

# SESSION 9: Manage Stress



## Welcome and Review (10 minutes)

**SAY:** Welcome back, everyone! Today, we are going to talk about how to manage stress.

Before we start, let's spend a few minutes going over what we discussed last time. I will try to answer any questions you may have.

**DO:** Briefly summarize previous session.

**DISCUSS:** What questions do you have about our last session?

**SAY:** Let's talk about how things went with the action plan you made last time.

**DISCUSS:** What went well? What didn't go so well?

**SAY:** Now let's talk about how things went with the other things you tried at home.

**DISCUSS:** What went well? What didn't go so well?

## Objectives (2 minutes)

**SAY:** Managing stress can help you also manage your weight. Today, we will talk about:

- Some causes of stress
- The link between stress and weight
- Some ways to reduce stress
- Some healthy ways to cope with stress

You'll also get a chance to practice relaxing. Finally, you will make a new action plan.

**SAY:** We'll start by talking about some causes of stress. There are many things in our lives that can cause stress. Let's look at an example. Please turn to "Barbara's Story" in this module's handouts.

**DO:** Read (or have a volunteer read) the first three paragraphs of "Barbara's Story".

**DISCUSS:** What are some things that make you feel stressed?

**Causes of stress include:**

- Conflict with other people
- Health problems
- Money problems
- New job or baby
- Not enough time
- Too many duties
- Unhappy with job
- Vacation
- Wedding

## Stress and Weight Management

**SAY:** We've talked about some causes of stress. Now let's look at the link between stress and weight.

Feeling stressed can:

- Change your body chemistry in a way that makes you more likely to gain weight.
- Cause you to act in unhealthy ways Let's go back to the story.

**DO:** Read (or have a volunteer read) the two lists on the page with Barbara's story.

**DISCUSS:** How do you feel when you are under stress?

**SAY:** As we've said, stress can cause you to act in unhealthy ways.

Let's go back to the story.

**DO:** Read (or have a volunteer read) the first paragraph and the two lists on page 4.

**DISCUSS:** How do you act when you feel stressed?

**SAY:** As you know, making unhealthy food choices, watching too much TV, and slacking off on fitness can make it harder to manage your weight. That's why it's so important to reduce and cope with stress.

## Ways to Reduce Stress

**SAY:** Unfortunately, there's no surefire way to prevent stress. You may lose your job. Someone you love may get sick, or even die. But there are ways to make your life less stressful.

Let's go back to the story.

**DO:** Read (or have a volunteer read) the rest of the story, starting with "Barbara has trouble saying 'no'".

**DISCUSS:** Do you ever have a hard time saying "no"?

**SAY:** We've talked about saying "no." Now let's discuss some other ways to reduce stress in your life.

Please look at "Ways to Reduce Stress" on page 5 of this module's handouts.

**DO:** Review the handout. Discuss briefly.

## Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

**SAY:** We've talked about how to make your life less stressful. But, as we've discussed, there's no surefire way to prevent stress. So it's important to know how to cope.

Please look at "Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress" in this module's handouts.

**DO:** Review the handout. Discuss briefly.

## Optional ACTIVITIES: Practice Relaxing

You likely won't have time to do all of these techniques/activities. Start with the technique you think would work best for your group. It's better to do one technique well than do all of them poorly.

## Relaxation Technique

**SAY:** The handout lists some ways to relax. Let's practice relaxing right now.

**DO:** If there's room to lie down, pass out one small pillow or mat to each participant. Ask participants to find a space on the floor. Allow them to sit or lie down on their mats. If it's too crowded to lie down, participants can stay in their chairs. Have them leave at least one foot between themselves and their neighbors.

Lower the lights. Put on soothing music. Ask participants to close their eyes. Walk around the room as you talk.

**SAY:** Let's start by relaxing your muscles. The idea is to tighten and then release each group of muscles in turn.

Let's start with your face muscles. Scrunch up your face. Hold for 5 seconds. Now release. Do you feel the difference?

**DO:** Repeat with the jaw, shoulder, arm, chest, leg, and foot muscles in turn.

Answer questions as needed.

## Meditation Technique

**SAY:** Now let's try a meditation activity. Focus on something simple that you find calming. It could be an image or a sound. Don't worry if other thoughts get in the way. Just go back to your image or sound.

**DO:** Give participants a few minutes. Answer questions as needed.

**SAY:** Now let's imagine. Imagine a scene that makes you feel peaceful. Try to picture yourself there.

**DO:** Give participants a few minutes. Answer questions as needed.

## Deep-breathing technique

**SAY:** Now let's breathe deeply. Relax your stomach muscles. Place one hand just below your ribs.

Take a slow, deep breath through your nose. Do you feel your hand going up?

Now breathe out slowly through your mouth. Make sure to breathe out all the way. Do you feel your hand going down?

**DO:** Give participants a few minutes. Answer questions as needed.

Turn off music. Turn on lights.

**DISCUSS:** What did you think of these ways to relax? Did you find any of them helpful?

**SAY:** Keep in mind: It may take time to see results. Relaxing takes practice. Try to practice for at least 10 minutes a day. At first, it may be easier to relax if you lie down in a dark, quiet room. But in time, you'll be able to relax anytime, anywhere.

## Setting goals: Plan for Success (10 minutes)

**SAY:** Please turn to your Action Plan Journal.

Review the concept of SMART goals (only if needed).

**SMART goals are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound**

**Decide:**

**Specific:** What will you do and where will you do it

**Measurable:** How will you know that you met your goal

**Achievable:** Is this something you can do between now and the next session

**Relevant:** Does this relate to your overall goals

**Time-bound:** When, how long and how often will you do it

Give people about 5 minutes to think about and write down SMART goals for diet, physical activity, and stress management/self-care.

**ASK:** Does anyone feel comfortable sharing one of their SMART goals? Then identify each component of SMART or encourage additional editing if components are missing (i.e. if the person says "I will walk three times this week" encourage them to add the where and how long to this to make it more specific and time-bound.

## Summary and Closing:

**SAY:** Please look at "Ways to Reduce Stress" on page 5 again. Between now and our next session, write how you will make your life less stressful.

I'd also like you to practice saying "no." Pick something each day that you don't want or need to do, but would normally say "yes" to. Instead of saying "yes," say "no".

**DO:** Answer questions as needed.

**SAY:** We have come to the end of our meeting. Today, we discussed how to manage stress. We talked about:

- Some causes of stress
- The link between stress and weight
- Some ways to reduce stress
- Some healthy ways to cope with stress

**DISCUSS:** Do you have questions about anything we talked about today?

Things to Try at Home:

- Ways to Reduce Stress
- Practice saying "no"
- Action Plan

**SAY:** Next time, we'll talk about the things you tried at home, including your action plan. We'll also talk about \_\_\_\_\_ .

Thank you for coming to this session. Remember to bring your Participant Notebook to the next session.