

Nurse-Centered Stress Relief Toolkit

IMPORTANT NOTE: This information is not intended to diagnose or treat any medical condition or to replace your healthcare professional. Always consult with your healthcare professional to design an appropriate anxiety/stress management and/or exercise program tailored to your personal health needs. If you experience any pain or difficulty with any of these exercises/activities, immediately stop and consult your healthcare provider.

Our Nurse Centered Stress Management Series is an eleven-part program created to introduce and reinforce self-care/stress-management activities to Nurse Residents. All of these activities can be completed within 15 minutes, have little or no cost associated with them, do not cross social, cultural, or religious boundaries, and can be performed in any location and without specialized equipment. The key to successfully establishing a stress-management routine, is to practice these activities routinely! Select those practices that you identify with and enjoy the most, and avoid limiting your self-care practices to just one method! We encourage you to explore the app markets, social media, and video channels to find other innovative ways to enhance your personal resiliency and reduce the negative impact of stress!

Phone wallpaper

Using a photo or positive affirmation as the wallpaper on your handheld device. It is estimated that Americans check their mobile devices 8 BILLION TIMES PER DAY! With approximately 185 million smartphone users, this equates to an average of 46 times per day PER PERSON (for those in the 18-24 age bracket, the average is 79 times per day). Imagine, if each of those 46 times you looked at your phone, you could remind yourself to TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF! Just think about that.... 46 positive reminders EACH DAY! This simple act could transform your life!

4-7-8 Breathing

The method, pioneered by Harvard-trained Dr. Andrew Weil, is described as a 'natural tranquilizer for the nervous system' helping to quickly reduce tension and allowing the body to relax. This method has demonstrated evidence in craving reduction, for treating insomnia, and even enhancing circulation and digestion. Guided videos are available at no cost via YouTube, and both the Android and IOS markets have applications with timers to assist you in performing and monitoring your progress.

Positive Affirmations / Three Good Things

“I AM” are two of the most powerful words; for what you put after them shapes your reality! Choose your words wisely! Dr. J. Bryan Sexton, associate professor in psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke’s School of Medicine and an expert in the idea of resilience, suggests to think of three good things or positive outcomes that occurred during the day and write them down. The best results for the exercise will come after 14 consecutive entries. To help reinforce the use of positive affirmations, our Nurse Residents are encouraged to include affirmations in their electronic passwords (which are typed as often as 100 times per day).

Chair Yoga

Yoga has been shown to improve strength, flexibility, overall health and well-being, reduce stress and improve mental clarity. However, yoga may not be for everyone. Chair yoga is a gentle form of yoga that is practiced sitting on a chair, or standing using a chair for support. You can practice simple stretches that can be done anywhere. Many videos/applications are available for this use. Our Nurse Residents are guided through a series of poses that are ideal for the work environment, and can be completed before or after many routine clerical duties.

Putty Buddy and Aromatherapy

Using a non-toxic and homemade dough, our Nurse Residents are guided through the many benefits of play theory and aromatherapy. The Putty Buddy exercise allows your hands to be free to move in any manner they choose, often resulting in exciting sculptures! This will help to reduce stress, but imagine if you add aromatherapy! You are using natural oils to enhance psychological and physical well-being. The inhaled aroma from these "essential" oils is widely believed to stimulate brain function. Essential oils can also be absorbed through the skin, where they travel through the bloodstream and can promote whole-body healing. It is used for a variety of applications, including pain relief, mood enhancement and increased cognitive function.

Mindful Raisin Exercise

Do you ever just throw food into your mouth because you have to? Not even taking the time to taste or truly appreciate the food, flavor, texture, aromas? Sometimes we just need to SLOW down and take the time! With mindful eating, you can start with a simple raisin exercise, then progress to a snack, then one meal (breakfast, lunch or dinner). Choose a specific location to eat, such as your table or the lunchroom at work. Sit quietly, don't get up, and don't even look at your phone. To enjoy the mindful raisin you must focus on the process of eating and appreciate and enjoy your raisin, snack, or meal. For more information on this exercise search “Mindful Raisin.”

Art Meditation

Learning how to use our personal creative gift in a positive and meditative way is a beautiful and satisfying experience! Art meditation is an easy-to-learn, relaxing, and fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns. It increases focus and creativity, provides artistic satisfaction along with an increased sense of personal well-being. Remember, it is NOT doodling. We doodle to “escape” something. We use art meditation to move deeper “into” something! There are no rules! The benefits are endless – relaxation, mindfulness, non-verbal journaling, self-esteem, anger management, problem-solving, inspiration and behavior modification. Your art doesn’t have to be perfect. If you can hold a pen you can do art meditation!

Guided Meditation

People meditate for different reasons. When using guided meditation, there is no need to strive to make anything happen. Simply observe what you find and practice letting things be for a while. When something grabs your attention, observe it first and see if it changes. If you find that you need to address it, that’s fine. Noticing that, pause and make an adjustment. In this way, the body scan provides an opportunity to practice responsiveness. With guided meditation, you can begin by lying down or sitting in a comfortable chair. Take a few moments to notice sensations of breathing. Expect your mind to wander, and when it does, return your attention to your body without judging yourself or giving yourself a hard time.

Labyrinth

What is the difference between a labyrinth and a maze? A labyrinth is a walking meditation, a path of prayer and an archetypal blueprint where psyche meets Spirit. It has only one path that leads from the outer edge in a circuitous way to the center. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. Unlike a maze where you lose your way, the labyrinth is a spiritual tool that can help you find your way. Benefits of a labyrinth are problem solving, reflection, goal setting, etc. Walking the Labyrinth quiets the mind, opens the heart and grounds the body, some find answers to questions long asked, and some find healing, creativity, a sense of wholeness. Even when you aren’t able to “walk” a labyrinth, you may take the walk with your finger, tracing the path on paper and reflecting in the same manner. Take as long as you need to navigate the labyrinth. Do not rush, breath as your finger guides you through. What will you find on your labyrinth journey? For more information visit <https://www.veriditas.org/New-to-the-Labyrinth>

Body Scan Meditation

Body scan is a powerful and healing form of meditation. It involves systematically sweeping through the body with the mind and bringing attention to your body's areas and regions; thus being able to attend to feelings and sensations of your body by remaining completely still. This can be performed lying down or sitting comfortably in a chair and can reveal the areas of our bodies that are most vulnerable to stress. .

ProQOL Assessment

ProQOL is the Professional Quality of Life measure. The goal is to help you improve your resiliency and increase the positive aspects of helping and reduce the negative ones. We want to promote compassion satisfaction and reduce compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and vicarious traumatization. Using this assessment and scoring, you will be able to see where you derive your compassion satisfaction and fatigue from so that you can maximize opportunities for satisfaction, and mitigate areas of opportunity.

When you are designing your stress relief toolkit, think about what will work for you, what you hope to accomplish, and what resources that you have. Keep an open mind and a brave heart, and sample a variety of new activities and techniques. Keep your toolkit fresh by constantly improving and upgrading upon your initial development. And, remember, in order for something to become a routine, it must be practiced routinely!