PROGRAM OVERVIEW

About the Training Program

Stress is a universal and naturally occurring phenomenon in humans. Recent epidemiological research indicates marked increases in stress-related diseases as a result of life styles saturated with excessive stress and chronic tension. Burnout, heart attacks, ulcers, decreased productivity, relational problems, depression, loneliness, and cynicism are frequent symptoms of chronic stress that adversely affect us personally, professionally, and physically.

While stress cannot be eliminated, we can learn to deal with it effectively to maximize our potential. The “Stress for Success” program is designed to enable participants to identify the stressors in their lives, to understand how these stressors affect them, and to learn and practice a variety of effective coping strategies.

Training Objectives

Participants will have the following opportunities:

- To increase their awareness of personal stressors and idiosyncratic stress reactions;
- To expand their repertoire of skills to enhance their ability, live a more relaxed life style, and prevent stress-related illness; and
- To control the stressors in their life through the development of a personal stress-management plan.

Designed by Vicky Whiteling.
## PROGRAM OUTLINE

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<td>C. Stress and Me</td>
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<td>B. Action Planning</td>
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I. Opening Activities

A. Why Stress for Success? (Presentation)

1. Introduce yourself and establish credibility by discussing your experience and expertise on stress management.

2. Post the objectives on a flip chart and review them.

B. Stress Line-Up (Icebreaker)

1. Ask participants to imagine a line stretching down the room. The head of this line represents “stressed to the maximum,” while the opposite end is “completely relaxed.” Ask participants to find a place on this line that reflects their current stress level. Encourage participants to form a single line and not bunch up in the middle.

2. Once lined up, ask participants to form a semicircle so they can see one another while maintaining their positions.

3. Ask participants to introduce themselves to one of the persons next to them and to find out what factors influenced their partners’ self-placement and what their partners hope to get from this training.

4. Ask each participant to introduce his or her partner to the group by using the following Sentence stem:

   This is ______, who selected this position because ______, and hopes to get _____ from this training.

   Demonstrate an example.

C. Stressors and Coping Strategies (Brainstorming; Materials: Newsprint and Flip Charts)

1. Divide participants into three small groups from their line-up: a “stressed-to-the-max” group, a “relaxed” group, and a “moderately stressed” group.

2. Indicate that identifying stressors and examining current coping strategies is the first step in managing stress effectively. Ask each group to brainstorm as many stressors
as they can think of and write them on newsprint and then brainstorm a list of coping strategies and write them on a separate sheet of newsprint. (These coping strategies may be negative and counterproductive as well as positive and helpful.) Endorsing the strategies is not the issue; rather, they should generate as many as possible. Request that each group appoint a spokesperson who will report the data back to the full group upon completion of the task.

3. Reassemble the full group and ask spokespeople to report from the brainstorming session. Obtain reactions from the group. Point out both the similarities and differences in both stressors and coping strategies. Also mention that most of us know better ways of coping than those we usually practice.

■ D. Personal-Symptom Inventory (Questionnaire; Materials: Form A)

1. Given stress is idiosyncratic, it is important to recognize one’s personal response patterns. Direct participants to complete the inventory by checking symptoms they have noticed lately and adding any that may be missing from the list.

2. Ask participants to look over identified symptoms and circle those that currently cause them most concern. Have them star their top three stress symptoms of concern.

3. “Next, request them to investigate their inventory for any patterns in their stress symptoms. Are their checks all in one area? Have them note any observations or insights on the inventory.

4. Pair off participants and request that they share with each other their results.

5. Reunite the full group and invite questions, observations, and insights. Suggest that the results of this inventory should be used in recognizing stress signals. Have them note what situations, people, and stressors trigger these symptoms and begin to think of behaviors and cognitions they would like to change. Save this information for later in the training.

■ E. What Do We Know About Stress? (Guided Teaching)

1. Indicate that the participants have already gathered much information on stress in small groups and individually and now they are going to integrate their findings, stretch their resources further, and discover what they know about stress cumulatively.

2. Invite participants to respond to the following questions written on newsprint, and write their replies under the questions.
What is stress?
• How do we respond to stress?
• What influences our responses to stress?

3. Cover these key points:
• Stress is an interactive process, between person and environment. It occurs as an individual adapts to the demand(s) placed upon him or her.
• Stress involves both external sources of pressure and internal responses to stressors.
• Stress is natural and necessary. Absence of stress is death.
• Any change, whether positive or negative, creates stress.
• Stress and illness (both physical and psychological) are related.
• Stress is perceptual. Individuals respond differently to the same stressors.
• Explain the rain-barrel analogy of stress. The body’s ability to contain stress is much like a rain barrel, which overflows when the water reaches the top. Too many stressors create overload and burnout. We need to create a plug in the barrel through learning and practicing effective coping strategies. These will enable us to control our stress so we can maintain a manageable level.
• Stressors, stress symptoms, and effective coping strategies can be categorized into five areas: physical, spiritual, emotional, relational/social, and cognitive.
• Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) model has three stages.

(1) **Alarm**: autonomic response; fight or flight response.
(2) **Resistance**: a transient stage that generally shows resistance to stress symptoms and illness. Prolonged exposure to the stressor will lead to exhaustion.
(3) **Exhaustion**: burnout; serious illness due to decreased immunity to disease; psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, or panic attacks; and ultimately death.

II. Expanding Your Repertoire of Stress-Reduction Strategies

A. **Energizer Stretch (Exercise)**

1. Ask participants to stand and find a free space where they can stretch comfortably in all directions.
2. Demonstrate and talk through several stretching exercises, which participants will imitate. For example, *inhale and reach for the ceiling, then exhale and let your arms return to their natural resting position at your sides. Drop your chin to your chest; next tilt your head back toward your spine; pull your right ear toward your right shoulder, then your left ear toward your left shoulder; move your head around and look over your right shoulder; move your head the opposite way and look over your left shoulder. Do ten shoulder rolls forward, then ten shoulder rolls backward.*

3. Allow participants to sit down again and ask for a couple of individuals to express their feelings after the stretching. Emphasize that these short exercises can be done anywhere and at any time for a quick tension release and energizer.

**B. Managing Stress Effectively (Case Study; Materials: Forms B, C)**

1. Divide participants into small groups of four. Distribute Form B and request participants to read the case study. Ask small groups to identify five behavior characteristics that contribute to the problem and stress level of Mary and also to identify five behaviors that Sally suggests to change those characteristics and reduce the stress level.

2. Reassemble the full group and have a representative from each small group report the characteristics and behavior changes identified in the case study. Record these observations on the flip chart to facilitate a short discussion on the similarities and differences in the behaviors and characteristics identified. Ensure that the group identifies the following characteristics and behaviors.

- Negative self-thoughts;
- Setting unrealistic expectations;
- Lack of self-care and physical attention (e.g., sleep deprivation);
- Lack of assertion (e.g., cannot say “no”); and
- Lack of role and boundary clarity.

Make sure the group identifies the following stress reducers that Sally suggests:

- Time management (e.g., “to do” lists);
- Building a support network;
- Self-nurturance (e.g., rewarding and treating self);
- Assertiveness;
- Relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing); and
- Delegation.
3. Ask participants to return to their small groups, and distribute Form C. Request that subgroups read and discuss this information and relate it to the case study.

4. Reconvene the full group. Encourage participants to share their questions, suggestions, reactions, and observations from this experience. Ask participants if they can identify with any of Mary’s stress responses. Attempt to facilitate the discussion so participants can relate the content to their own experiences of stress and use of stress-reduction strategies.

■ C. Stress and Me (Small-Group Discussion)

1. Divide participants into trios. In these trios, ask them to count off zero, one, two.

2. Ask participants to discuss the following question in their trios for five minutes: “What did you learn this morning about the stress in your life and how you respond to it?”

3. After five minutes, rotate the groups by asking person zero to remain seated, person one to move one group clockwise, and person two to move two groups clockwise.

4. Ask the newly formed trios: “What was a new coping strategy you learned this morning? What was a coping strategy you recognized that you already utilize in your life?”

5. After five minutes, rotate the trios a third time, using the same process as before. Pose a final question for discussion: “What coping strategy would you like to learn more about?”

6. Reunite the full group and invite a few participants to learnings and observations from the earlier session. Briefly share their

7. Provide a sneak preview of what’s to come: Participants will have the opportunity to experience and practice a problem-solving strategy and a variety of relaxation techniques.

■ III. Practicing Stress-Reduction Strategies

■ A. Stress Review (Game; Materials: Prepared Index Cards)

1. Prepare (in advance) index cards with questions and answers based on the content of the first session. Each card should contain only one question or one answer, and there should be enough cards for every participant to have one. The following examples may be used: The absence of stress is? Death. What are exercises to reduce stress? Aerobics, walking, jogging. What are some healthy eating habits? Low cholesterol, low fats, high fiber.
2. Shuffle the cards and distribute an index card to each participant. Ask each participant to locate the person who has the question (or answer) that matches the answer (or question) that he or she holds.

3. Reassemble the group once everyone has paired up. Invite one member of each pair to read the question or the answer (as in “Jeopardy”) and ask the group to generate the appropriate answer or question. Compare the group’s answers or questions with those written on the index cards.

**B. Stress Management (Lecturette; Materials: Form D)**

1. Give a short lecturette on stressors and how they affect people’s lives.

2. Ask participants to think of the things that cause them stress. Suggest that they begin by thinking of when they wake up in the morning. Offer the following questions for them to consider:
   - Do I wake up stressed?
   - If so, what is the stress associated with?
   - Am I under time pressure as I dress for work?
   - Do I drink coffee with one hand and iron a shirt with the other?
   - Do I gobble down my breakfast?
   - Do I skip breakfast entirely?
   - When I’m on the road, driving to my job, am I under time pressure?
   - Do I comb my hair with one hand and drive with the other?
   - If I give myself time to drive to work leisurely, does the traffic still create stress?
   - Do I enter my place of employment in a frenzy?

3. Suggest that they continue with these types of questions until they have remembered their typical daily actions through going to bed at night. Then they should ask:
   - Do I wake up during the night stressed by anticipation of the next day?

4. Distribute Form D to the participants and ask them to complete the form individually.

5. When all the participants have completed Form D, divide them into small groups to discuss their answers.

6. Reassemble the total group and ask for volunteers to share their learnings.

7. Ask for volunteers to share their action plans.

8. Ask the group for feedback on the shared action plans.
C. Relaxation Techniques (Mental Imagery; Materials: Form E)

1. Invite participants to move into a comfortable spot to prepare for a series of relaxation exercises. These exercises flow continuously: deep meditative breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenics, and a music and imagery experience. Indicate that it is impossible to be stressed and relaxed simultaneously. If they are relaxed or learn how to relax, then they will be draining stress from their rain barrels and giving themselves the opportunity to maximize their potential.

2. **Meditative breathing.** Ask participants to close their eyes and turn their focus to taking slow and deep breaths. Talk participants through a controlled breathing sequence.

**Progressive muscle relaxation.** Ask participants to shift their focus to their feet while continuing to breathe deeply. Instruct participants to tense the muscles in their feet, hold the tension, and then relax the muscles, allowing all the tension to flow out of the feet. Encourage participants to notice the difference between the tense and relaxed states and to appreciate the relaxation. All the muscle groups will be approached in this manner moving up through the body to the face and head.

**Autogenics.** Suggest images to further facilitate the relaxation. For example, ask participants to feel their bodies sink into the carpet with heaviness as they continue to feel more and more relaxed. Or say, “Imagine yourself limp as a rag doll. Feel the sun warming various parts of your body, bringing relaxation and peace to that area,” and so forth.

**Imagery and music.** Invite participants to turn their focus to their imagination and go to their favorite resting place—somewhere special. This may be a favorite room or place in nature. It may be real or imagined. Play recorded music to help them explore their favorite resting place. Give participants about five minutes to image. Then turn the music off, indicate the imaging time has ended, and resensitize participants to the room. Inform participants they can revisit this personal sanctuary another time.

3. Distribute Form E and ask participants to complete it.

4. Pair off participants and request that they share their relaxation, imagery, and writing experiences.

5. Reunite the full group and invite three participants to share their imagery and relaxation experiences.

6. Briefly discuss the implications of their personal sanctuary as a place to retreat for relaxation when they are feeling anxious or stressed. Invite questions and reactions.
D. Evaluation of Life Style (Dyadic Interviews)

1. Pair off participants and give each person a notebook (a few sheets of stapled paper will do), which will serve as a journal.

2. Ask participants to interview their previous partners by using the following questions (written on a flip chart). The interviewer is to record the responses in the interviewee’s journal.
   - What strategies do you currently use to cope with stress? Include both adaptive and maladaptive approaches.
   - On reviewing your stress-symptom inventory, what aspects of your life style do you need to change to promote stress reduction?
   - Which of the stress-management strategies presented in this program would you like to incorporate into your current life style?

3. Reassemble the group and ask for observations, insights, and reactions.

IV. Closing Activities

A. Energizer Stretch (Exercise)

1. Divide participants into groups of four.

2. Ask participants to stand in a free space where they can stretch comfortably in all directions and to establish which group member’s birthday comes earliest in the calendar year.

3. Ask the person with the earliest birthday in each small group to lead their group in some stretching exercises.

4. Reunite the full group and ask them how they feel.

B. Action Planning (Small-Group Discussion; Materials: Form F)

1. Reconvene trios. Ask one member to be the client and the other two to be consultants. Explain that roles will rotate so that everyone has the opportunity to be the client.

2. Ask consultants to use Form F to help the client develop a personal stress-management plan incorporating information and exercises presented in the program. Ask clients to add this plan to their journals. Encourage participants to make this plan as realistic as possible to facilitate its implementation and follow through.
3. After ten minutes, rotate the roles so another client develops his or her personal stress-management plan.

4. After ten minutes, instruct participants to rotate roles for a final time in their trios.

5. Reunite the full group and invite several participants to share their personal stress-management action plans.

■ C. Press Conference (Full-Group Discussion)

1. Provide a forum for participants to ask any questions they have about any of the ideas, activities, and exercises of the program. Answer as many questions as time permits.

2. Allow participants to answer for themselves some of the questions posed to you.

■ D. Final Reflections (Whip)

1. Briefly review the four sections of the program. Invite participants to share any final reflections. Encourage them to use the information they have learned to control the stress in their lives.

2. As a closing event, ask participants to complete one of the following sentence stems and to share their answers:
   • As a result of this stress management program I am going to:
   • I appreciate _______________ in this program.

3. Thank participants for their interest, ideas, time, and work.
### STRESS FOR SUCCESS

#### FORM A

**Stress-Exhaustion Symptoms**

Check the symptoms of stress exhaustion you have noticed lately in yourself.

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<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL</th>
<th>SPIRITUAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ appetite change</td>
<td>___ anxiety</td>
<td>___ emptiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ headaches</td>
<td>___ frustration</td>
<td>___ loss of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ tension</td>
<td>___ the “blues”</td>
<td>___ doubt</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ fatigue</td>
<td>___ mood swings</td>
<td>___ lack of forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ insomnia</td>
<td>___ bad temper</td>
<td>___ martyrdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ weight change</td>
<td>___ nightmares</td>
<td>___ desire for magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ colds</td>
<td>___ crying spells</td>
<td>___ loss of direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ muscle aches</td>
<td>___ irritability</td>
<td>___ cynicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ digestive upsets</td>
<td>___ “no-one cares”</td>
<td>___ apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ pounding heart</td>
<td>___ depression</td>
<td>___ need to “prove” self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ accident proneness</td>
<td>___ nervous laughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ teeth grinding</td>
<td>___ worry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ rash</td>
<td>___ discouragement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ foot tapping</td>
<td>___ little joy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>___ finger drumming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>___ increased drug, alcohol, cigarette use</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENTAL</th>
<th>RELATIONAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>___ forgetfulness</td>
<td>___ isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ dull senses</td>
<td>___ intolerance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ low productivity</td>
<td>___ resentment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ negative attitude</td>
<td>___ loneliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ confusion</td>
<td>___ lashing out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ lethargy</td>
<td>___ hiding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ whirling mind</td>
<td>___ clamming up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ no new ideas</td>
<td>___ lowered sex drive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>___ boredom</td>
<td>___ nagging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>___ spacing out</td>
<td>___ distrust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ negative self-talk</td>
<td>___ lack of intimacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ poor concentration</td>
<td>___ using people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ fewer contacts with friends</td>
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A Case Study

The following telephone conversation took place between two good friends who have known one another since their college days.

Sally: Mary, Hello! How are you? I have been thinking about you a lot lately. We never get together anymore and I miss you. This morning I put you right at the top of my to-do list and made calling you a number-one priority.

Mary: Thanks for calling, Sally. I’ve been so-so. Frankly, I’ve been a little depressed and so tired lately. I never seem to get everything done. Between the house, my job, the kids, and my family, there just aren’t enough hours in the day. I’ve been getting up an hour earlier to catch up, and I’m still behind. I feel like such a failure.

Sally: I am so glad I called today. We need to talk more than I imagined. I can’t wait to share some of the exciting new things that I’ve learned that have made my life so much easier. From the sound of your voice, I think some of these things will help you. I feel it is important that we stay in touch. We need to take care of ourselves. That includes keeping our special friendship going. Can we make a date for a nice lunch for one day this week? We’ll plan to go somewhere special. We deserve to treat ourselves. That is one of the new things I’ve learned to do. I’ve made a list of all the things I find pleasurable and I pick at least one and do it every day.

Mary: You must be better organized than I am. I just don’t have time to do something pleasurable for myself. I’m such a mess.

Sally: Mary, it doesn’t have to take a lot of time. It can be something as simple as buying a candy bar you like and eating it. Or taking a bubble bath after the kids are in bed.

Mary: Sally, don’t you feel guilty doing that?

Sally: No. Now when can we go to lunch?

Mary: I don’t know when I can do it. I drop all the kids off at school at 8 a.m. on my way to my part-time job; I’m trying to keep my hand in at the Law Office while the kids are small. I’d feel guilty wasting all that education, just sitting home. Then I have to pick up Johnny at 12:45 every day from kindergarten. I drop him off at my mother’s while I go to the office for a few hours to do John’s billing and accounting. He depends on me so that he can go to lunch with some of his business friends. He’s so busy this time of year. I have an evening meeting at least two nights a week because I’m running the scouting bazaar this month. They couldn’t find anyone else to do it. The kids were going to be so disappointed. I just couldn’t say no when they asked me.

Sally: Mary, stop a minute. Take a deep breath. You are running a mile a minute. No wonder you are exhausted and overburdened. If you can’t say no to all those other

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requests, I must insist that you not say no to me. This lunch is going to be a most important one for you. I am going to teach you how to say “No.” It can change your life. It has mine.

Mary: But how can I possibly make time? I don’t have anyone to help me. I do everything for everyone. Everyone depends on me.

Sally: That is another thing we are going to talk about. For now, I have a suggestion, so that we can get this plan started. First, does your mother drive?

Mary: Yes, but I hate to ask her for help. She has her hands full with Dad. I try to help her as much as I can.

Sally: Mary, please listen! Just try my suggestion. What do you have to lose? First, talk to John about our luncheon date. Ask him which day would be most convenient for him to stay in the office for lunch. If necessary negotiate another time to do the billing for that day. Then call your mother and ask her if she can pick up Johnny at school at 12:45 and take him home with her on that day. Of course, you will have to make a to-do list of all the things that you have committed to this week that you can’t delegate, reschedule, or cancel before you know which day will be best for you.

Mary: I don’t know, Sally. I hate to ask people to do my jobs.

Sally: Mary, why are they your jobs? One of the things I’ve learned is that I can delegate some of my jobs to other people” at work and at home. It isn’t necessary for me to do everything myself. It wasn’t easy at first. Everyone was used to me doing all the jobs. I had to practice how to delegate” that is, giving some of the less important jobs to other people to do. I had to practice just saying “No!” The hard part was figuring out what was important to me and what wasn’t. That is another part of changing this hectic merry-go-round life. I really had to look at all the roles I play in my life. Are they all necessary? What does being a “Mommy” mean? What does being a wife mean? I’ve started redefining my roles and it has worked wonderfully well. I’ll tell you exactly how to go about it when we meet for lunch. I’ll call you tomorrow morning to set up a definite date. Can’t wait to see you. Bye.
Stress-Management Strategies and Tips

Time Management
Effective use of time maximizes efficiency and productivity.
- Set and prioritize short- and long-term goals.
- Regularly review and revise goals.
- Make daily “to-do” lists.
- Set realistic time lines and deadlines.
- Subdivide major tasks and do one part at a time.
- Utilize 4D’s: dump, do, delegate, delay.
- Maximize your “prime” working time.
- Avoid procrastination.
- Minimize schedule interruptions.
- Handle paper and materials once.
- Maximize commuting and waiting time by reading, dictating, writing, returning phone calls, etc.

Physical Fitness
Keeping your body in shape with regular aerobic exercise helps you deal with stress more effectively.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Schedule regular exercise time.
- Have routine medical checkups.
- Get enough sleep (set the alarm to go to bed).
- Always warm up five to ten minutes before you exercise (e.g., stretch, jog slowly, or walk before strenuous exercise to gradually increase heart rate).
- Finish workouts with a five- to ten-minute cool down.
- Exercise twenty to sixty minutes aerobically three times a week.
- Exercise between 60 and 90 percent of the maximum heart rate.
- Strength training is recommended at least two times per week with eight to twelve repetitions.
- Wear appropriate shoes and workout clothing.
- Work out at your own pace so you will not strain your muscles or resolve.
- Exercise with a friend.
- Hang in there initially; it gets easier over time.
Nutrition
Balance, moderation, and variety are the keys to eating well to maintain a sound body and mind.

- Eliminate or restrict the amount of caffeine and sugar in your diet.
- Eat regular meals, including breakfast.
- Take a lunch break away from your desk.
- Avoid crash diets.
- Eat from each of the food groups’ meat or other protein foods; dairy products or other calcium sources; fruits and vegetables; cereal and grains.
- The recommended daily fat intake is no more than 30 percent of your total calories.
- No more than 10 percent of your daily calories should come from saturated fat.
- Keep cholesterol below 300 milligrams per day.
- Limit salt intake to less than 2,400 milligrams per day.
- Remove all visible fat from meat.
- Substitute skim milk and low-fat dairy products for the regular variety.
- Avoid “fast” foods.
- Multiply grams of fat by nine to get the number of calories from fat.
- Eliminate or limit alcohol.
- Request sauces and dressings on the side.
- Quit smoking.

Relaxation Techniques
Incorporate relaxation strategies into your schedule to keep stress levels low and increase productivity.

- Learn and practice self-relaxation techniques regularly, (e.g., meditation, yoga, or tense-and-relax muscle progressions).
- Take deep, slow breaths to calm down.
- Use visualization to practice succeeding in anxiety-producing situations.
- Listen to music to facilitate relaxation.
- Create an environment conducive to relaxation.
- Seek out variety and changes in your pace of life.
- Use journal writing to express your thoughts and feelings.
- Maintain and nurture your sense of humor.
- Schedule in fun, relaxation, and recreation.

Cognitive Restructuring
Transform negative self-thoughts to increase self-esteem, successful achievements, and productivity.

- Identify negative self-thoughts and distortions.
- Practice changing negative thoughts and feelings to positives and developing new thinking patterns.
• Maintain an optimistic attitude.
• Transform white-is-black thinking so you will stop predicting something will inevitably happen in a given situation.
• Give up negative fantasies (e.g., believing you cannot do something because that is the way you are).
• Strive for realism, not perfectionism.
• Eliminate stretch-or-shrink thinking (i.e., exaggerating your inadequacies and shrinking down the positive things about yourself).
• Accept and embrace the positives and avoid being the victim.

Assertion Skills
Honest, direct, and appropriate expression of your feelings, beliefs, and opinions enables you to control the stress in interpersonal situations.

• Say “no” and do not offer excuses or justify your behavior.
• It is O.K. to make mistakes.
• Be the judge of your own behavior.
• Calmly repeat yourself like a broken record.
• Keep your language clear and focused.
• Use fogging (i.e., to stop the discussion from becoming sidetracked, acknowledge the criticism may have some truth to it).
• Practice assertive skills at work and at home.
• Seek closure on unfinished business.
• Delegate responsibility to others.

Establishing a Support Network
Support helps reaffirm positive self-images and connection with a larger community, which helps alleviate stress.

• Receiving nurturance enhances your ability to give it, which creates a cycle of supply and demand.
• Do not be afraid to ask directly for help.
• Be receptive when support is given.
• Establish good communication channels with members of your support networks, both professional and personal.
• If you do not know, ask someone who does.
• Participate in team activities (e.g., sports and choirs).
• Give up being a lone ranger; ask for support.
• Seek optimistic people for your support system.
STRESS FOR SUCCESS
FORM D

Consider the stress factors in your daily life. List the six most stressful ones. Then prioritize them according to the degree of stress they create in your life. Number the most stressful factor “1”; the least stressful, “6.”

In what ways do these factors add stress to your life?
ACTION PLAN:

What can you do to reduce, change, eliminate, or cope better with these stressors? Put a target date by each action you list.
Imagery Experience: Discovering My Personal Sanctuary

Use *key words* or *phrases* to answer the following questions. Try not to think about your responses too much; be spontaneous and write down what immediately comes to mind.

1. Briefly describe your favorite resting place.

2. What did you:
   - see?
   - hear?
   - touch?
   - taste?
   - feel? (relaxed, happy, sad, etc . . . .)
3. What feelings and experiences from your favorite resting place currently exist in your life?

4. What feelings and experiences from your favorite resting place are currently absent in your life?

5. What feelings and experiences from your favorite resting place would you like to bring into your life right now?
Personal Stress-Management Plan

1. Describe the stressful situation.

2. Identify as many stressors in the situation as possible.

3. What strategies can you use to decrease the effects of these stressors? Consider the strategies you learned today. Name three you prefer.

4. What roadblocks would hamper implementation of these strategies?

5. Discuss (with consultants) ways you may overcome these roadblocks. Consider what resources you may need.
6. What will the situation look like after you have implemented your plan?

7. Briefly outline your plan to decrease stressors in your life. Describe:

   **Which** strategies you will use:

   **Where**:

   **How often**:

   **For what purpose**:

   **When** will you review this plan?