

Can't weight to meditate

Week 5



Information sheet

Stress has many sources, whether it's a demanding job, family pressures or money worries. Stress by itself isn't bad since the purpose of stress is to force you to take action. The problems begin when you don't handle stress in a healthy way. Your sense of humor can disappear and your outlook for the future becomes grim. This often leads to weight gain and addictive behaviors.

The goal for **Week 5** is to help you identify and cope with the stress factors in your life and develop strategies to deal with them. Focusing on the following project goals will add to your coping strategies.

Plan a quiet time each day

We live in a noisy, technological age. With phones ringing, faxes going, pagers beeping and televisions blaring, it's no wonder our stress levels are escalating. Noise overload creates imbalances that can cause serious health problems. Schedule quiet time for yourself each day, even if it's just five minutes.

Practice relaxation therapy

Practice deep breathing, visualization, meditation or progressive muscle relaxation. Log on to BlueAccess® for Members at www.bcbstx.com to assess your level of stress, coping skills and response to stress. Find out how stress can affect your health, and learn relaxation techniques to help reduce it.

Find your passion

Do you like cooking, bird watching, painting, sewing, playing basketball, gardening, working with kids or photography? Any activity that you are passionate about will help quiet internal stress. The more physical your activity, the better. Brain chemicals released during physical activity promote better moods and curb cravings.

Engage in a physical activity

As you learned in Week 3, it's important to fit some stress-free physical activity into your day. Exercise not only relaxes you, but energizes you as well. Exercise also triggers hormones that boost the immune system. A body that is well nourished and well exercised is better equipped to handle the everyday pressures of life.



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Information sheet *continued*

Practice random acts of kindness

A loving, giving attitude toward others will enrich you with joy and happiness. A small note of encouragement, sharing a home cooked meal with a friend or baby sitting for a young mother so she can get a well-deserved break, are all activities that nourish us from within. Plan to do or say one nice thing each day for someone else.

Manage your time

Much of our stress comes from our busy lives. Have you ever noticed how some people manage to lead very busy lives and accomplish a great deal, while others are constantly running around in a state of panic? We all have the same 24 hours. The difference is organization. Use a weekly calendar to track your appointments and goals. Keep a daily list that puts your most important priorities first and drop activities that don't support your goals. Turn frustrating delays into something enjoyable by having a book, tape or magazine available.

Sleep more

One study reported seven out of 10 Americans experience sleep problems.* As the quality and quantity of our sleep decreases, depression, cravings, irritability and overeating rise. Sleep is as necessary as food, oxygen and water. While you sleep, your body is busy stabilizing mood, memory and appetite. Deprive yourself of a good night sleep, and your body will feel the imbalance, making you more vulnerable to disease. Approximately 47 million Americans may be putting themselves at risk for injury and health problems because they are not getting the sleep they need.*

Getting started

Read through all your materials

Practice relaxation as you read the information, and make sure your environment is quiet and stress-free.

Print your log form for Week 5

Record regular goals that you achieve, project goals that need work and any action plans to help you meet your goals. For example, you can help reduce stress by walking or practicing deep breathing rather than turning to food, going to bed 30 minutes earlier each night or allowing the answering machine to pick up calls after 8 p.m.

Complete the *How to Stress Less* handout

You may not even realize how stress is affecting you until you stop and think about the stress factors in your life. Writing them down is a good way to increase your awareness so that you can take proactive steps to manage your stress.

Continue with your Food Diary

Have you mastered last week's food goal? If not, keep working on it. If you have, then you're ready to move ahead to a new one from your goal sheet.

Keep tracking your physical activity

If you are consistently achieving your fitness goals, you're probably already noticing some positive results. Physical activity can help you feel better and increase your energy.

*Source: National Sleep Foundation

www.bcbstx.com

Don't Weigh to **Feel Great**