

Week 14: Walk to Wellness

STRESS

What Is Stress?

Stress is a part of life and occurs when we tense up in response to pressure. Stress is what happens to us when we allow events or situations to overwhelm our ability to cope with them. Any change, good or bad, big or small, can cause stress.

What Causes Stress?

Stress can be caused by many events and situations. Getting married, a serious illness, or changing jobs can cause stress. Losing keys, having a birthday, having a flat tire, or needing to get errands done before picking up children can also cause stress.

An Ounce of Prevention . . .

The old saying “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is certainly true when it comes to stress. It’s best to avoid stress whenever we can. However, if we cannot avoid stress, there are ways to cope.

Why are we talking about stress in this program? Many people react to stress by changing their eating and activity habits. Some people eat and drink too much as a way to deal with stress, and others may stop eating. Some people become very inactive and withdrawn.

We understand that it is stressful even to attend this program and to think about all the lifestyle changes we suggest. Changing behavior and asking your family to make changes to help you can create stress.

You Can Manage the Stress!

Stress can interfere with the work you have done in this program. Using the tools and skills discussed in this session, practice preventing and avoiding stress so you can stay focused on your goals.

How Do You Feel Stress?

What situations make you feel stressed?

How do you feel, physically and mentally, when you are stressed?

What do you do differently when you get stressed?

Ways to Prevent Stress

Practice these tips to prevent stress:

- Say “No” when asked to do something you do not want to do. ✓ Try to say “Yes” only to important matters.
- Share some of your workload with others.
- Set goals you can reach in a realistic time.
- Take charge of your time.
 - ✓ Make realistic schedules.
 - ✓ Get organized.
- Use problem solving techniques.
 - ✓ Describe the problem in detail.
 - ✓ Think of all your options.
 - ✓ Pick one option to try.
 - ✓ Make an action plan.
 - ✓ Try the plan. See how it goes.
- Plan ahead.
 - ✓ Think about the kind of situations that are stressful for you.
 - ✓ Plan how to handle them or to work around them.
- Keep things in perspective. Remember your purpose.

- ✓ Think of all the good things in your life.
- ✓ Remember why you joined this program.

Reach out to people for support.

Be physically active. Physical activity is a great stress reducer.

When You Cannot Avoid Stress

Despite your best attempts, you cannot always avoid stress. However, several actions can help you cope with the stress.

When you cannot avoid stress:

Catch the stress early

- ✓ Learn to be aware of the signs that show you are getting stressed. My signs of stress:

- ✓ Stop yourself as soon as you realize you are stressed. Take a 10-minute time-out.
- ✓ Move those muscles. Go for a walk, a bike ride, or do another activity you enjoy.
- ✓ Pamper yourself. Do something you enjoy doing just for yourself.
- ✓ Breathe. Take a full, deep breath. Count to five. Then let go of your breath slowly. Let the muscles in your face, arms, legs, and body go completely loose.

Stress Related to This Program

Taking part in this program may cause you stress. It takes effort to make the changes this program suggests. And these changes can complicate your life, causing tension and stress for you and for those around you. Below are some examples of how being in the program may cause stress and some ways for dealing with it.

Possible sources of stress	Ways to manage stress	Example
Extra time spent shopping and preparing food.	Share the work.	Ask spouse or family member to help shop.
	Take charge of your time.	Make double recipes, and freeze half for later.
Feeling you are missing out because you can't eat favorite foods.	Set goals you can reach.	Now and then allow yourself to have favorite foods in small amounts.
	Keep things in perspective.	Remind yourself how important preventing diabetes is to you.
Your family does not like low-fat/calorie foods.	Reach out to people.	Ask your family to support your efforts to try new foods.
	Use the steps for solving problems.	Discuss your feelings and your promise to lose weight with your family. Think of all your options that might work with them, and then try one.
Feeling uneasy joining at social events where high-fat/calorie foods are available.	Practice saying "No."	Turn down invitations that are not important to you.
	Reach out to people.	Call the host or hostess ahead, ask what will be served, and ask whether you can bring a low-fat dish.
	Plan ahead.	Before you go to a party, plan what foods you will choose when you are there.
Feeling pressure to fit activity into a busy schedule.	Plan ahead.	Make an appointment to be active with a family member or friend.
	Problem solve.	Combine activity with other events you plan to do. (Have a meeting while walking. Go hiking with the family.)