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SOFT skills

Soft Skills for Youth
Employment

Stress
management



**SOFT SKILLS
FOR YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT**

2022-1-TR01-KA220-YOU-000087078





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Stress management



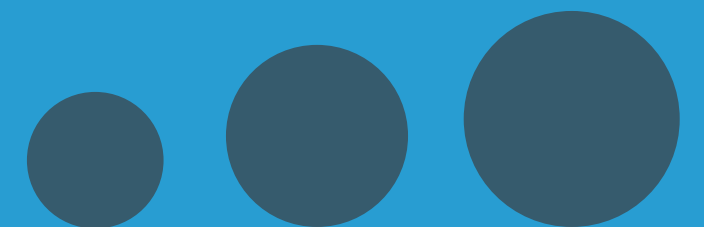
2.0 hours



Individually or in a group
of 20-24 participants



- Large piece of papers,
- Colorful markers





AIM of the training



- Defining what stress is,
- Knowing how to deal with stress
- Exploring own behaviors in stress situation – self-reflection

STEP 1 - WARM UP activity - (10 -15 minutes)



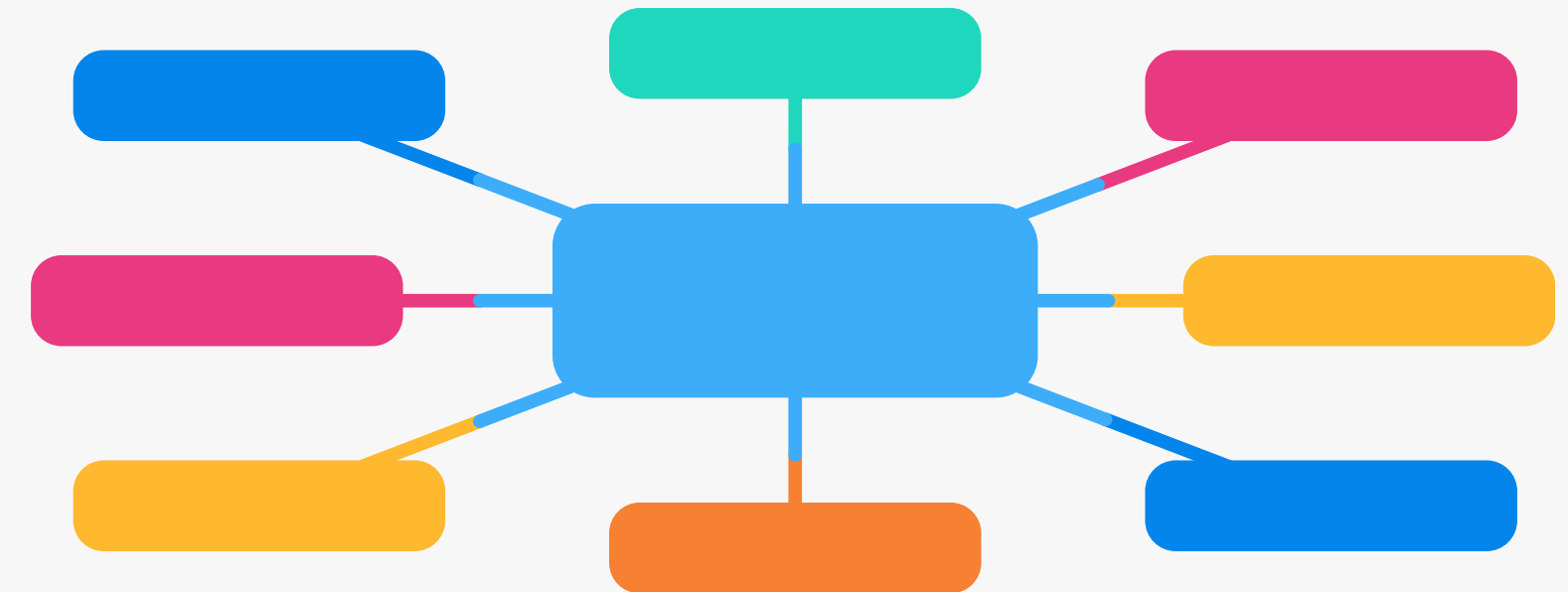
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Mind Map - Stress

Take a large sheet of paper and coloured markers.
Prepare a Mind Map about **Stress**.

Self reflection:

What was easy and difficult for you in this task?



STEP 2 - Understanding stress (15 minutes)



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Stress is the body's and mind's reaction to demanding or dangerous circumstances. It is a normal response that aids in the body's and mind's ability to adjust to changes and handle trying situations. Numerous things, including external pressures, expectations from the workplace or school, problems in relationships, financial worries, and even inner thoughts and feelings, can cause stress.

The body triggers the "fight or flight" response when it encounters a stressor by releasing chemicals like cortisol and adrenaline. This reaction boosts awareness, vitality, and attention while preparing the body to respond swiftly to the perceived threat. Stress can be helpful in small doses and aid people in overcoming obstacles.





Understanding stress

Excessive or prolonged stress can be harmful to one's physical and emotional well-being. Long-term stress exposure has been linked to a number of illnesses, including immune system weakness, anxiety, depression, heart problems, and digestive disorders.

Thus, it is **essential for general wellbeing to manage stress** through healthy coping strategies like physical activity, relaxation methods, social support, and time management.



Key components of stress



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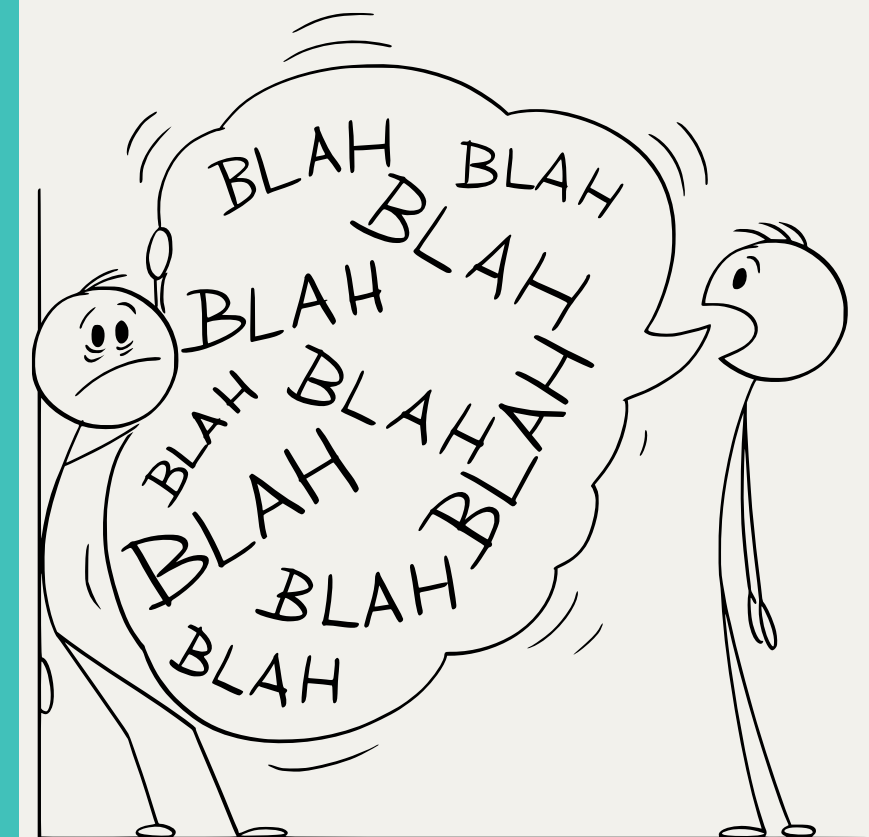
A complex interaction between behavioral, psychological, and physiological elements occurs during stress. These three factors can be used to broadly classify the main causes of stress:

The physiological elements are:

Hormones: When the body senses a threat, it releases stress hormones including cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones raise blood pressure, heart rate, and energy levels in order to prime the body for the "fight or flight" reaction.

Autonomic Nervous System (ANS): Stress causes the sympathetic nervous system to become active, which raises physiological reactions and attentiveness. Once the stressor has passed, the parasympathetic nervous system attempts to bring the body back into balance.

Physical Symptoms: Physical symptoms such as headaches, tense muscles, stomach problems, and irregular sleep patterns can all be signs of stress.



Key components of stress



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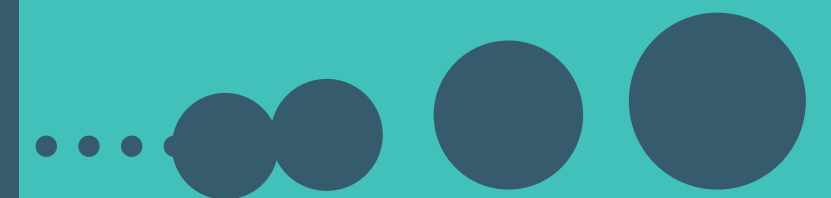
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Psychological Elements

Behavioral Appraisal: People's perceptions and interpretations of stressors are very important. The amount of stress experienced can vary depending on how one evaluates a circumstance. Stress can be reduced by positive evaluation or coping techniques, but it can also be increased by negative evaluation.

Emotional Reactions: Anxiety, frustration, dread, and irritation are just a few of the feelings that stress can cause. Individual differences and the type of stressor can influence different emotional reactions.

Coping Strategies: People use a variety of coping strategies to manage their stress, including addressing problems, looking for social support, and partaking in relaxing or distracting activities.



Key components of stress



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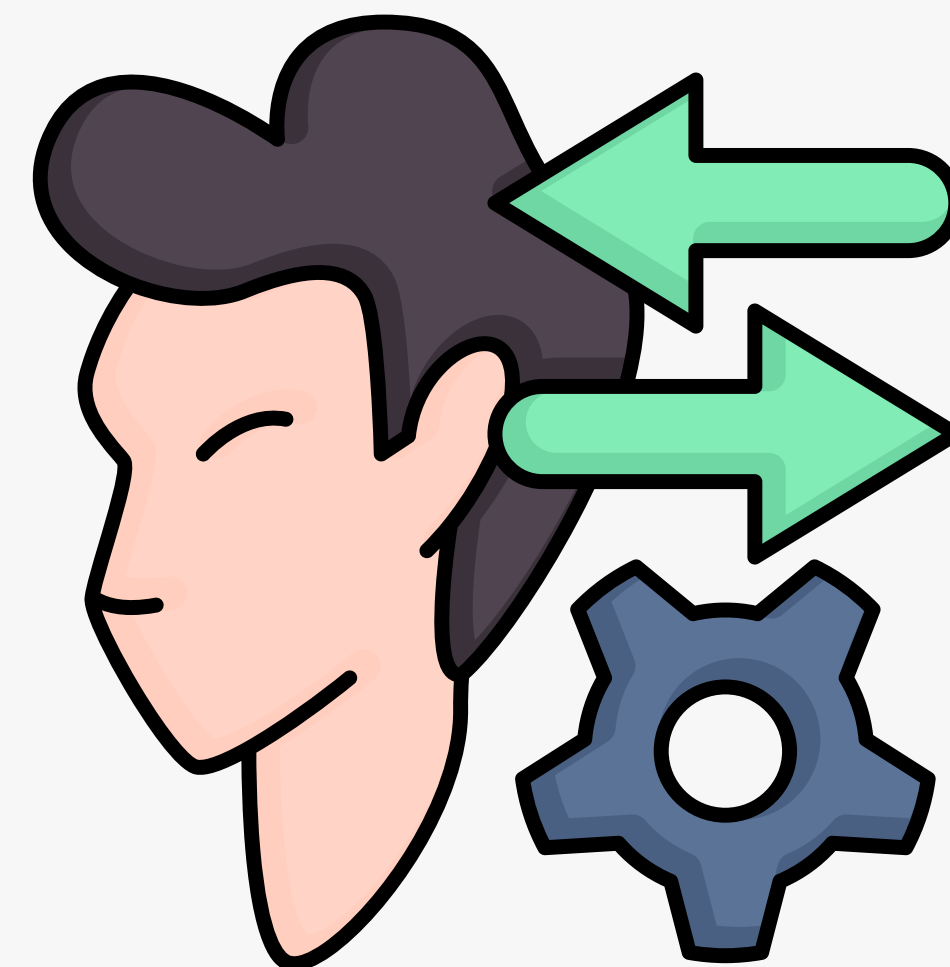
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Behavioral Factors

Coping Mechanisms - when faced with stress, people may resort to coping mechanisms including avoidance, disengagement, or support-seeking. Effective stress management is facilitated by adaptive coping mechanisms.

Performance and Productivity - stress can affect memory, decision-making, and cognitive function, which can affect how well people perform on different jobs.

Health-Related Behaviors - stress can affect how one lives, including food preferences, sleep schedules, and exercise regimens.



How to deal with stress



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Adapting useful coping mechanisms to control the behavioral, psychological, and physiological aspects of stress is part of managing stress. Keep in mind that each person is unique, therefore it's critical to determine what is most effective for you. Try out various techniques and develop a customized plan for handling stress in your life. Here are some strategies that can help:

- **Determine Stressors** - the first step in managing stress is to identify and comprehend the sources of it.
- **Challenge and reframe negative attitudes.** Accept what you cannot change and concentrate on what you can.
- **Time control**- set priorities and organize your tasks. Divide more complex jobs into smaller, more doable steps. By doing this, you may avoid feeling overburdened.
- **Practice relaxation methods** - engage in methods of relaxation including progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness meditation, or deep breathing. These can assist in lowering stress levels and calming the neurological system.



How to deal with stress



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- **Daily physical Activity** - exercise on a regular basis has been shown to lower stress hormones and release endorphins, which are organic mood boosters. Make time for an enjoyable hobby or pastime as part of your daily schedule.
- **Social Contact** - talk to friends, family, or a support system about your thoughts and worries. Speaking with others about your worries can help you see things from a different angle and relieve your emotions.
- **Healthy Lifestyle** - steer clear of excessive caffeine, alcohol, and other substances that may raise your stress levels; also, maintain a balanced diet and get adequate sleep.
- **Establish realistic goals** - divide more ambitious objectives into more manageable chores. Appreciate the little things in life, and don't put too much pressure on yourself.



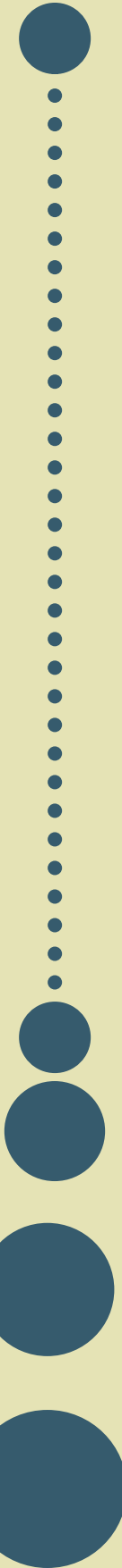
How to deal with stress



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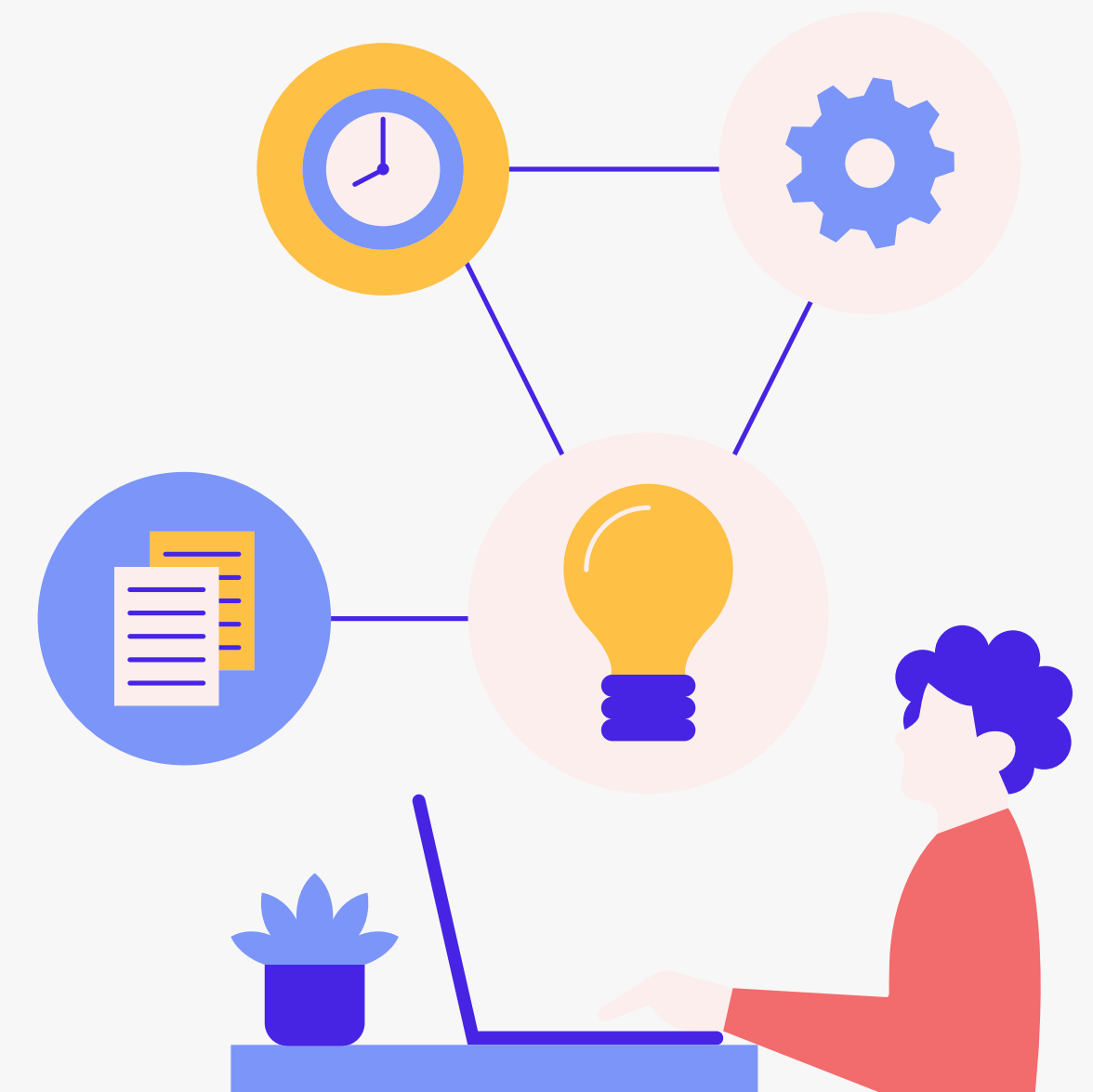
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- **Learn How to Say No** - understand your boundaries and be willing to say no to more commitments when you're already stretched thin. Stress management requires setting limits.
- **Seek Professional Assistance** - if stress becomes unbearable or chronic, you might want to think about getting assistance from a mental health specialist. They can offer assistance, direction, and coping mechanisms customized to your particular circumstance.
- **Participate in Things to Do** - take time for activities you enjoy. Taking up hobbies and leisure pursuits can be a terrific way to decompress and divert your attention from worries.
- **Cultivate Mindfulness** - you may stay present and lessen anxiety about the past or the future by practicing mindfulness techniques like meditation and focused breathing.



Effective stress management might be hampered by a number of obstacles. Determining these obstacles is essential to creating plans to get through them. Typical obstacles include the following:

- lack of awareness
- persistent negative thought
- social Isolation/lack of social support
- perfectionism
- avoiding the source of stress.
- lack of coping skills
- unrealistic and/or poor time management
- financial difficulties, limited resources
- health Issues, physical health problems
- cultural or stigma Issues
- unrealistic expectations





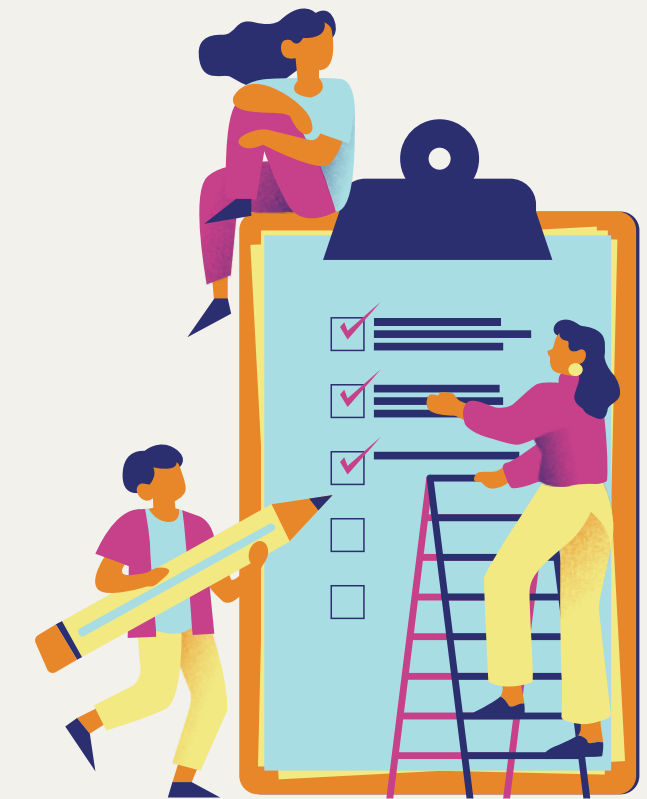
People can adopt a variety of stress-reduction strategies and tools into their daily life. It's important to explore and determine which of these techniques works best for you, as the efficiency of these tools may differ from person to person. Here are a few suggested resources for stress management:

Exercises for Deep Breathing

To trigger the body's relaxation response, engage in deep breathing exercises or diaphragmatic breathing. Breathing deeply and slowly can help lower tension and increase calm.

Meditation with mindfulness.

Practice mindfulness meditation to help you stay judgment-free in the present moment. In addition to fostering a stronger sense of awareness and calm, mindfulness techniques can aid in ending the cycle of stress.



Progressive Release of Muscles (PMR) To relieve physical strain, PMR entails methodically tensing and relaxing various muscle groups. This has the potential to lessen tension and stiffness in the muscles.



Tools for stress management



Assisted Visualization. To generate relaxing and uplifting mental images, use visualization or guided imagery techniques. By doing so, the emphasis might be diverted from stressors.

Work out. Frequent exercise, like jogging, yoga, or walking, can help lower stress hormones and boost endorphin production, which naturally elevates mood.



keeping a journal. Keep a notebook where you can record your feelings and thoughts. This can provide feelings a healthy release, provide perspective on stressors, and reveal mental patterns.



Tools for stress management

Time Management. Set reasonable goals, prioritize your duties, and divide more difficult jobs into smaller, more doable ones. Feeling overburdened can be avoided with efficient time management.

Social Assistance. Make contact with loved ones, friends, or support networks. Stress can be reduced by expressing your emotions to others and getting support from them.

Methods of Relaxation. Take part in relaxing activities, such taking a warm bath, enjoying relaxing music, or engaging in your favorite pastimes.



Tools for stress management

Therapy based on cognitive behavior (CBT). Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a therapy method that assists people in recognizing and altering harmful thought patterns and behaviors that lead to stress.

Biofeedback. Using electronic monitoring to become conscious of and regulate physiological processes is known as biofeedback. It may be useful in treating physical problems brought on by stress.



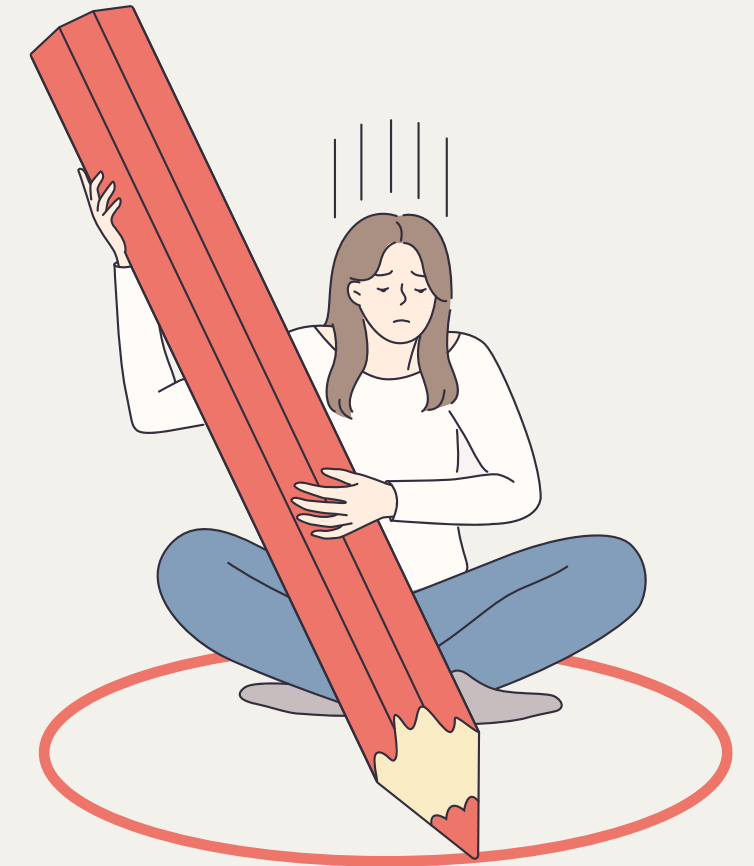
Aromatherapy. Some smells, like chamomile or lavender, are said to have relaxing properties. Stress management techniques may include aromatherapy or the use of essential oils.



Tools for stress management

Laughter and Humor. Laughter helps lower stress levels and releases endorphins. Whether it's watching a humorous film or hanging out with loved ones, do things that make you chuckle.

Setting Boundaries. To avoid taking on more than you can handle and being overwhelmed, learn to say no and set appropriate boundaries.



Expert Assistance. Consider getting assistance from a mental health expert who may offer more support and direction if stress becomes unbearable or overwhelming.





Activites

(as much time as you need)



**How to reduce
stress**
**Deep Breathing
Exercise
activity 1**

**Mindful Walking
activity 2**

**Music-Inspired
Drawing
activity 3**

**Relaxation /
Visualization
activity 4**



Activity 1 – How to reduce stress

Deep Breathing Exercise

Step 1

What helps you to reduce stress – what you usually do.
Write down your ideas.

Step 2

Look find a peaceful, cozy spot to sit or lie down. Close your eyes and inhale deeply for a few moments. Breathe in gently and deeply through your nostrils, letting your belly balloon out.

For a little period, hold your breath. Breathe out through your lips gently and completely, allowing your belly to contract. Continue doing this for a few breath cycles while paying attention to how your breath feels. Continue by progressively increasing the length of your breaths, both in and out.

Try to release any tension or thoughts while you breathe, allowing your mind to settle and become more focused.

Step 3

Did this exercise help you to reduce stress?





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Activity 2 - Mindful Walking

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Look find a **peaceful, secure area** to stroll, either inside or outside.

Start by centering yourself by staying motionless and inhaling deeply many times. As soon as you begin to walk, **become aware of every step and the feelings in your feet.**

Allow your body to move naturally while you walk at a comfortable speed. By taking in the sounds around you, experiencing the temperature, and taking in your environment, you can activate your senses.

Refocus your attention gently on the actual sensations of walking whenever your thoughts stray.

Keep walking with awareness for a minimum of five to ten minutes.

Once you're done, stand motionless for a brief period and concentrate on your breathing and feeling grounded.





Materials Needed

- Paper, Pencils, colored pencils, or markers
- Music player or a device to play music

Steps:

- Select Music: calming, energizing, classical, instrumental, ambient or any music that you enjoy.
- Create a relaxing and quiet environment:
- Listen mindfully, close your eyes and listen, pay attention to the nuances, rhythms, and emotions conveyed by the music.
- Feel the Emotion that the music brings forth. Notice images that come to mind as you listen.
- Start Drawing, while listening to the music, begin to express your emotions and sensations through drawing. Use pencils, colored pencils, or markers to translate the music onto paper, focus on the process and your emotional expression.
- Allow your hand to move freely on the paper creating abstract shapes, lines, or images that represent the feelings stirred by the music; let the music to guide your movements.
- Experiment with Colors that resonate with the mood of the music.
- Reflect on Your drawing; think how the process of translating music into visual art has influenced your emotional state.
- You can share it or keep it private.



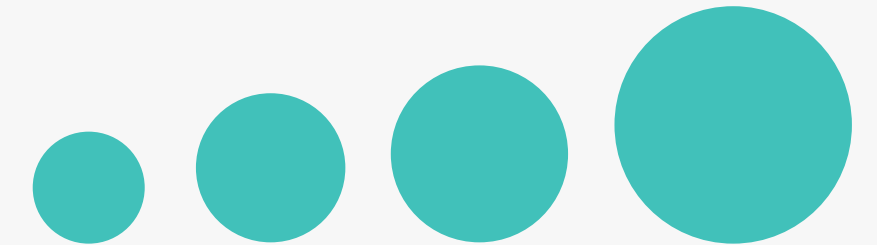
Activity 4

Relaxation



Task1 - Read the text

- The exercise should last about 20 – 30 minutes.
- Exercise regularly, thanks to which relaxation will become your habit after some time.
- Make sure no one and nothing disturbs you.
- Find a comfortable place. You can lie down or sit on a comfortable armchair. Lie down so that your body can relax completely.
- Don't worry about whether you succeed or not. Just relax.
- If during the exercise your thoughts run away, nothing has happened. Calmly return to the exercise you are performing.
- Tighten your muscles for about 5 seconds. During this time, keep certain muscles tensed - quite tight, but not overly so. Then let go and feel the muscle relax. Give yourself 10 seconds to feel the relaxed muscle.
- **You can use the music -**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCjAEV2v6JU>



Activity 4

Relaxation



Take two deep breaths at first. Exhale slowly. Now clench the fists of both hands. Feel the tension, hold for about 5 seconds... and let go. Take a moment to notice the pleasant feeling of relaxation in this place.

Tighten all the muscles in both hands by pressing your forearm against your shoulders. Hold... and let go.

Tighten your shoulders. Hold the tension... and release it.

Raise your eyebrows and frown. Hold... and let go.

Tighten your eyelids and tighten all the muscles around your eyes. Tighten them for a while... and let go.

Clench your teeth firmly while pressing your tongue firmly against the roof of your mouth. Hold... and relax them.

Tilt your head back and tighten the back muscles of your neck. Wait a minute... and let it go. Do this point twice, because the neck muscles are usually the most tense.

Tighten your back muscles. Hold... and let go.

Take a deep breath, hold the air and tighten your chest muscles. Hold, and together with the exhaled air, relax these muscles.

Tighten your abdominal muscles. Hold... and let go.

Tighten your buttock muscles. Hold...and relax them.

Tighten your leg muscles. First thighs, then calves. Hold... and let go.

Tighten your foot muscles by pointing your toes towards your face. Hold... and relax them.

Contract your toes, strongly tensing the muscles there. Hold... and let go.

Feel the state of your body consciously. Feel the deep relaxation you are in. If any other muscle is even a little tense – clench it tight and let it go.

Enjoy this pleasant state for a few minutes visualizing that you are on the beach, in the forest or in the meadow. Focus on this visualization now, seeing, hearing and feeling this image. After a few minutes, take a deep breath and stand up, completing this exercise.



Conclusion and WRAP Up (10 minutes)



How you felt during this activity?
What have you learnt about yourselves?
What could be improved or changed?



Where to find theory? Useful links

- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/six-relaxation-techniques-to-reduce-stress>
- <https://positivepsychology.com/cope-with-stress>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wemm-i6XHr8&t=2s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuiQxBB67wI&t=2s>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/best-ways-to-manage-stress>



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