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Managing Stress Wisely

(A Dietary Guidelines for Americans Focus Area)

Facilitator Notes

Main Learning Points and Review of Healthy Steps from Last Session: *Weight Management (A DGA Focus Area) Part 2: What Do the Guidelines Say?*

1. Body Mass Index measures if a person's weight is at a healthy level for their height.
2. The higher the BMI level, the greater the chance of developing health problems.
3. Waist circumference measures the body fat around the abdominal, or stomach, region.

Review Healthy Steps from last session.

Note



This session could be used for family/friend groups or sessions. It offers an opportunity for the participant and family to practice skill-building together.

Tips for this Session

Participants' answers can be a guide to normalizing their stress triggers (their physical and emotional responses to stress). Encourage participants to identify stress-management tips they want to use. Before the session begins, you may want to write three columns on the chalkboard or flipchart:

- a. Stress Triggers
- b. Stress Symptoms
- c. Tips to Manage

As participants add information to the board throughout the session, place their names by their contributions (have small sticky notes that they can use). At the conclusion of group, time permitting, copy what has been written and reproduce it for the next session as a handout to review what was learned.

General Tip

Simply presenting new knowledge is not likely to lead to behavioral change. Why? For many reasons, including:

1. Adults remember less than 10% of what they read and 50% of what they see and hear.
2. People with mental illness may have even greater difficulty remembering what they see and hear.
3. However, everyone remembers much more of what they say and what they do.

That is why the deepest learning comes when new material is actively applied to real life situations.

Note

For more in-depth exploration of managing stress, refer to *Team Solutions, Workbook 6 – Managing Stress and Problems*

Suggestion for Topic Introduction and Relevance to Participants

“Do you believe stress and physical health are connected?”

(Encourage dialogue about the connection between stress and the way people think and feel.)

“If you believe that stress affects physical health, can you understand how stress also can affect your mental health?”

“On the board you see:

- *Stress Triggers*
- *Stress Symptoms*
- *Tips to Manage”*

“In today’s session, we will look at information and tips on how to manage stress so you can live a healthier lifestyle. If you like one of these tips, or if some of the information applies to you, you can put a Post-it note on the board next to that area.”

“For example, something that triggers my stress is when I don’t have enough time to get all my work done. If I hear this trigger mentioned during this session, I’ll put a Post-it note on the board by “stress triggers.”

“Let’s answer the first six questions on the Topic Assessment before we start, just to see how familiar we are with this topic.”

Topic Assessment

1. A 2. C 3. B 4. B

T – topic introduction
R – relevance to participant
I – identify objectives
M – materials for session
M – motivate to use

Review of Session 12: Weight Management Part 2: What Do the Guidelines Say?



Main Learning Points of Session 12

What were the main learning points of Session 12? If you did not attend the last session, you may guess, and also write the answers as people say them:

1. Body Mass Index (BMI) measures if a person's w_____t is healthy for their height.
2. The higher the BMI level, the g_____r the risk of developing health problems.
3. Waist circumference measures body fat around the s_____h region.

Take a Small Healthy Step Review:

What small healthy step did you choose to work on between sessions?

Did you complete your healthy step yet?

1. **Yes.** How did it go? _____

2. **No.** What got in the way of completing your practice?

If you still plan to complete your practice, when will you do it?

3. **I didn't choose a small healthy step.**

Topic Assessment



Mark one: Pre Post

Your Score:
+ ____ out of 4

Directions:

1. Read each question carefully.
2. Read every answer before marking one.
3. Mark only one answer to each question.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Stress can be both healthy and unhealthy for us.

- A. True B. False

2. People with mental illness are more likely to _____ to cope with stress:

- A. go to bed at the same time every night.
B. listen to music and practice relaxation skills.
C. drink, smoke, use drugs or overeat.
D. use positive self-talk and problem solving.

3. Everyone reacts to stress in the same way.

- A. True B. False

4. When practicing healthy coping skills for managing stress, it is important to:

- A. Make the biggest and hardest changes first.
B. Avoid all problems, stress, and difficult situations.
C. Make 3-4 changes at a time so change happens faster.
D. Learn about your reactions to stress.

5. I am confident I manage my stress in healthy ways.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree Unsure

Topic Assessment



6. This information is important for me to know.

Strongly
Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree
Nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly
Agree

At the end of the session, answer these questions before turning in this paper:

7. This session helped me.

Strongly
Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree
Nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly
Agree

8. What I liked about this session: _____

9. How this session could have been better for me: _____

Managing Stress Wisely

Objectives for this Session

1. Identify at least 2 things that make you feel stressed.
2. Identify 1 physical symptom you feel when under stress.
3. Identify 1 emotional symptom you feel when under stress.

Stress is part of everyday life. Many people think stress is only unhealthy, but stress can be healthy, too. Stress can give us the energy and focus we need to deal with a situation and it can motivate us to change. But too much stress can build up and cause us to worry, lose sleep or make choices that are not healthy. Stress sometimes can cause us to overeat to try to make ourselves feel better.

Main Learning Point #1

We can experience both good and bad stress.

Did you know? According to the 2006 Mental Health America Survey, “people with mental illness, are far more likely to feel stress than those without such personal experiences.” People with mental illness are more likely to talk to family about their stress, but also are more likely to drink, smoke, do drugs and/or overeat. It’s especially important for people with mental illness to understand how to manage stress in a healthy way.

Main Learning Point #2

People with mental illness are more likely to drink, smoke, use drugs and/or overeat to cope with stress.

Managing Stress Wisely

(continued)



Answer this question: How are you feeling today?

Today, I am completely calm and relaxed.

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree
Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly
Agree | Unsure |

If you answered “strongly disagree” or “disagree,” what is making you feel this way today?

When we are stressed, we may feel uncomfortable, nervous, excited, or completely overwhelmed. It depends on the person and the situation, because everyone handles stress differently. What might make one person feel stressed might not bother another person at all.



What Kinds of Things Make You Feel Stressed?

(Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Believing no one is listening to me | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting with someone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worrying about money | <input type="checkbox"/> Not getting enough sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being in a crowd | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting an appointment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being late | <input type="checkbox"/> Not getting what I need |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing loud noises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking too much caffeine | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Did you know? When you are stressed, your body releases chemicals, called hormones, to help you manage the situation. These hormones rush through your body and give you the focus you need to take care of the situation. This often is referred to as the “fight or flight response.”

Managing Stress Wisely

(continued)



Think about how you know when you are stressed. What happens to your body? What do you experience? Please answer by checking what applies to you in the lists below:

Physical Signs

- Muscle tension
- Heart beats faster
- Stomach ache
- Increased appetite
- Sweat
- Feel “butterflies” in your stomach
- Bite your nails
- Clench your hands into fists
- Other: _____

Emotional Signs

- Can't concentrate
- Become irritable or angry
- Cry
- Stay away from others
- Feel restless
- Become focused and alert
- Tired
- Nervous
- Other: _____

Main Learning Point #3

Everyone responds to stress differently. It is important to learn about your reactions to stress.

Managing Stress Wisely

(continued)



The following tips help to manage stress: (Please check off all that apply to you.)

- Nutrition:** Eat healthy and appropriate amounts of food on a regular schedule. Use your *Daily Food and Beverage Tracker* to help you.
- Physical Activity:** Plan for and add more physical activity to your day. Use the *Daily Physical Activity Tracker* to help you.
- Positive Thinking:** Congratulate yourself when you are doing a good job. Pat yourself on the back when you have done something you feel good about.
- Relaxation:** Listen to calming music, stretch and breathe. Plan times to rest. Make a date with yourself to relax or have fun!
- Support:** Call a friend or family member to talk about your day.
- Sleep:** Go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time every morning. Take a warm bath or drink a glass of warm low-fat milk to help you relax before you go to bed.
- Make a List for the Stressful Times:** Make a list of who can help you, ways you can deal with stress, and what makes you feel better.
- Other:** _____

Make one change at a time. Remember, the small steps approach can apply to stress management, too. Choose a tip and make it a goal to focus on that tip before you worry any other goals. Choose the next goal when you are ready. Do not add more stress to your life by making too many changes at once. Changing how you react to stress is possible and takes time.

Main Learning Point #4

Make one change at a time.

Review & Moving Forward



The *main learning points* of this session are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Take A “Small Healthy Step” to Ensure Your Success!

It’s important to practice new knowledge and skills. What will you do between now and the next session? Please choose one healthy step from the list below:

- 1. STUDY.** I am going to reread my handout at least once.
- 2. SHARE.** I will share my handout with someone in my support system. I will ask _____ to read it and talk with me about how they react to their stress.
- 3. TEST MYSELF.** This week I will use at least one tip I learned today to help manage my stress. The tip I choose is: _____
- 4. OTHER** (Choose Your Own “Small Healthy Step”): _____

Take an “Extra Step Forward” (optional)

- 5. READ and RESPOND.** I will read the “*Sarah’s Story*” handout and write down answers to the questions. I will bring the handout to the next session.

Tip: Put this piece of paper where you will see it at least once a day. It will remind you to practice. Remembering your commitment will help you to complete your personal practice option.

Sarah's Story

Sarah learned last week through her Supported Employment Program that she will interview for a job in two days.

Sarah has not worked in a few years and as the interview gets closer, she begins to doubt that she can sit through an interview and speak clearly about her skills. She cancels plans to visit with a friend and she goes home and worries most of the night.

She can't sleep. Her stomach is upset and she thinks about everything that might go wrong in the interview. She paces back in forth in her living room for a while then goes into the kitchen to get some juice. Instead of only drinking juice she also eats the last piece of chocolate cake and all the vanilla pudding that she made earlier in the day. (She almost always eats when she is nervous about something.)

The next day, Sarah is so tired she does not go to her partial care program. She remembers that her friend Helen had an interview recently and never lost sleep over it. Sarah had planned to call Helen to talk about it, but she didn't.

Sarah believes she can handle this situation alone. The interview is tomorrow.



What is Sarah stressed about? _____

List two ways Sarah copes with her stress: _____

In your opinion, how can Sarah deal with her stress differently?

Think about a stressful experience you have had. What was it about?

How did you deal with your stress? _____

If you were in the same situation again, would you deal with stress differently?

Yes No Unsure

If you answered yes, please explain: