

OPTIFAST® Lifestyle Education Series™

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1

OPTIFAST® Lifestyle Education Series™

Stress management

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2

Tools for Success

- Understand the true cause of stress and the body's stress response
- Identify your personal sources and symptoms of stress
- Learn the three A's of stress management: Avoid, Alter, or Adapt
- Recognize stress-related eating
- Develop a stress management plan
- Learn to trigger the relaxation response with deep breathing and physical activity

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3

What Does Each of These Scenarios Have In Common?

- Alex's project has been accepted...he celebrates by eating his favorite lunch and dessert.
- Sue munches on brownies directly from the pan after an argument with her significant other.
- Pam nibbles on snacks while stuck in rush hour traffic.
- Ron's boss is unhappy with his progress on a project...after the boss leaves his office Ron goes to the vending machine for a candy bar.

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4

Defining Stress

- Stress is a necessary and normal part of life
 - Without it we would become bored and lose interest in life
- Stress exists on a continuum from "eustress" or positive stress (graduation, job promotion, falling in love) to distress (overdue bills, chronic illness)
- Stress is not the event or situation—it's the way we respond to it
- A constant supply of "everyday" stressors can lead to many health problems previously associated with acute distress

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5

Stress Occurs on a Continuum of Feelings

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6

Excitement or Eustress

- A mostly positive state
- Can alternate between periods of excitement or euphoria with feelings of stress and tension as you anticipate an upcoming event and it's outcome

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7

Stress

- This can be the product of being overwhelmed
 - Too much to do and too little time to prepare
- May worry about disappointing someone
- May feel pressured to work harder, do better, be perfect
- Common symptoms:
 - Tension
 - Irritability
 - Headaches
 - Stomach aches

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8

Anxiety

- This is the point where you anticipate something bad happening and you believe you can't do anything to change it
- Triggered by many things--examples
 - Fear of a physical attack
 - Fear of embarrassment in front of friends or other important people
- Begin to obsess about the event, can't seem to get it out of your mind

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9

Depression or Distress

- Depression is the end of the continuum
- This is a state in which a person constantly perceives life as threatening or dangerous and believes they can't do anything to change it
- Leads to lethargy and hopelessness
- If depression lasts longer than 2 weeks, it's important to seek professional help

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10

Stressors

- What are your current perceived stressors?
- Record them on the bottom of page 2

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11

The Stress Response

- We are hard wired to respond to all stressors in the same way whether positive, negative, real or imaginary
- Our bodies can't distinguish between imminent danger and non-life threatening annoyances
- When you perceive a stressor your body activates the sympathetic nervous system
 - "Fight or flight" response
- Body prepares you to fight an enemy or flee danger

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12

Immediate Physiological Responses to Stress

- Increased heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Increased blood pressure
- Sweating
- Muscle constriction
- Pupil dilation
- Increased adrenaline (raises fats in bloodstream to allow for increased energy needs)
- Rapid blood clotting (in case of injury)

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13

Symptoms of Prolonged Stress or Acute Distress

- Physical
 - Hypertension
 - Insomnia
- Emotional
 - Depression
 - Irritability
- Cognitive
 - Difficulty concentrating
- Behavioral
 - Overeating
 - Procrastinating

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14

Eating to Relieve Stress

- Eating comfort foods may invoke a "happier" time in our lives
- Eating to reduce stress can lead to overeating and weight gain
- It's important to find other ways to manage stress

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15

3-A's of Stress Management: Avoid

- Avoid needless stress
 - What stressors in your life can you avoid?
- Examples:
 - A person who constantly irritates you
 - Heavy traffic—can you use flexible hours or work from home on some days?
 - Additional projects that you can't complete in a timely way
 - Discussion of controversial topics at inopportune times
 - People who sabotage your efforts at living a healthy lifestyle

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16

3-A's of Stress Management: Alter

- Alter those situations that you can't avoid
 - What stressors in your life can you alter?
- Examples:
 - Using "I" statements, explain to someone why you'd like them to change their behavior
 - Communicate your feelings or needs clearly
 - Change your environment to better support your needs
 - Replace the open glass candy dish with an opaque covered one
 - Manage your time more efficiently
 - Mentally rehearse how you will handle a stressful situation

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17

The Relaxation Response

- Physical activity
 - Aerobic exercise reduces muscle tension
 - Exercise produces endorphins, which impart a calm and tranquil feeling
- Relaxation breathing
 - This helps withdraw attention from the external world and concentrates on your calm inner world
 - Produces similar feelings one gets from yoga, meditation, and deep muscle relaxation
 - Can do this anywhere, just takes some practice and patience

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18

Stress Management Contract

- Choose one or two things you can do differently to manage your stress
- Complete the Stress Management Contract on page 8

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