

Mastering your Stress

priorityhealth.com

Stress Statistics

- More than 40 million Americans ages 18 to 64 have anxiety disorders.
- Americans spend over \$20.3 billion per year to cope with stress.
- Estimated percentage of adults attempting make efforts to control stress: 95%.

Sources: NIH, NIMH, CDC, NCHS

priorityhealth.com

Stress Statistics

- Over 90% of disease is caused or complicated by stress
- Stress has been linked to all leading causes of death (including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, and suicide).

Sources: NIH, NIMH, CDC, NCHS

priorityhealth.com

Objectives

- Define stress and its sources
- Learn the body's response to stress
- Identify your stress response
- Learn new stress management skills
- Create an action plan for success



What is Stress?

- Stress is your reaction to life's challenges and events
- Short-term stress boosts the immune system
- Chronic, long-term stress suppresses the immune system

Our Body's Response to Stress

- Release of adrenaline and other neurotransmitters
- Fight or flight kicks in
- Common responses include increased heart rate, increased blood sugar for energy, increased sweating, pupils dilated

Master your Stress

- Awareness
 - Identify stressors
 - Identify your stress response
- Skills
 - Strategies to reduce controllable stressors
 - Strategies to manage your stress response
- Action
 - Create a plan

priorityhealth.com



Identify Your Stressors

- **Internal stressors**
 - Stress you create
- **External stressors**
 - Stress caused by others or by situations outside of your control

priorityhealth.com

Internal Stressors

(stress we create)

- Unrealistic Expectations
- Fears and Uncertainties
- Negative attitudes and feelings
- The need to do it all and have it all
- Poor health habits

priorityhealth.com

External Stressors

(stress caused by others or by situations outside of our control)


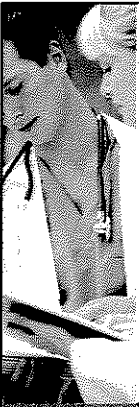
- Requirements of the workplace
- Financial insecurity
- Household obligations
- Unpredictable events
- Health problems

Stress Test

- What is causing stress in your life right now?
- Becoming **aware** of the stressors is the first step in living stress free.

Identify Your Stress Response


- Response to stress is individual
 - Fatigue vs. insomnia
 - Overeating vs. no appetite
 - Muscle tension
 - Headache, backache, nervousness
 - Biting nails

Skills

- Stress reduction strategies
 - Reducing those sources of stress we have control over
- Stress response strategies
 - Responding well to sources of stress outside of our control


priorityhealth.com



Stress Reduction Strategies
(reducing the sources of stress we have control over)

- Realize that nobody is perfect
- Change your mental talk
- Learn to say "No"
- Plan ahead
- Organize – "Work smart, not hard."

priorityhealth.com



Stress Reduction Strategies (cont.)

- Communicate effectively
- Live with gratitude- think of what you have instead of what you want
- Have a positive focus

priorityhealth.com

Stress Response Strategies

(responding well to sources of stress outside of our control)

- Deep breathing
- Guided Imagery
- Stretching
- Exercise

Stress Response Strategies (cont.)

- Get enough sleep
- Develop new hobbies, skills, and interests
 - Schedule time for you!
- Eat well
 - Stressed = Desserts



Action

- Create a plan
 - Specific steps
 - Attainable goals



Questions?

priorityhealth.com

Identifying Your Source of Stress

Internal Stressors (stress you can create)

Put a check next to the situations that cause you stress:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of heights or flying (or other phobia) | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a 'half-empty' outlook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern over losing your job | <input type="checkbox"/> Being a perfectionist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking in public | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a tendency to over-schedule |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting new people | <input type="checkbox"/> Often being critical of others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worrying about a change in your work | <input type="checkbox"/> Needing to have a spotless home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern over an upcoming job evaluation | <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting control as often as possible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for tax results | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

External Stressors (stress caused by others or by situations outside of your control)

Put a check next to the situations that cause you stress:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking care of an ill parent | <input type="checkbox"/> Career change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of an object | <input type="checkbox"/> Unrealistic boss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal health concerns | <input type="checkbox"/> Child-rearing issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Moving to a different home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of a loved one | <input type="checkbox"/> Uninvited houseguest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict (at work/home/with friends) | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging family members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming deadlines and responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Encounter with the legal system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic/commute | <input type="checkbox"/> New romantic relationship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a baby | <input type="checkbox"/> Car trouble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting married | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming an empty nester | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

My Stressors

1. List specific examples of stress producers in your life

(from "Identifying My Sources of Stress" handout)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. List how you currently handle stress

Examples: Anger, nail biting, binge eating

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Seek out new skills for dealing with stress

Example: Take a walk, deep breathing exercises, talk to a friend or professional

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Action steps for decreasing stressors

Example: Say "no" to _____; Let go of control of _____ situation;
Do deep breathing before weekly staff meeting

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

Stress busters

These techniques will help you cope with stress more efficiently, calm your thoughts and help you learn to relax. Try them all, and then decide which one produces the greatest benefits. Continue to practice these on a regular basis.

Exercise 1: Deep breathing

1. On a flat surface, lie on your back with your knees slightly bent and head supported. (If needed, use a pillow under your knees to support your legs.)
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm (belly) move as you breathe.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your lower hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible. Focus on filling the belly with as much air as possible.
4. As you exhale, begin to pull your belly button in toward your spine, forcing out every last breath.
5. Repeat this exercise for 10 breaths. To keep the breathing steady, it might help to count slowly from one to 10 each time you inhale and exhale.

Exercise 2: Progressive muscle relaxation

1. In a comfortable position, lie on your back allowing your arms to rest at your sides, palms down, on the surface next to you.
2. Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply while performing the exercise.
3. Clench your hands into fists and hold them tightly for 15 seconds. As you do this, relax the rest of your body. Visualize your fists contracting, becoming tighter and tighter.
4. Then, let your hands relax. Upon relaxing, make all your muscles soft and pliable.
5. Now, tense and relax the following parts of your body in the following order:
 - a. Face
 - b. Shoulders
 - c. Back
 - d. Stomach
 - e. Pelvis
 - f. Legs
 - g. Feet
 - h. Toes

Hold each part tensed for 15 seconds, and then relax your body for 30 seconds before going on to the next body part.

6. Finish the exercise by shaking your hands and imagining the remaining tension flowing out of your fingertips.

Exercise 3: Neck and shoulder stretches

Head Rolls

1. Slowly tuck your chin toward your chest and look down at your toes.
2. Gently roll your head down in front, from the right shoulder to the left shoulder.
3. Repeat this process 10 times

Forward Flexion

1. Bend forward at the waist, relaxing your arms towards the floor.
2. Let your neck muscles relax.
3. Slowly begin to shake your head “Yes,” lifting and lowering 10 times.
4. Then slowly shake your head “No,” turning it side to side 10 times.
5. Gently roll back up to the standing position.

Shoulder Rolls

1. Begin rolling your shoulders in a circular motion forward by pulling them together in front.
2. Continue to roll your shoulders down toward the floor and then back up toward your ears.
3. As you do this, focus on pulling your shoulder blades apart in back.
4. Reverse directions traveling backwards with your shoulders. Now focus on opening your chest as you pull your shoulder blades together in back.
5. Repeat 10 times rolling forward and 10 times rolling back.

Exercise 4: Shrinking stress

1. Sit, or lie, in a comfortable position. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
2. In your mind, visualize a situation that causes you to feel anxious and tense.
3. Slowly begin to shrink the stressful situation, seeing it shrink until it's so small that it can literally be held in the palm of your hand. Hold your hand out in front of you, and place the situation in your hand.
4. Now the stressful situation is so small it can fit on your second finger. Watch it shrink from there until it finally turns into a little dot and disappears.
5. Often this exercise causes feelings of amusement, as well as relaxation, as the stressor shrinks, gets less intimidating and finally disappears.