 6.) Avoiding the situation is appropriate if other people are \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a) Around
  - b) Gone
  - c) Not negatively impacted
  - d) Looking

7.) Do not avoid if doing so will \_\_\_\_\_ impact your health.

- a) Positively
- b) Favorably
- c) Negatively
- d) Likely

8.) Avoiding will \_\_\_\_\_ stress to someone else.

- a) Cause
- b) Transfer
- c) Take
- d) Undermine

9.) Avoiding will cause more stress when?

- a) Today
- b) Yesterday
- c) In the long-term
- d) Never

10.) What does a positive no enable you to say?

- a) Yes
- b) Sure
- c) Absolutely
- d) No

*When we change our perception, we gain control.*

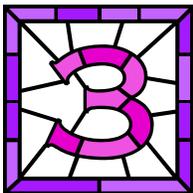
***Greg Anderson***

## Module Six: Accepting the Situation



Benjamin Franklin once said, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” Our final A will help us cope with those things that cannot be changed.

### The Third A



Our third A will help us deal with those things in life that just need to be done, even though they are unpleasant. Accepting the situation as it is, and being as positive as possible about it, is what this third A is all about. You can even use some of the principles from the first A to alter your attitude and make the situation a little less stressful!

Some examples include:

- Going to the dentist
- Taking a turn presenting a team project instead of passing it off to someone else
- Visiting a lonely neighbor who tends to be unpleasant

## Identifying Appropriate Situations

Accepting the situation is appropriate when:

- The task must be done eventually
- Avoiding or altering it would cause undue stress to you or another person



Accepting the situation is not appropriate when:

- You are doing so just to please others
- Avoiding or altering it would reduce your stress more than accepting it
- You are accepting it because you feel you have no choice

## Creating Effective Actions



Some people feel that accepting stressful situations and living through them makes them powerless. This is not true. With this model, you are choosing to accept the situation rather than to alter or avoid it. Often, having that power of choice can reduce stress greatly.

Another tactic that can help you accept a situation is positive thinking, as discussed in the first A. Or, identify the benefits of accepting this situation. Earlier, we used the example of taking a turn presenting a team project instead of passing it off to someone else. If you went ahead and presented the team project, you could gain many things from it, including:

- Respect from managers and co-workers
- Self-respect
- More confidence and experience when speaking in public

## Practical Illustration



Richard dreaded public speaking. It was his turn to bite the bullet and make a speech to a standing room only crowd. Just thinking about it made him jittery. Janine felt his pain and offered to help Richard get over his fear. Richard had the words, but the cat had his tongue and wouldn't let him get the words out of his mouth. Janine modeled her public speaking techniques using the words Richard wrote until Richard found the wind in his sails and, with Janine's brilliant advice, he was able to put one foot in front of the other, step up on stage in front of his peers, and implement her ideas. Janine glowed with pride as Richard knocked it out of the park with his eloquent speech.

## Module Six Review Questions

- 1.) When is accepting the situation appropriate?
  - a) When you are doing so just to please others
  - b) When avoiding it or altering it would reduce your stress more than accepting it
  - c) When you feel you have no choice
  - d) When avoiding it or altering it would cause undue stress to you or another person
  
- 2.) What tactic will help you accept the situation?
  - a) Powerlessness
  - b) Avoiding the situation
  - c) Passing it off to someone else
  - d) Positive thinking
  
- 3.) Instead of passing off a project, what could you gain from the experience?
  - a) Reduced stress
  - b) Powerlessness
  - c) Self-respect
  - d) Fear
  
- 4.) Who is credited for saying, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."?
  - a) Abraham Lincoln
  - b) Eleanor Roosevelt
  - c) Benjamin Franklin
  - d) Winston Churchill
  
- 5.) Which of these is not the appropriate time to accept the situation?
  - a) The task must be done eventually
  - b) You are doing so just to please others
  - c) Avoiding it would cause stress to another person-to-person
  - d) Visiting an unpleasant neighbor

- 6.) Complete this sentence. Some people feel that accepting stressful situations and living through them makes them \_\_\_\_\_
- a) Respected
  - b) Altered
  - c) Confident
  - d) Powerless
- 7.) Which of these is another tactic that can help you accept a situation?
- a) Positive thinking
  - b) Crying
  - c) Speaking in public
  - d) Going to the dentist
- 8.) Which of these would not be gained from taking a turn presenting a team project?
- a) Respect from managers and co-workers
  - b) More confidence and experience when speaking in public
  - c) Undue stress
  - d) Self-respect
- 9.) Which of these is an example of a positive attitude?
- a) Unpleasantness
  - b) Irritability
  - c) Stress
  - d) Respect for others
- 10.) Which of the following is not a lesson learned from this module?
- a) Cope with those things that cannot change
  - b) Deal with those things in life that may be unpleasant
  - c) Intimidate people to get your way
  - d) Change your attitude to a more positive attitude

*The better work men do is always done under stress and at great personal cost.*

**William Carlos Williams**

## Module Seven: Using Routines to Reduce Stress



Routines allow us to systematize the unchanging elements of our life, so that you can spend your energy on more worthwhile projects. By planning meals in advance, having a system for chores, and using to-do lists, you can run a more efficient environment and have fewer things to worry about.

### Planning Meals

Here are some ideas to make proper meals a part of your household.



- Take an hour on the weekend to plan meals, create a grocery list, and go shopping. Make sure to include anyone who lives in your household.
- In the grocery store, stay around the outer perimeter, where fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, and dairy are usually kept. Try to stay away from frozen and processed items.
- Take advantage of non-processed shortcuts, like pre-trimmed meat, salad kits, and pre-grated cheese.
- If you find it hard to keep fresh fruit in the house, try stocking up on frozen fruit.
- Try experimenting with slow cookers. They are inexpensive to purchase, use inexpensive ingredients, are easy to use, and they enable you to have supper ready as soon as you get home.
- Theme nights, like tacos or personal pizzas, are a great way to customize individual meals and encourage family members to try new things. Just remember to load up on the veggies and go easy on the dough and cheese.

By planning meals in advance, you'll accomplish two things: you will reduce your stress during the week, as meals will be planned, and you will eat better and feel better!

## Organizing Chores

It's also helpful to build routines around chores. Every person over the age of three in your household should help with chores. To make chores more palatable, we suggest that the household jointly make a list of things that need to be done, and then each person can choose a few tasks. Unpleasant tasks, like cleaning the bathroom, can be rotated.

Younger children can perform tasks like:

- Setting the table
- Making their bed
- Sorting laundry
- Feeding pets
- Preparing some parts of meals, like salad kits



Older children can help with tasks like:

- Helping to cook meals
- Helping younger children with their chores
- Loading and unloading the dishwasher
- Folding and putting away laundry

Having assigned tasks, and designated times to perform those tasks, will help you keep a clean, orderly household. In the end, it means there's that much less to worry about.

## Using a To-Do List



A to-do list is one of the most powerful life management tools that there is. Best of all, it is inexpensive and easy to use. It can be customized for home or work, and it can be used by individuals or families.

To manage household tasks, we suggest creating a Productivity Binder. At the front, place a calendar for the month. Next, place loose-leaf pages in the binder and label each with a date of the month. On each page, make a list of the things to be done that day and who is responsible for each item. Cross each item off when it is complete. Incomplete items can be transferred to the next day. The binder format makes it easy to keep your family calendar and to-do list in one spot, plus newsletters, reminders, flyers, and other important information.

At the back of the binder, you can keep calendars for subsequent months so that events and to-do items can be recorded as they come up. At the end of the month, simply remove the old calendar, and move the new calendar from the back of the book to the front.

Individuals can use this approach as well, although you may want to use a spiral notebook for portability.

We recommend keeping separate journals for work and home to maintain your optimum work/life balance.

Of course, there are online or virtual options that are easy to use. Google Calendar is a free option, but the appeal of stationery has recently made a comeback, and the connection of writing thoughts on to paper is good for memory. *When something is hand written, your brain is forced to process the information, which helps you to retain that information*

## Practical Illustration



Joe had a ton of work to do. With his boss breathing down his neck, Joe was up to his ears with unfinished tasks. Mike came to the rescue and showed Joe how to tame his chaos by organizing his desktop clutter into a manageable productivity binder; breaking gigantic tasks into small chores; and developing a solid plan of action to conquer his growing lists of workplace responsibilities without losing his head or his job. With Mike's help they were able to put these plans into action and make Joe's life easier by reducing his stress thus giving him more energy to not only keep the creative juices flowing, but to become a rising star in his workplace.

## Module Seven: Review Questions

- 1.) What do routines allow us to do?
  - a) Increase stress
  - b) Prioritize
  - c) Lose energy
  - d) Thrive on chaos
  
- 2.) What is one thing you can plan in advance to have a more efficient environment?
  - a) Meal planning
  - b) Interruptions
  - c) Weather
  - d) Deadlines
  
- 3.) Name one task that younger children can do to help at home.
  - a) Help cook meals
  - b) Load and unload the dishwasher
  - c) Set the table
  - d) Fold laundry
  
- 4.) How can older children help with tasks?
  - a) Make their bed
  - b) Sort laundry
  - c) Feed pets
  - d) Help cook meals
  
- 5.) Complete this sentence. Routines allow us to \_\_\_\_\_ the unchanging elements in our life, so that you can spend your \_\_\_\_\_ on more worthwhile projects.
  - a) Avoid, money
  - b) Alter, time
  - c) Eliminate, lunch break
  - d) Systematize, energy
  
- 6.) Having a system of chores and using to-do lists can make you run a more \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a) Efficient environment
  - b) Rigid workday
  - c) Stressful household
  - d) Scattered work area

- 7.) Which of these is an example of how to make a proper meal?
- a) Shop daily for dinner supplies
  - b) Order take-out everyday
  - c) Eat on the go
  - d) Plan meals
- 8.) When in the grocery store you should stick to the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_?
- a) Frozen food aisles
  - b) Processed food aisles
  - c) Candy aisles
  - d) Outer perimeter of store
- 9.) In the store you should take advantage of non-processed shortcuts like \_\_\_\_\_?
- a) Ice cream
  - b) Canned meats
  - c) Pre-grated cheese
  - d) Sugary cereals
- 10.) Which of these is not an example of how to make proper meals a part of your household?
- a) Theme nights
  - b) Experimenting with slow cookers
  - c) Stocking up on frozen fruits
  - d) Ordering out nightly

*It's not stress that kills us; it is our reaction to it.*

*Hans Selye*

## Module Eight: Environmental Relaxation Techniques



So far, we have talked about how to create a stress-reducing lifestyle, and how to reduce the impact of stressful situations. Despite all these preventative steps, stress will still happen. When it does, it's important to have some tools to keep cool.

### Finding a Sanctuary



Have you ever wished that you could just escape to a personal paradise when things get tough? Perhaps you imagine a tropical beach, or a cozy campsite in the middle of the woods. Although escapism isn't a good plan long-term, having a mental place to escape to and regroup can be a useful tool.

To create your personal sanctuary, start by thinking of your favorite place. It can be anywhere – a tropical island, a snowy mountain, an exotic jungle; wherever you feel most relaxed and safe.

Now, use your senses to capture all the elements of your sanctuary.

- What do you see?
- What does it smell like?
- What does it taste like? (For example, you may be able to taste the salt in the air by the ocean.)
- How does it make you feel?
- What textures do you associate with this place?
- What sounds would you hear?

Feel free to create a physical sanctuary by writing down your observations, drawing a picture, or even tucking away a physical piece of it (like a rock or leaf) in your desk.

## Using Music



Music can also be a great soother for the soul. Experts believe that the rhythm has powerful effects on our bodies.

If you need to relax, try to listen to some calming music. Jazz, classical, and even nature sounds are great ways to transport you to another place and give you time to unwind and regroup after a stressful situation. Music with an upbeat tempo can help you get back in the groove and up your mood.

If you are musically inclined, playing an instrument and singing along can relieve a ton of physical and mental tension. (Even if you aren't musically inclined, put on your favorite song and sing along! We guarantee it will make you feel better.)

## Seeing the Humor



Humor is another great stress reliever. It has been scientifically proven that a good belly laugh lowers blood pressure, reduces hormones created by stress, gives the immune system a boost, and creates a sense of well-being and happiness.

Remember these points when using humor as stress relief.

- Reading a funny story or joke can be a great way to make you laugh.
- Keeping a humorous calendar in your cubicle is a good way to have a laugh at hand, particularly if it's the page-a-day type. Just make sure it's appropriate and permitted in your office.
- Seeing the humor in a stressful situation can be difficult, but it can also help you put things in perspective. Try to imagine how the situation might appear from the outside, or how you might see it down the road.
- Sharing a laugh with friends and family is always a good pick-me-up. When sharing jokes at work, be sensitive to others, and make sure that what you're sharing is appropriate.

## Practical Illustration



Sylvia needed a break from her stress. Her coworker, Ann, approached her with caution. Ann asked what she could do to help. Sylvia spat a response that almost sent Ann running. Understanding that Sylvia needed to let off some steam, Ann lent her ear and offered Sylvia advice. After an eternity, Sylvia agreed that playing her favorite tunes and creating a little oasis at her desk gave her stress a mini-vacation and allowed her to continue working without blowing her stack. Ann's advice to dig up treasures Sylvia loves and squeeze them into her daily routine saved Sylvia a ton of time and allowed her to become a more productive happy employee.

## Module Eight: Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these is a relaxation tool?
  - a) Using humor to reduce stress
  - b) Yelling
  - c) Working nonstop until task is complete
  - d) Going to find a crowd of people to be with
  
- 2.) What should you consider when creating your sanctuary?
  - a) How others will like it?
  - b) How much work you can accomplish in it?
  - c) What sounds you'd like to hear?
  - d) That you have the tools to create your to-do list
  
- 3.) How can music relieve stress?
  - a) By soothing your soul
  - b) By creating a noise buffer
  - c) By convincing you to take up an instrument
  - d) By inspiring you to write a song
  
- 4.) Which of these have scientists proven to lower blood pressure?
  - a) Working long hours
  - b) High demand jobs
  - c) Humor
  - d) Crying
  
- 5.) When stress happens it's important to have some \_\_\_\_\_ to keep cool?
  - a) Candy bars
  - b) Tools
  - c) Noise
  - d) Extra work
  
- 6.) Which of these isn't a good long-term plan to reduce stress?
  - a) Escapism
  - b) Finding a sanctuary
  - c) Listening to soothing music
  - d) Exercise

- 7.) Which of the following is not one of your senses?
- a) Smell
  - b) Taste
  - c) Avoid
  - d) Feel
- 8.) Complete this sentence. Experts believe that \_\_\_\_\_ has powerful effects on our bodies?
- a) Rhythm
  - b) Stress
  - c) Public speaking
  - d) Fear
- 9.) If you are not musically inclined, which one of these can you do to relieve stress?
- a) Get upset because you never had music lessons
  - b) Destroy your radio
  - c) Eat a bowl of ice cream
  - d) Put on your favorite song and sing along
- 10.) Which of these is not an example of using humor as a stress reliever?
- a) Reading a funny story or joke
  - b) Keeping a humorous calendar in your cubicle
  - c) Sharing a laugh with friends
  - d) Laughing at someone's pain

*Worry and stress affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system, and profoundly affects heart action.*

*Charles Mayo*

## Module Nine: Physical Relaxation Techniques

Stress can cause many physical side effects, including:



- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Depression
  - Obesity
  - Digestive problems
  - Increased susceptibility to illness
  - Increased risk of heart attack and stroke

These effects increase the longer you are stressed, and the higher your stress level. Having some ways to reduce the effects of stress on our body and mind is important.

### Soothing Stretches



Having some quick, easy stretches in your stress management toolbox will help you ease some of the physical tension caused by stress. In fact, these can (and should) be used several times a day to help prevent muscle tension and feelings of stress. Although these activities are not particularly strenuous, it's always best to check with a doctor before trying any physical activity, especially if you have health problems.

**Neck Roll:** Let your chin hang down to your chest. Next, slowly roll your head to your left side, so that your left ear is near your left shoulder. Roll your head backwards and let your head hang as far back as is comfortable. Now, slowly roll your head to the right, so that your right ear is near your right shoulder.

Continue rolling your head until your chin is once again hanging to your chest. Now, repeat the process, but go in the other direction (so that you begin by rolling your head to your right shoulder.)

**Shoulder Shrug:** Relax your shoulders. Slowly shrug towards the front of our body and upwards. Next, shrug your shoulders down towards the back of your body. When your shoulders are back in their natural position, relax, and then repeat the exercise in the opposite direction.

**Side Stretch:** Stand with your left hand on your left hip. Place your right hand straight out so that it is perpendicular to your body. Slowly stretch your right hand over your head, to the left, and bend to the left at the waist as far as is comfortable. Stretch for a moment, and then slowly return to the standing position. Repeat for the opposite side.

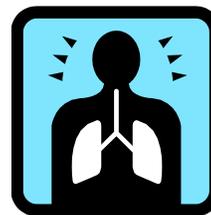
**Lumbar Stretch:** Stand and place both hands in the small of your back. Arch your back slowly, feeling the stretch. Repeat three times.

The key to these exercises is to do them slowly and regularly. They are also very effective when combined with deep breathing, which just happens to be our next topic!

## Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is an excellent relaxation tool that can be adapted for almost any situation. It also has some physical benefits, including:

- Reduction in blood pressure
- Reduction in muscle tension
- Boost in metabolism
- Clearing of the mind
- Boost in endorphins (our natural painkillers)



The basic technique is just like it sounds: slowly breathe in through your nose, and then breathe out through your mouth. Try counting slowly as you do this. Each breath should take ten to twenty seconds. (You will be able to take longer breaths with practice.)

When you are in a stressful situation, it is easy to unobtrusively deep breathe to keep yourself cool. This will also help prevent some of the harmful physical effects of stress, since stress causes us to breathe faster, making our bodies work harder.

If you have a few moments to yourself, sit down, close your eyes, and spend a few minutes deep breathing. Deep breathing can also be used in conjunction with picturing your sanctuary or stretching.

## Tensing and Relaxing

Believe it or not, intentionally creating tension is a relaxation technique – as long as you remember to relax afterwards!

Try this: bunch your hands up into fists as tight as possible. Now, slowly let your fingers roll out, feeling the tension evaporate from your hands and fingers. Try it again, slower. For maximum effect, deep breathe while tensing and relaxing.



You can try this with almost any part of your body. Here are some examples:

- Scrunch your eyes up
- Curl your toes towards your shins
- Make a big frown and then smile
- Tense your abs as tight as you can

You can even purposely tense yourself from your toes all the way up to your head, and then relax from your head to your toes. Remember, the key is to go slowly, and deep breathe if possible while tensing and relaxing.

## Meditation



Meditation is the ancient art of moving your mind into a deeper state of awareness through relaxation. There are many forms of meditation, including religious and non-religious methods.

Most forms of meditation involve sitting or lying in a comfortable position and tensing and relaxing certain groups of muscles while deep breathing. Other forms focus simply on breathing and emptying one's mind. We suggest doing some research on the Internet or at the local library to find information on the various methods, as they are far too diverse to cover here. You can also consult a yoga studio or your church.

Our challenge to you: Try meditating once a day for thirty days and see how it makes you feel!

## Practical Illustration



Steve was foaming at the mouth after a long day of interruption after interruption. His coworkers, Earl and James, had survived eight long hours with Steve so far. They wanted to help before Steve exploded. Deciding that showing rather than telling was probably better, they sat in their chairs and modeled relaxation techniques. Earl started deep breathing while James did side stretches. Steve wondered if everyone had lost their marbles and grumbled at their circus routine. They convinced him to give some stretches a shot. He did in hopes of having them stop bugging him. Within a few moments, he felt better. Liking the results, Steve continued to use the techniques and declared his cubicle a stress-free zone from now on.

## Module Nine: Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these is a physical side effect of stress?
  - a) Insomnia
  - b) Laughter
  - c) Music
  - d) Good health
  
- 2.) What can you do at your desk to reduce stress right now?
  - a) Stretches
  - b) Yell
  - c) More work
  - d) Eat
  
- 3.) Which of these is not a stretching technique?
  - a) Lumbar
  - b) Neck roll
  - c) Deep breathing
  - d) Side
  
- 4.) Which of these is a physical benefit of deep breathing?
  - a) Clearing of the mind
  - b) Laughter
  - c) Increased appetite
  - d) Shoulder rolls
  
- 5.) Which one of these is a relaxation technique?
  - a) Breathing faster
  - b) Working faster
  - c) Scrunching your eyes up
  - d) Going to crowded places
  
- 6.) All of these are physical side effects of stress except \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a) Obesity
  - b) Increased susceptibility to illness
  - c) Increased risk of heart attack and stroke
  - d) Higher income levels

7.) The above effects \_\_\_\_\_ the longer you are stressed.

- a) Decrease
- b) Have no effect on
- c) Increase
- d) Eliminates

8.) What can soothing stretches help you do?

- a) Increase your stress level
- b) Organize your desktop
- c) Lower your BMI
- d) Ease some of the physical tension

9.) Which of these is the proper first step to doing a neck roll?

- a) Relax your shoulders
- b) Roll your head
- c) Stand with your left hand on your left hip
- d) Let your chin hang down to your chest

10.) Which of these is in the proper order for doing a lumbar stretch?

- a) Stand, both hands in small of back, arch your back, feel the stretch
- b) Both hands in small of back, arch your back, stand, feel the stretch
- c) Stand, feel the stretch, arch your back, hands in small of back
- d) Hands in small of back, stand, feel the stretch, arch your back

*Stress is like an iceberg. We can see one-eighth of it above, but what about what's below?*

**Patrice O'Connor**

## Module Ten: Coping with Major Events



The tools that we have discussed so far will help you manage and reduce stress in your everyday life. However, as you encounter stressful events, your toolbox will have to grow, too. This module will explore how to prepare for major stressful events, and what to do when those events happen.

### Establishing a Support System



The building blocks that we have discussed so far will help you survive a major stressful event. If you already have a minimal amount of stress and a low-stress lifestyle, you will be one step ahead of the game.

Maintaining a strong network of family and friends is also important. Keep in touch with your social support system even in good times. Remember, you can use the tools we've discussed in this workshop to help others through stressful situations.

In stressful times, strong bonds with family and friends will provide valuable support and resources. Take advantage of your support systems when times get tough, and be there for others when they need you. It's an investment that will repay you many times over.

## Creating a Plan



When a stressful event arises (or if you anticipate a stressful event), creating a plan can give you a much-needed sense of control. With a plan, you can feel like you're at least a little bit on top of things, and that you have power over the situation. Often, people find that making lists and planning (even if it's for the short term) restores a bit of order and control to their life.

Things to think about include:

- How can I maintain a healthy lifestyle (with appropriate amounts of diet, sleep, and exercise) during this period?
- What changes will I need to make to my lifestyle?
- How will my routine help me during this period?
- How might my routine change?
- How can I use the Triple "A" approach to handle this situation?
- What relaxation techniques might be appropriate?
- What support systems can I rely on?

Remember, stress is individual, and therefore your approach should be too. If you simply can't find the time to exercise during this stressful period, for example, and can manage only a ten-minute walk per day, accept that as your new routine. This is not the time for you to put additional pressure on yourself.

After the stressful event is over, try to return to your normal routine as soon as possible. This will help restore order to your life and return your stress levels to normal.

## Knowing When to Seek Help



Despite your best efforts, some situations are just too stressful to handle on your own. It is never a bad idea to ask for professional help with stress. Having an objective third party to talk to and get feedback from can be an important part of your support system.

If you're wondering where to find help, start at your workplace. Many employers offer confidential employee assistance programs. If your organization doesn't offer these types of programs, look online for local mental health services or hotlines in your area.

It makes sense that large events will cause large amounts of stress. However, several small stress-causing events that happen in close proximity can cause exponential amounts of stress. For example, imagine a month marked by these events: getting in a fender-bender, making a significant mistake at work, having an argument with your spouse, and coming down with a bad cold. You could probably cope with each individual event as it happened.

Now, imagine if all of these events happened in the space of a few days. Your stress level would be much higher, and you would probably find it far more difficult to cope. Think of the straw that broke the camel's back.

Remember, different things are stressful to different people. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness; it is a mark of intelligence and strength.

## Practical Illustration



Dave and Sue were organizing a meeting to help their coworker, Paula, get through a hard time in her life. They joined forces to round up a support network of Paula's friends and family to provide the assistance she needed and to show Paula that despite their individual duties, they all took responsibility for their team members and would move mountains to make help her through hard times. With the dedicated help of a few friends and a supportive network of eager coworkers, Dave and Sue were able to pull Paula through whatever woes she may have had and help her succeed.

## Module Ten: Review Questions

- 1.) How can having a strong bond with family and friends benefit you?
  - a) Increase stress
  - b) Make you less productive
  - c) Help you survive a stressful event
  - d) Make things worse
  
- 2.) What can you do to regain a sense of control during stressful times?
  - a) Avoid the situation
  - b) Pass duties off to someone else
  - c) Set a table
  - d) Create a plan
  
- 3.) Where can you find help if stress becomes too much for you?
  - a) Mental health professional
  - b) Buried underneath your to-do list
  - c) At the dentist
  - d) At a donut shop
  
- 4.) Establishing a support system will help you to what?
  - a) Conquer your to-do list
  - b) Get a better job
  - c) Exercise more
  - d) Cope with major events
  
- 5.) What do you need to be one step ahead when dealing with a major stressful event?
  - a) Support system
  - b) Stress
  - c) Tough tasks
  - d) Obesity
  
- 6.) Maintaining a strong network of \_\_\_\_\_ is also important.
  - a) Co-workers
  - b) Business contacts
  - c) Medical professionals
  - d) Family and friends

7.) What can family and friends do for you?

- a) Add more stress
- b) Increase work load
- a) Shame you
- c) Provide valuable support and resources

8.) When a stressful event arises, what can give you a much-needed sense of control?

- b) A good meal
- c) Creating a plan
- d) Exercise
- e) New diet

9.) Remember that stress is \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Too much to handle
- b) Better than humor
- c) Good for your health
- d) Individual

10.) It is never a bad idea to \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Avoid work
- b) Ask for help
- c) Try to solve problems alone
- d) Increase your stress levels

*In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive.*

***Lee Iacocca***

## **Module Eleven: Our Challenge to You**



We have discussed many tools in this workshop, and we hope that our ideas have sparked some thoughts on how you can manage and reduce stress. However, it's hard to know how to solve a problem if you don't know what the problem really is! This module will explore how to use a stress log system to identify, reduce, and manage stressors.

### **Creating a Stress Log**



A stress log can help you identify your major stressors, and it can help you identify trends in those stressors. Identifying the cause of stress can help you reduce the number and impact of stressors in your life, and it can help you manage the stress that does occur.

A basic stress log is pictured on the next page.

<b>What happened?</b>
<b>When did it happen?</b>
<b>Where did it happen?</b>
<b>How high was my stress level, on a scale of one to ten? (1=Not Stressed, 5=Moderately Stressed, 10=Close to a nervous breakdown)</b>
<b>How did I feel?</b>
<b>Why did this event cause me stress?</b>
<b>What did I do about it?</b>
<b>What would I like to do differently next time?</b>

We suggest that you copy this form into a three-ring binder or a spiral notebook. You can modify this form to suit your needs, but we recommend keeping the basic fields intact, as it will help with the next steps.

## Week One: Recording Events



The first stage of using a stress log is to gather information. For seven days, fill out your stress log each time you feel stressed or anxious. We also recommend writing a journal entry each night, summarizing the day and your stress-related feelings.

## Week Two: Identifying Stressors and Creating a Plan



When the first week is over, sit down with your journal and a blank piece of paper. First, take a moment to write down your overall stress level based on the one to ten scale used in your stress log.

Now, write down the events that caused the highest stress levels. Next, write down the events that caused stress most frequently. Finally, add events that you know are stressful but were not captured during the past week.

From this, identify your major stressors and create a plan for each. Some things to think about include:

- Which A (Alter, Avoid, Accept) might be appropriate in dealing with this situation?
- How could lifestyle changes (in diet, sleep, exercise, routine, and organization) help alleviate this stress?
- What relaxation techniques could help me cope with this stress?
- What resources (such as support systems and outside help) can help me reduce this stressor?
- What will my final plan look like?

In order to be successful, your final stress management plan should set small, achievable goals that have a reasonable time frame for completion.

If you cannot think of a way to identify a particular stressor, try consulting friends and family. If you are really stuck for a plan, set it aside and review it later.

## Week Three: Creating New Habits



Now it's time for the exciting part: putting your plan into action. Take one or two small parts of your stress management plan at a time and incorporate them into your life. Try each part for a week or two. If it works, make it a part of your lifestyle or stress management approach. If it doesn't work, make a note of your efforts and move on. Continue incorporating new tools and habits into your lifestyle in this way.

## Reviewing and Evaluating

In the beginning, we recommend reviewing your stress management plan weekly or bi-weekly. Think about these things.

- What was my stress level the last time I reviewed my plan?
- What is my stress level now?
- What has changed?
- What stressors have been added to my life?
- What stressors have been removed from my life?
- How should my plan change?
- What stress management techniques have been working for me? What techniques have not been working? How should my plan change?
- What is my plan for the next week?
- When will I review my plan again?



Once you have started to develop a good stress management strategy, you can reduce your review to once a month or less – whatever works for you. If you find your stress levels starting to rise, go back to week one and work through the process again.

## Practical Illustration



Sam scratched his head not understanding why the notebook marked 'stress log' was on top of the mountain of work on his desk. Gilles noticed his confusion and told him that he could help himself battle his frustrations by logging all the things that stressed him out. Sam protested but eventually he agreed to keep a log. Gilles volunteered to help keep him on the straight and narrow. After a week, Sam realized he let undue stress control his life and he and Gilles researched ways to control that, and Sam was able to stop a situation from wreaking havoc one day and implemented techniques to make him breathe easier.

## Module Eleven: Review Questions

- 1.) Which of these tools can help you identify stressors in your life?
  - a) A stress log
  - b) A yoga mat
  - c) A colleague
  - d) A child
  
- 2.) What should you include in your stress log?
  - a) Your to-do list
  - b) Your shopping list
  - c) List of accomplished tasks
  - d) A list of every time you felt anxious or stressed
  
- 3.) What can a stress log help you achieve?
  - a) Identify areas to work on
  - b) Better penmanship
  - c) Bigger work load
  - d) List of gift ideas for friends and family
  
- 4.) What can you do today to begin creating new habits?
  - a) Write it down and forget about it
  - b) Keep doing the same thing until it works
  - c) Give up
  - d) Incorporate new tools and habits into your life
  
- 5.) You can use a stress log to do all of these except:
  - a) Manage stressors
  - b) Reduce stress
  - c) Increase stress
  - d) Identify stress
  
- 6.) Identifying the cause of \_\_\_\_\_ can help you \_\_\_\_\_ the number and impact of stressors in your life.
  - a) Laughter, increase
  - b) Sadness, decrease
  - c) Stress, reduce
  - d) Tension, increase

- 7.) Which of these questions would you not include in your stress log?
- a) What I need to pick up from the market today?
  - b) What happened?
  - c) When did it happen?
  - d) What did I do about it?
- 8.) Which of these would not be a good indicator of your level of stress in a stress log?
- a) Close to a nervous breakdown
  - b) Moderately stressed
  - c) Sitting in my cubicle again
  - d) Not stressed
- 9.) Recording events is in which stage of using a stress log?
- a) Week two
  - b) Week three
  - c) Week one
  - d) Week four
- 10.) In order to be successful, your final stress management plan should set \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_?
- a) Large, stress-inducing goals
  - b) Small, achievable goals
  - c) Small, unnecessary goals
  - d) Large, impossible goals

*Sometimes when people are under stress, they hate to think, and it's the time when they most need to think.*

**Bill Clinton**

## Module Twelve: Wrapping Up



Although this workshop is coming to a close, we hope that your journey to improve your Stress Management skills is just beginning. Please take a moment to review and update your Action Plan. This will be a key tool to guide your progress in the days, weeks, months, and years to come. We wish you the best of luck on the rest of your travels!

### Words from the Wise

- **Benjamin Franklin:** Do not anticipate trouble or worry about what may never happen.
- **Adabella Radici:** If your teeth are clenched and your fists are clenched, your lifespan is probably clenched.
- **Henry Kissinger:** There cannot be a stressful crisis next week. My schedule is already full.

### Lessons Learned

At the end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- Identify the best approach to a stressful situation (Alter, Avoid, or Accept)
- Understand what lifestyle elements you can change to reduce stress
- Use routines to reduce stress
- Use environmental and physical relaxation techniques
- Better cope with major events
- Use a stress log to identify stressors and create a plan to reduce or eliminate them

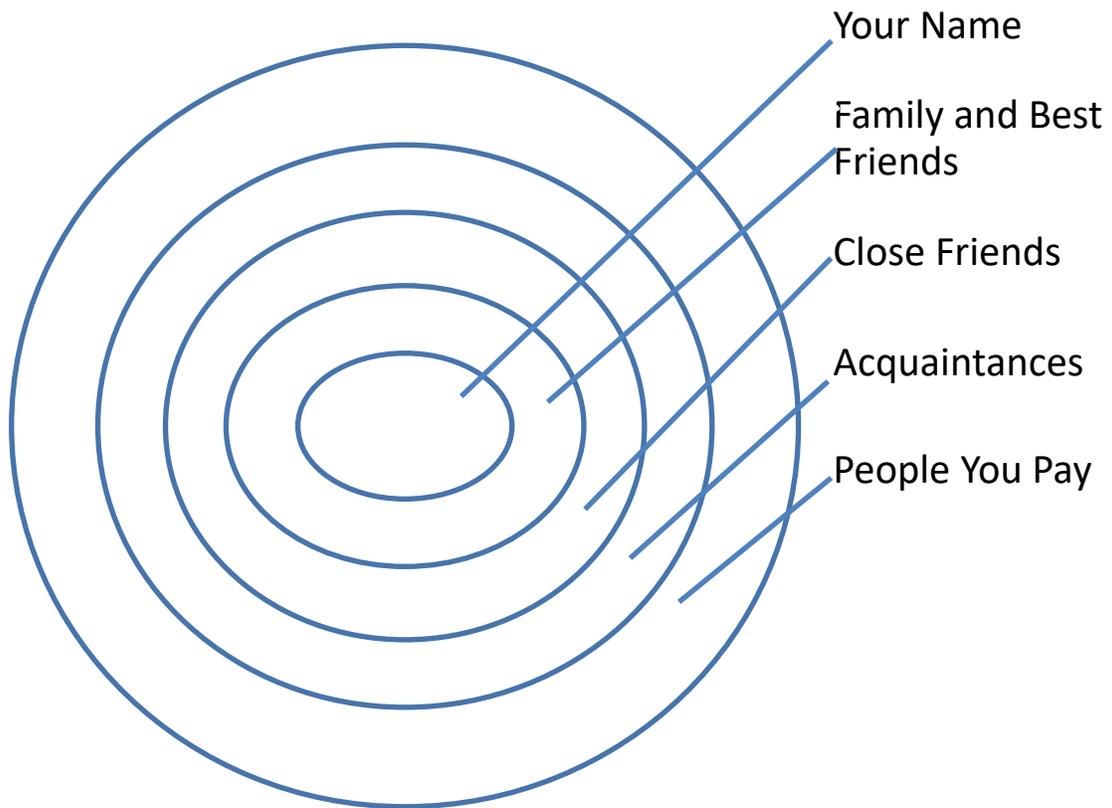
## Appendix

### Worksheet 1

# *The Triple A Approach*

SCENARIO	ALTER?	AVOID?	ACCEPT?	ACTION PLAN
Your neighbor always comes outside to talk to you as you leave the house. You often don't have time for conversation, especially since it is usually negative, but you feel bad saying no.				
You have just joined a new team at work. You find your new manager abrasive and that dealing with him is stressful.				
Your mother-in-law is coming to visit next week. You always find her visits time-consuming and stressful.				
You live in an area that experiences frequent earthquakes. You find these events very unnerving and hard to deal with.				
You have been putting off your yearly dental checkup for a few months because you find it stressful. However, you developed a toothache last week that is getting painful.				

# *Your Circle of Support*



Worksheet 3

## *Your Individual Stress Log*

<b>WHAT HAPPENED?</b>
<b>WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?</b>
<b>WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?</b>
<b>HOW HIGH WAS MY STRESS LEVEL, ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN? (1=NOT STRESSED, 5=MODERATELY STRESSED, 10=CLOSE TO A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN)</b>
<b>HOW DID I FEEL?</b>
<b>WHY DID THIS EVENT CAUSE ME STRESS?</b>
<b>WHAT DID I DO ABOUT IT?</b>
<b>WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?</b>

## Post Assessment

- 1.) Which of these would be stressful?
  - a) Eating a banana
  - b) Taking a test
  - c) Listening to soothing music
  - d) Being organized
  
- 2.) Which one of these would be considered stressful?
  - a) A great movie
  - b) A night out on the town
  - c) Public speaking
  - d) Reading a book
  
- 3.) Which of these is not a foundation of a low-stress lifestyle?
  - a) Diet
  - b) Sleep
  - c) Skipping meals
  - d) Exercise
  
- 4.) What must you have as a base for a stress-reducing lifestyle?
  - a) Wood
  - b) A chair
  - c) Foundation
  - d) Ceiling
  
- 5.) Which of these is not an appropriate way to alter a stressful situation?
  - a) Think positively
  - b) Do something differently
  - c) Improve specific skills
  - d) Transferring stress to someone else
  
- 6.) Not wearing a seatbelt would be an example of which of these?
  - a) A smart move
  - b) A safe choice
  - c) An unsafe move
  - d) A lazy move

7.) Which of these is a positive tool you can use to avoid a stressful situation?

- a) Hiding under your desk
- b) Sleeping less
- c) Dumping the work on someone else
- d) Using the positive no

8.) Which of these is way to take power over a stressful situation?

- a) Let the work pile up for later
- b) Pass it off to someone else
- c) Only do enough to make it look good
- d) Avoid it if it's appropriate

9.) What tactic will help you accept the situation?

- a) Powerlessness
- b) Avoiding the situation
- c) Passing it off to someone else
- d) Positive thinking

10.) Complete this sentence. Some people feel that accepting stressful situations and living through them makes them \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Respected
- b) Altered
- c) Confident
- d) Powerless

11.) What do routines allow us to do?

- a) Increase stress
- b) Prioritize
- c) Lose energy
- d) Thrive on chaos

12.) What is one thing you can plan in advance to have a more efficient environment?

- a) Meal planning
- b) Interruptions
- c) Weather
- d) Deadlines

13.) Which of these is a relaxation tool?

- a) Using humor to reduce stress
- b) Yelling
- c) Working nonstop until task is complete
- d) Going to find a crowd of people to be with

14.) What should you consider when creating your sanctuary?

- a) How others will like it?
- b) How much work you can accomplish in it?
- c) What sounds you'd like to hear?
- d) That you have the tools to create your to-do list

15.) Which of these is a physical side effect of stress?

- a) Insomnia
- b) Laughter
- c) Music
- d) Good health

16.) What can you do at your desk to reduce stress right now?

- a) Stretches
- b) Yell
- c) More work
- d) Eat

17.) What can having a strong bond with family and friends do for you?

- a) Increase stress
- b) Make you less productive
- c) Help you survive a stressful event
- d) Make things worse

18.) What can you do to regain a sense of control during stressful times?

- a) Avoid the situation
- b) Pass duties off to someone else
- c) Set a table
- d) Create a plan

19.) Which of these tools can help you identify stressors in your life?

- a) A stress log
- b) A yoga mat
- c) A colleague
- d) A child

20.) What should you include in your stress log?

- a) Your to-do list
- b) Your shopping list
- c) List of accomplished tasks
- d) A list of every time you felt anxious or stressed

## Recommended Reading

Alexander, J. (2002). *The Weekend Healer*. Simon and Schuster.

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