



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
HEART INSTITUTE
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA



CARDIAC REHABILITATION

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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GETTING STARTED

Everyone agrees: Life is stressful. Too much stress is related to a variety of health problems, including increased risk for heart disease. For this reason, stress management is important. Learning about stress and how to manage it will improve both your physical and emotional health, and your overall quality of life.

The Heart Institute Prevention and Rehabilitation Centre (HIPRC) provides a comprehensive series of educational kits on topics related to stress management and emotional health. In this kit you will:

Step 1: Know how the body responds to stress

Step 2: Learn to recognize sources and symptoms of stress in your life

Step 3: Use a stress record to track your stressful situations

STEP 1: KNOW HOW THE BODY RESPONDS TO STRESS

Stress is a two-part process: cause and effect.

The cause is called the “stressor.” Stressors can be real or imagined. Some things you worry about in life – your stressors – never happen.

Not all stress is bad. Without some stress, there could be no progress in life – no reason to get up in the morning. Some stress is needed for growth and challenge. One goal of stress management is to shift from always viewing stress as negative and damaging, to viewing it – whenever possible – as something that is positive, inevitable, and necessary.

The source of stressors may be environmental, social, physical, daily hassles, major life events and your thoughts. Examples of stressors are provided below.

Environmental

- Weather
- Traffic/Parking
- Noise

Social

- Relationships with family and friends
- Relationships at work
- Demands and expectations of others

Physical

- Health problems
- Aging

Daily Hassles

- Technology not working eg: computers, cell phones

Major Life Events

- Loss of a loved one
- Loss of a job
- Divorce

Thoughts

- Past events and your values affect how you think about an event

The *effect* a stressor has on you is called the “stress response.” The stress response has also been called the “fight or flight” response and more recently the “fight, flight or freeze” response. When you are faced with a stressor, your body experiences a series of physical changes intended to help you fight the stressor or flee from it. If you feel overwhelmed by the stressor then you freeze. These changes are complex and involve the nervous system and the endocrine (hormones) system.

Some common physical responses to stress include:

- Fast heartbeat
- Rapid breathing, breath holding
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased body temperature and perspiring
- Muscle tension
- Increased blood sugar to use as energy
- Dilation of the pupils to enhance vision
- Blood flow directed to muscles and liver (hands and feet feel cold)
- Increased blood clotting for protection if injured

For early humans, the “fight, flight or freeze” response was their means of survival. Today, most stressful situations don’t require a fight, flight or freeze response to survive. In fact, in today’s world, you are more likely to let stressors build up or become excessive before taking action. Unfortunately, if left unchecked, stress can cause problems to your health and well being. Stress is thought to be a contributing factor to heart disease.

According to the World Heart Federation, more research is needed to define which kinds of stress more likely cause heart disease.

**You may be feeling more than stress and are worried and/or sad much of the time.
For more information about Anxiety and Depression see the Mood section.**

STEP 2: LEARN TO RECOGNIZE SOURCES AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

Clearly, stress is unique for each individual. The way you respond to a stressor depends on how stressful you personally perceive the stressor to be. What is highly stressful for your neighbor may not be stressful at all for you. Remember, not all stressors are bad. Stressors can be both positive and negative. A promotion at work or the birth of a new baby are examples of positive stressors.

Think back over the past six months. List examples of positive and negative stressors in your life in the space below.

MY POSITIVE STRESSORS	MY NEGATIVE STRESSORS

Now do this short questionnaire-Stress Index to look at your level of stress. The questionnaire was designed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.ca) and Heart and Stroke Foundation

STRESS INDEX

DO YOU FREQUENTLY:	YES	NO	DO YOU FREQUENTLY:	YES	NO
Neglect your diet?			Have few or no supportive relationships?		
Try to do everything yourself?			Use sleeping pills or tranquilizers without consulting a doctor?		
Blow up easily?			Not get enough rest?		
Seek unrealistic goals?			Get angry when you are kept waiting?		
Fail to see the humour in situations others find funny?			Ignore stress symptoms in your habits and attitudes?		
Act rude?			Put things off until later?		
Make a “big deal” of everything?			Think there is only one right way to do something?		
Look to other people to make things happen?			Fail to include relaxation time in your day?		
Have difficulty making decisions?			Gossip?		
Complain you are disorganized?			Impatiently try to race through your day?		
Avoid people whose ideas contradict your own?			Spend a lot of time complaining about your past?		
Bottle up everything inside?			Fail to get a break from noise and crowds?		
Avoid or neglect physical activity?			Score 1 for each “YES” answer		
			TOTAL YOUR SCORE		

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

1-6:	You have few hassles and generally lead a low-stress life. That's great! But, don't spend so much energy avoiding problems that you shy away from challenges.
7-13	You've got a handle on your life. Though you're in good control, try to improve choices and habits that might still cause some unnecessary stress. You will find useful advice in these kits.
14-20	Warning: You're in the danger zone! Even now you're probably suffering stress-related symptoms. Take time out every day to look at choices you've made and reflect on outcomes. The suggestions in these kits will enable you to take better control of your life.
20+	Red flag emergency! Stop. Re-think. Change your lifestyle. Improve your diet. Make physical activity a regular routine, and above all, try to find ways to relax. Is it exercising? Knitting? Spending time with your kids? Try to positively alter your attitudes. Use the kits to help guide you to live a healthier, happier life. You may also wish to speak to your healthcare provider for some additional help.

ACUTE AND CHRONIC STRESS

Acute stress is more common and originates from daily pressures, responding to a threat or challenge. It can be positive and assist individuals to achieve goals. Acute stressors could include speaking in public or a flat tire. Provided this is not ongoing, most individuals can manage acute stress without health effects.

Chronic stress is ongoing and in some cases, individuals may not see any solution or way out of the situation for example: an ill family member or toxic work environment.

Chronic stress can lead to health problems, such as headaches and insomnia. The chronic-stress response is more subtle than is the acute-stress response, but the effects may be longer lasting and more problematic

STEP 3: USE A STRESS RECORD TO TRACK YOUR STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

Before you can learn to manage your stress better, it is helpful to know what causes your stress (your “stressors”) and how you feel when under stress. Try to identify the situations in your life that make you feel tense and anxious. Pay attention to how your body reacts to stress (your “stress response”). You may see patterns that repeat themselves over and over again.

- Where and when is stress most likely to occur?
- Do you feel more stress on a certain day of the week or at a certain time of day?
- Are certain people associated with your stressful situations?
- How do you react to stress?

After identifying your sources of stress and how you responded, you will learn to evaluate your stress management techniques and learn ways you might better deal with the situation in the future.

Use the Stress Record to keep a record of your stressful situations for one week. Make a separate entry for each stressful situation. For a more accurate record, it is best to make an entry every time you feel stressed or every hour or two while you are awake. Before writing on this copy, you may want to make additional copies. See the example that is provided.

HIPRC STRESS RECORD

Directions:

- **Day/Date:** When did you feel stressed? For each day, record the date.
- **Time:** Make an entry for each time of day you feel stressed.
- **Trigger:** What specific event seemed to cause you to feel stressed? Triggering events can be the actions of another person, a personal thought, a new situation, or anything that immediately precedes your increased feelings of stress.
- **Response:** What were your specific feelings of stress? Describe as best as you can your physical (changes in your body), emotional (thoughts and feelings), and behavioral (actions) responses to stress.
- **Intensity:** How much stress did you feel? Rate your intensity on a scale of 1 (very little stress) to 10 (very much stress).
- **Duration:** How long did the stress last before you felt calm again? Record the time (seconds, minutes, hours) until the stress goes away and you feel calm again.

DAY/DATE	TIME	TRIGGER	RESPONSE	INTENSITY	DURATION
Monday <i>mm/dd/yy</i>	7:45a 9:30a 5:00p	Heavy traffic Project deadline Sick child	Lost my temper Had heart palpitations Felt despair	7 8 8	30 min 45 min 60 min
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

LEARNING TO RELAX

Too often people use unhealthy ways to deal with stress. Some people smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol to help them relax. Actually, these practices increase both mental and physical stress. And, they can lead to addiction.

There are healthy ways to relax. Regular exercise, meditation, and other relaxation techniques can reduce stress and have a positive impact on your attitude and quality of life. In this kit you will:

- Step 1:** Assess your current stress management practices
- Step 2:** Learn new ways to relax
- Step 3:** Use a Stress Log to record stress management techniques

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR CURRENT STRESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Answer these questions to assess your stress.

1. How would you rate the usual degree of stress in your personal/home life?
(Check the one that best applies)
 - A great deal of stress
 - Some stress
 - Hardly any stress

2. How would you rate the usual degree of stress in your job? (Check the one that best applies)
 - A great deal of stress
 - Some stress
 - Hardly any stress

3. How well do you feel you manage the stress in your life?
(Rate on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 = very well; 5 = not well at all)

_____ Personal/home life _____ Job-related

Interpretation: If you have “some” or “a great deal” of stress in your personal life or in your job, and you rate your stress management as 3 or above, you could probably benefit from learning stress management techniques.

Below are some of the ways people deal with stress. Some are positive and healthy; others are clearly negative. Some can be either positive or negative, depending on how they are used. *Which of the following do you usually do to reduce tension? (Check all that apply)*

- Talk to someone you can trust
 - Smoke, use e cigarettes or smokeless tobacco
 - Don't think about it
 - Eat
 - Watch TV
 - Have an alcoholic drink
- Take a drug
 - Listen to or perform music
 - Get angry or "blow up"
 - Go to sleep
 - Get involved in a hobby
 - Do nothing
 - Laugh
- Pray or other religious practice
 - Read
 - Cry
 - Do some kind of exercise
 - Practise a relaxation technique (deep breathing, meditation, muscle relaxation)

List any other ways you relieve stress here:
1.
2.
3.

STEP 2: LEARN NEW WAYS TO RELAX

There are many ways to relax. Some of the most useful relaxation techniques are described below. Choose a technique you think you will enjoy and practise it for at least one week. Evaluate your experience.

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

Shallow and rapid breathing is a natural response to stress. With shallow breathing less oxygen is taken in with each breath. Deep breathing can reverse this effect. It can also help relieve stress-related headaches, backaches, stomach aches, and sleeplessness. Deep breathing is often the first step in other stress management techniques such as visualization, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation.

You can do deep breathing anytime, anywhere. It can be done sitting, standing, or lying down, as long as you are comfortable. Wear loose clothing or loosen your tie, belt, or buttons. A quiet place is recommended, although not necessary.

1. Begin by breathing in slowly and deeply through your nose. While breathing in, count to five and silently say the word "in" to yourself. Notice that your abdomen relaxes as your lungs fill with air.
2. After the count of five, purse your lips and let the air escape slowly as you count to five and say the word "out" to yourself.

Repeat the exercise (up to two minutes, if time permits). With practice, you may be able to count to 10 during each phase of the exercise. *You can increase your relaxation if you imagine breathing in ocean air, the scent of flowers or forest air and visualize a restful place.*

VISUALIZATION

Visualization (creating a scene in your mind) is very effective when used with deep breathing exercises. With practice, visualization can be one of the easiest stress management techniques for you to do.

1. After a few minutes of deep breathing, create a picture in your mind of a scene in which you are perfectly relaxed. Continue deep breathing.
2. Involve your senses as you continue to visualize this special place. What sounds do you hear? How does your skin feel? What smells are in the air? Continue deep breathing.
3. Focus on this scene until you feel as relaxed as if you were really there.

Some people are uncomfortable trying to use visualization to relax. They feel they are just daydreaming and wasting time. It’s important, however, to give your mind a rest, especially when feeling stressed. You may be surprised to find some of your most creative ideas and solutions come after visualizations.

Check visualizations that would be relaxing for you.

- Lying on a quiet beach
- Lying in a field of grass and flowers
- Walking in a rain forest
- Sailing on a boat in the ocean
- Standing at the top of a beautiful mountain range
- Sitting in front of a glowing fire

Others (list here):
1.
2.
3.

MEDITATION

Meditation has its roots in many Eastern traditions and cultures. The objective of meditation is to clear the mind. There are many ways to meditate. While you can do it anywhere, anytime, some advance planning makes it more beneficial. The best times for meditation are before breakfast or before dinner in the evening. Begin with a 10-minute session and gradually work up to 20 minutes. It takes regular practice, day after day, to benefit from meditation.

Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Dim the lights. Wear loose, comfortable clothing.

1. Sit in a straight chair with your feet on the floor and your hands in your lap with your palms up. Check your posture to be sure you are balanced and centered, as if a string were attached to the top of your head pulling you upright. Keep your body as still as possible. Focus your eyes on a spot on the floor a few feet in front of you. Let your eyelids droop nearly closed.
2. Start with deep breathing exercises. Breathe from your abdomen rather than your chest. As you exhale, count “one.” Continue counting up to five, or higher if you can.

3. Try to clear your mind of all thoughts, sounds, or body sensations. If thoughts enter your mind and you forget to count, dismiss the thoughts and start again at one. Many thoughts will enter your mind as you meditate, but let them pass through.
4. You may wish to time your meditation as in the Eastern culture by burning a stick of incense. When finished, rock gently back and forth before slowing rising.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation helps you become more aware of where muscle tension is in your body. It can also help calm other reactions to stress, such as rapid breathing and a fast pulse. Many people use progressive muscle relaxation to relieve stress-related headaches and sleeplessness.

In the beginning, it is best to do this exercise lying down. Choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed for at least 20 minutes. If you are unable to stay awake, you may want to do this exercise in a sitting position.

1. Relax your entire body as much as possible. Begin with deep breathing exercises.
2. You will begin with the muscles of your feet and work upward on the body – calves, thighs, buttocks, abdomen, hands, arms, and shoulders. End with the face, mouth, jaw, eyes, and scalp.
3. With each muscle group, tighten the muscles as you inhale. Hold the tension briefly, then relax and exhale. Let the tension flow out with each breath. Notice the feel of the muscles as they tighten and relax.
4. Allow more time for the relaxation phase of the exercise. If a muscle seems very tense, repeat the tightening with that muscle group.
5. After progressing through all the muscle groups, lie very still for five minutes as you continue deep breathing and experience the relaxed feeling.
6. When you are ready to get up, count backward from ten to one. Get up slowly and carefully.

Do progressive muscle relaxation daily for best results. Combine it with visualization or meditation. Over time, you can even learn to do this technique while sitting upright at work or elsewhere.

STRETCHING

Your muscles tighten in response to stress. When the tension is held and the muscles are not used, waste products remain to cause pain and discomfort. Most people hold tension in their head, neck and shoulder areas. This is called the “stress triangle.” Learning how to relax the muscles in this area can help you relieve stress and tension headaches. The base of the triangle is the mid-points between your shoulders and your neck. The top of the triangle is on your forehead between your eyes.

Performing six to twelve repetitions of these simple stretches and rolls can help you relieve tightness in your stress triangle. You can do these stretches anywhere – at home or work. If you are performing a tedious task, stop frequently to do these stretches.

- **Neck Roll:** Keeping your left shoulder level, stretch your right ear to your right shoulder. Roll your head down so your chin is on your chest. Repeat the stretch on your left side. Do rolls only from side to side.

Do not let your head drop back.

- **Shoulder Shrug:** Lift your shoulders up and make large circles going forward and back. You can rotate both shoulders or stretch only one at a time.
- **Overhead Stretch:** With one hand, reach up as if you were picking an apple from a tree slightly ahead and far above you. Repeat with the other hand.
- **Standing Body Roll:** Roll your head forward until your chin is on your chest. Bend your knees slightly and continue rolling down until your hands are hanging near your knees. Rest there a moment, then, slowly roll back up.

SELF-MASSAGE

You can learn to give yourself a massage. Massage can relax muscles, relieve muscle spasms and pain, increase blood flow in the skin and muscles, ease mental stress, and help you feel more relaxed. Use massage oil or lotion if desired for a smoother massage. Avoid exerting heavy pressure on the spinal column or other bony areas.

Shoulders and Back of Neck

- While sitting upright, massage your stress triangle. Use your right hand to work on your left shoulder and left hand on your right shoulder. Work your fingers gently but firmly, beginning with your shoulder blade, moving up toward the back of the neck and including the scalp. Repeat each stroke four times.
- Use a circular motion to massage the thick, muscular part of your shoulder at the base of your neck. Gradually increase the pressure. Use the right hand for the left shoulder and the left hand for the right shoulder. (Note: Do not massage the sides or front of the neck. This can be dangerous.)

Head and Face

- Use your fingers to apply pressure on your forehead, between your eyes (top point of your stress triangle).
- Place your thumbs on the area below your brow bone close to your nose. Apply gentle pressure.
- Use your fingers to gently rub the areas of the temples and behind your ears with circular motions.
- Rub your scalp with a gentle and rapid motion as though shampooing your hair.

Feet

- While sitting on a chair or on the floor, rest one foot on the opposite thigh. Use your thumbs to rub the full length of your foot, from the heel to the toes and back. Repeat several times.
- Wrap your fingers around the top of your foot and your thumbs around the bottom. Squeeze with your thumbs, starting at the arch and moving up to the toes. Repeat several times.
- Take each toe between your fingers and gently roll it back and forth. Rub the area between the toes.
- Holding your ankle in one hand and your toes in the other, rotate your foot first in one direction, then in the other.

Massage is even more relaxing if someone else does it for you. Many health professionals practise massage, or you can go to a licensed massage therapist. If you are interested, ask your doctor or mentor to recommend a qualified massage therapist for you.

Massage is not a substitute for medical treatment for an injury. See your doctor for treatment if you have an acute injury, such as a sprain, tendonitis, or swollen joint.

STEP 3: USE A STRESS LOG TO RECORD STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Use the Stress Management Log at the end of this section to record a rating of your stress level at different times during the day. Keep the log for one week. Many people have used a stress log and found it to be very helpful with stress management.

Use the following scale to rate your level of stress:

KEY	
0 =	No stress at all; very calm
1 =	Minimal stress; relaxed
2 =	Slight stress; slightly anxious
3 =	Moderate stress; anxious
4 =	High stress; very anxious with some stress symptoms
5 =	Severe stress; extremely anxious with numerous stress symptoms

Your goal is to keep your stress level at 3 or below at all times. Lower is better. *Remember, prolonged periods of high stress can be harmful to your health.*

Also use the Stress Management Log to record the stress management techniques you practise. Choose at least one of the stress management techniques listed below. Build up to a minimum of 20 minutes of stress management training every day. You should begin to notice lower stress ratings in the time periods following your stress management practice.

STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

- Deep breathing exercises
- Visualization
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Meditation
- Self-massage
- Stretches

STRESS MANAGEMENT LOG

TIME OF DAY		STRESS RATING (0-5)	STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES		
			WHAT I DID	MINUTES	NOTES
MONDAY	 When you wake up: Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 Before lunch: How stressful was the morning?				
	 After work/Before dinner: How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 Before bedtime: How stressful was the evening?				
TUESDAY	 Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 How stressful was the morning?				
	 How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 How stressful was the evening?				
WEDNESDAY	 Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 How stressful was the morning?				
	 How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 How stressful was the evening?				
THURSDAY	 Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 How stressful was the morning?				
	 How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 How stressful was the evening?				

TIME OF DAY		STRESS RATING (0-5)	STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES		
			WHAT I DID	MINUTES	NOTES
FRIDAY	 Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 How stressful was the morning?				
	 How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 How stressful was the evening?				
SATURDAY	 Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 How stressful was the morning?				
	 How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 How stressful was the evening?				
SUNDAY	 Did you have a restful sleep?				
	 How stressful was the morning?				
	 How stressful was the afternoon?				
	 How stressful was the evening?				

COPING WITH STRESS

Most people cope with too much stress by either avoiding the situation or approaching the problem. “Avoiders” wish the problem would go away or try to withdraw from it. “Approachers” may worry and fret, but try to get the situation resolved as soon as possible.

Neither of these styles is right or wrong. There are advantages and disadvantages to each style. Probably a mix of avoiding and approaching stress is best. Choosing a response that is appropriate for the situation is the goal. Knowing how you are likely to respond to stress can help you identify the best ways to relieve and manage stress in your life. In this kit you will:

Step 1: Consider your style of coping with stress

Step 2: Learn appropriate ways to avoid, alter, or adapt in stressful situations

Step 3: Develop a Personal Stress Management Contract

STEP 1: CONSIDER YOUR STYLE OF COPING WITH STRESS

Researchers have found that people usually fall into two basic categories of reaction to stress: Avoiders and Approachers. Both styles can help to reduce stress levels. Which are you? Do you know others who exhibit each style?

AVOIDERS	APPROACHERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to get away from it all • Block out stress • Withdraw • Hope it will go away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions to know as much as possible • Worry and fret • Get upset in situations they can’t control • Work hard and continue pushing

Below are some advantages and disadvantages of each style. Add in other advantages and disadvantages from your personal experiences.

AVOIDERS

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many situations are resolved on their own. • Avoidance may work well for stressful events of short duration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stressful situations can’t be ignored. • Avoiders are sometimes unprepared to deal with a major crisis. • Avoiders are often unaware of their physical symptoms of stress.

APPROACHERS**ADVANTAGES**

- Taking action helps the individual feel in control.
- Approachers may handle stress better over the long haul.
- Approachers are usually aware of their physical symptoms of stress.

DISADVANTAGES

- Approachers may get upset and angry in difficult situations.
- The “work hard and continue pushing” style can lead to burn out for the individual and people who live or work with him or her.

STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR:**AVOIDERS**

- Meditation, reading, hobbies, taking a long walk or a hot bath are effective stress relievers for you.
- Learn to recognize your body’s physical reaction to stress.
- Seek special help – counseling or a support group – during times of major crisis.

APPROACHERS

- Participate in exercise that requires concentration, such as tennis, rather than walking or swimming, which allows you to replay your worries.
- Use problem-solving techniques that help you control your thoughts.

STEP 2: LEARN APPROPRIATE WAYS TO AVOID, ALTER, OR ADAPT IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

In any stressful situation, there are three alternative courses of action: Avoid, Alter, or Adapt. A goal of stress management is to use an action that is appropriate for the situation.

AVOID

Not all the stresses in life can be avoided, but you should recognize your options and do what you can to avoid needless stress. You may be able to decrease how often you must deal with many stress-producing situations.

Can you:

- Avoid noisy places?
- Avoid hot or cold temperatures?
- Avoid unnecessary changes (make a decision and stick with it)?
- Avoid someone who constantly aggravates you?
- Leave for work or home earlier to avoid traffic?
- Walk away from a stressful situation (and come back with a clear mind)?
- Avoid discussing a particular topic?

List at least one stressor in your life you could avoid.
1.
2.
3.
List at least one stressor in your life you cannot avoid.
1.
2.
3.

ALTER

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, maybe you can alter or change it in some way to create a more positive outcome. Altering a situation will require advance planning. Try to anticipate stress in advance and be prepared with your solution.

Can you:

- Wear earplugs or headphones to block noise?
- Dress appropriately to deal with extreme temperatures?
- Alter your route to avoid traffic?
- Alter your goals to be more realistic?
- Set up a schedule to manage time better?
- Ask someone to change their behavior or action?
- Delegate authority and responsibility to others when possible?
- Learn to say “no”?
- Match the task to the time available to complete it?
- Be sure you get accurate information?
- List priorities?
- Break down tasks into smaller steps?
- Plan something interesting to do?
- Establish routines?
- Develop trusting relationships?

List at least one stressor in your life you could alter.
1.
2.
3.
List at least one stressor in your life you cannot alter.
1.
2.
3.

ADAPT

If you can't avoid or alter the situation, then you may need to adapt how you think, feel, or act. The change may need to come from within you. Adapting to stressful situations and learning to deal with them as best you can may be a better response than making significant changes in your life.

Can you change your thinking?

- Forgive a mistake
- Apologize for a mistake
- Talk to yourself (“I can remain calm”)
- Be less competitive with yourself and others
- Think of stress as an opportunity or challenge
- Think of the positive things in your life
- Consider if it is worth the worry (Is this worth getting upset over?)
- Consider if it will be important in the future (How important will this be in a year, five years?)
- Look at the “big picture”
- Be less of a perfectionist

Can you change your feelings?

- Practice relaxation techniques
- Use visualization to create a positive outcome
- Exercise to reduce stress
- Laugh or sing
- Share your feelings openly

Can you change your actions?

- Seek information
- Count to 10
- Use the stress management skills you have learned
- Learn new skills to reduce stress
- Slow down and do one thing at a time
- Talk to someone you trust about your problem
- Work on a hobby
- Don't make matters worse by smoking, drinking too much, or overeating

List at least one stressor in your life that you can adapt to.
1.
2.
3.

STEP 3: DEVELOP A PERSONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

You have learned how you typically respond to stress, as well as new ways to deal with stress. If there is a stressor in your life that you would like to try to cope with more effectively, this Personal Stress Management Contract can be helpful to you.

A personal contract is an effective tool for making changes in your life. A contract has these features:

- **It's a written document.** You make a commitment to yourself to fulfill the contract by a certain date.
- **The goal or purpose of the contract is very specific.** You will know if you have achieved your stated goal to your satisfaction.
- **There is a reward specified in advance.** The reward should be something significant that will motivate you to work toward your goal.
- **Another person is involved in the contract.** You should ask someone for their support and signature.

PERSONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

My Stressor:		
Goal by:		
(date)		
I,	will avoid / alter / adapt my stressor as follows:	
(your name)	(circle one)	
How I know that I have achieved my goal:		
When I have achieved my goal, I will reward myself as follows:		
The type of support I need from others is:		
I will involve:		in my plan.
	(who)	
Your Signature:		Signature of Witness:
(date)		(date)

USING EXERCISE TO MANAGE STRESS

Through the Heart Institute Prevention and Rehabilitation Centre (HIPRC) you have learned about the many ways exercise can benefit your physical health. Exercise can also benefit your psychological or emotional health. It is one of the best treatments for managing and preventing stress. Exercise has even been called nature's own tranquilizer because of the calming effect it has on the body. In this kit you will:

Step 1: Understand the role of exercise in the stress response

Step 2: Identify ways exercise prevents stress

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN THE STRESS RESPONSE

When you are faced with a demand or challenge (“stressor”), changes occur in your body to prepare you for physical activity (“fight, flight, freeze”). Chemicals and hormones are released to provide the quick surge of strength needed to take action. In primitive humans, this response helped them to fight or flee from danger and was the key to their survival.

Fortunately, your response to stressors is not likely to require that you fight, flee or freeze as your body has prepared you to do. But the unused chemicals and hormones that remain in your body become harmful by-products of the stress response. Left unchecked, these products can produce a variety of negative physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms.

Physical activity or exercise, however, can reduce the effect of the harmful by-products by using them as nature intended – for increased activity. Since the stress response is intended to result in physical activity, the natural thing to do is move! Exercising is the most logical and beneficial response to a stressful situation. Exercise reduces the duration and the intensity of the stress response and helps the body return to a relaxed and balanced state.

EXERCISE TIPS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Consider exercising at the end of the day to rid the body of stress by-products that have built up over the course of the day.
- If appropriate, go for a walk to take a break from problems. It helps to put problems into perspective so they can be handled with a clear mind.
- After sitting for a long period of time at a tedious task, do a few stretches to relax the muscles in the face, neck and shoulders.
- Avoid competitive physical activities for stress management purposes. You might be too aggressive.
- When using physical activity as a stress management tool, be aware of how the activity affects the body and be careful not to over exert.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY WAYS EXERCISE PREVENTS STRESS

You probably know someone who has to deal with a lot of stressful situations, but seems to handle it very well. We might say that person is “stress hardy.” Exercise is one of the best ways to protect yourself against the effects of stress and make your body stress hardy.

- Aerobic activities make the vital organs of the body, such as the heart, lungs, and circulatory system, stronger and better able to function properly when exposed to stress.
- After a vigorous workout (swimming, brisk walking, dancing, biking, jogging), the muscles are tired of tensing. When your muscles are relaxed, you feel relaxed.
- After exercise, the headache you had may go away due to relaxed shoulder and neck muscles.
- Physical activity makes you feel more energetic.
- You sleep better after an exercise session.

In recent years, scientists have discovered that strong, natural pain killers, called endorphins, are released during exercise and may remain in the bloodstream for hours. This discovery, in part, explains the tranquil, relaxed feeling of well-being that so many regular exercisers enjoy. It’s been called a “runner’s high,” and you can feel it too by following the recommendations outlined in your HIPRC Exercise Plan.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Most people who suffer from stress believe they have no control over the events in their lives. You may or may not have control over specific events, but you can learn to have control over your thoughts, which, in turn, affect your feelings and behaviours.

Learning to feel more in control of your thoughts is an important stress management technique. By learning to analyze your thoughts, you can challenge irrational thoughts and substitute accurate, rational thoughts in their place.

The rewards of rational thinking are numerous. You will experience a greater feeling of well-being and wholeness and feel freer to act in a self-enhancing way. Self-enhancing attitudes and actions are associated with a positive self-image, esteem, motivation, discipline, and goal attainment. In this kit you will:

Step 1: Understand the relationships between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours

Step 2: Know the difference between rational and irrational thinking

Step 3: Analyze your inner dialogues

Step 4: Feeling good about yourself

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS

Why do you feel and act the way you do? How much control do you have over the way you feel and act?

Things happen to cause you to feel and act the way you do. Because this connection between what happened and how you feel and act is made instantly, you may believe you have no control over your feelings and behaviours.

See the example below. You feel disappointed and depressed when you add up your minutes of exercise and realize that you did not exercise 240 minutes each week as you had planned. You decide it is okay to take the weekend off and not exercise at all.

ACTIVATING EVENT	YOUR FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS
Exercise less than goal of 240 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings: Disappointed and sad • Behaviours: Take the weekend off; not exercise

In reality, something else happens between the event and your feelings and behaviours – you think. You think about the situation, yourself, other people, and many other things. While you're thinking, you carry on a conversation with yourself. These conversations, called "inner dialogues," are going on in your mind all the time. Most of the time you aren't even aware of your thoughts or your inner dialogues. But, these inner dialogues are important and can significantly influence *how you feel* and *what you do* in a specific situation.

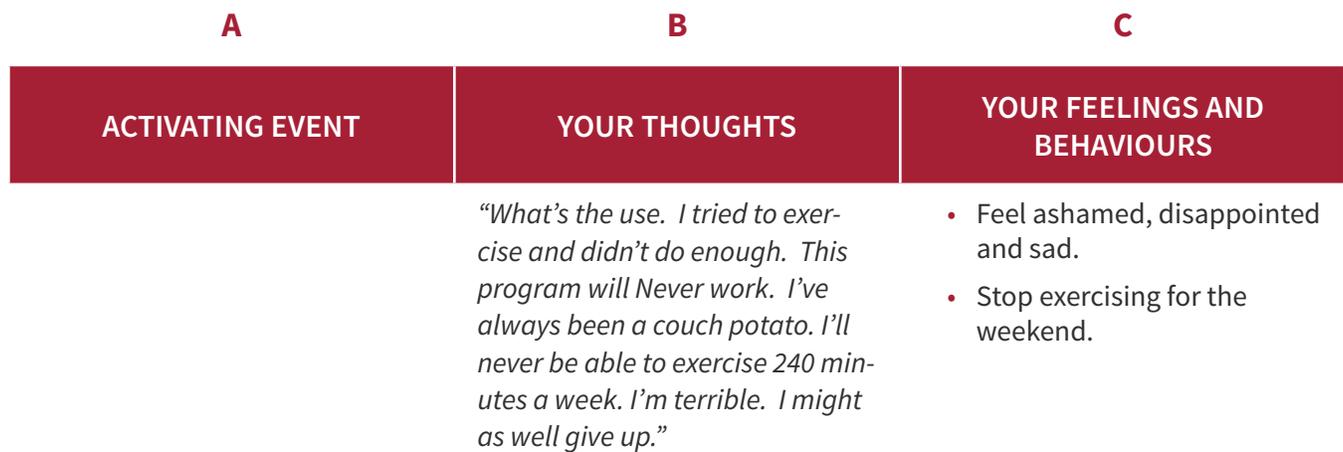
Dr. Albert Ellis, a world-renowned psychologist, developed a model to explain the relationships between outside events and our feelings and behaviours. It's called the A-B-C Model.



At Point B you have a choice to think rationally or irrationally.

- **Rational thinking** is accurate, realistic, logical, reasonable, and self-enhancing. Thinking rationally doesn't mean you reject negative thoughts or simply think positively. It looks for what is accurate and accepts it as accurate. Rational thinking can help you deal with stress, anger, and to resolve conflicts. Rational thinking encourages feelings and behaviours that lead to improvements.
- **Irrational thoughts** are inaccurate, unrealistic, illogical and self-defeating. Irrational thoughts can lead to stress and anxiety, sadness, anger, and conflict with others. Irrational thoughts can prevent you from attaining your personal goals. Most people think irrationally at least some of the time.

In this example, not exercising all weekend is the unfortunate outcome of several negative, irrational thoughts.



In Step 3 of this kit, you will learn how to challenge inaccurate, irrational thoughts, restate them as rational thoughts, and produce positive feelings and behaviours.

STEP 2: KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL THINKING

Most people think irrationally at least some of the time. An important stress management goal is to learn to think rationally most of the time. Dr. Albert Ellis has identified 12 basic irrational ideas that may underlie your thoughts in a given situation. The first four are the most important and most common. It will be helpful for you to learn to recognize these ideas because you are likely to be thinking one or more of them when you feel upset or stressed.

IRRATIONAL IDEAS

4. **Approval:** You feel you must have sincere love and approval almost all the time from all the people you find significant.
5. **Perfectionism:** You must prove yourself thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving, or you must at least have real competence or talent at something important to be worthwhile.
6. **Demanding:** You view life as awful, terrible, horrible, or catastrophic when people or things do not go the way you would like them to go.
7. **Blaming:** You consider people who harm you or commit misdeeds against you as generally bad or wicked individuals, and you should severely blame, damn, and punish them for their actions.
8. **Borrowing Future Trouble:** If something seems dangerous or fearsome, you must become terribly occupied and upset about it.
9. **Perfect Solution:** People should behave better and things should turn out better than they do, and you have to view it as awful and horrible if you do not quickly find good solutions to life's hassles.
10. **Misery:** Emotional misery comes from other people or things, and you have little ability to control your feelings or rid yourself of depression and hostility.
11. **Irresponsibility:** You find it easier to avoid facing many of life's difficulties and self-responsibilities than to undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline.
12. **Ancient History:** Your past remains all-important and because something once strongly influenced your life, it has to keep determining your feelings and behaviours today.
13. **Inertia:** You can achieve happiness by inaction or by passively "enjoying yourself."
14. **Dependency:** You must have some person or persons you can depend on at all times to survive.
15. **Shame:** Because you did one embarrassing or devastating thing, you are bad and always will be bad.

OVERCOMING PERFECTIONISM

If you are a perfectionist, you are setting yourself up for failure and disappointment. If your goal is perfection, you are guaranteed to be a loser at whatever you do, no matter how hard you try.

It is hard to let go of perfectionism because it can be habit forming. Giving up on perfectionism *doesn't mean* you have to:

- stop working hard
- quit doing your best
- refuse to see or act upon your mistakes
- compromise your high standards
- give up overly ambitious goals

These techniques can help you overcome perfectionism:

- Realize that it's not to your advantage to be a perfectionist. Weigh the “pros” and “cons” of perfectionism.
- Break the connection between perfection and satisfaction. You don't have to perform perfectly to receive a great deal of satisfaction, and, performing exceptionally well won't necessarily make you happy.
- Study your environment to see if a model of perfection ever really fits reality. You will usually find some way that everything could be improved.
- Attempt to discover the fear that drives you to “perfectionism.” Ask yourself, “If this were true, why would it be a problem for me?” Deal with your fears.
- Focus on the processes rather than the outcomes as the basis for evaluating things. For example, focus on following your food plan and following your exercise plan, rather than how much weight you lose.
- Set time limits on your activities. Quit at a set time whether you have finished or not, and go to the next activity or project. Remember there is a point of diminishing returns. You will improve your satisfaction and productivity.
- Learn to feel comfortable making minor mistakes and learn from them. Don't be afraid to take risks that don't put you or others in danger. You will grow from the experience.
- Count the things you do right rather than highlight things you haven't done. Focus more on the positives in your life and you will feel better about yourself.
- Share your feelings with others in situations where you feel nervous or inadequate.
- Don't try to cover up your mistakes. You don't have to feel shame or embarrassment if you make a mistake.
- Set realistic goals and expectations.
- Make happy memories of pleasurable situations that were not perfect.

STEP 3: ANALYZE YOUR INNER DIALOGUES

Learning to think differently takes practice and effort. It requires that you become aware of your inner dialogues – the thoughts that go through your mind in a given situation.

BEING AWARE OF INNER DIALOGUES

Recalling specific inner dialogues is not always easy because the thinking occurs so quickly and automatically. If you have difficulty recalling your inner dialogues, try this:

- Recall how you were feeling (sad, glad, mad, scared). Say “I felt _____” and insert a feeling word.
- Then say “I felt _____ because I thought that _____.” For example, “I felt disappointed because I thought about how many times I had tried to stop smoking and failed. This seemed to be proof that I was destined to be a smoker.”

ANALYZING THE ACCURACY OF THOUGHTS

These questions will help you determine if your thoughts are accurate or inaccurate. Be prepared to accept the thoughts that are accurate, even if they are unpleasant, and put them in perspective so you can deal with them.

Ask yourself:

- What is actually true about the situation?
- What facts may you be forgetting or ignoring?
- What is not true? Look for “must,” “should,” “need to,” and exaggerations?
- How might you be exaggerating your thoughts and feelings by catastrophizing and thinking that there are no other options?
- What’s the worst thing that could happen? How likely is that to happen? How awful is that worse thing?
- What is probable or likely to happen?

CHALLENGING INACCURATE THOUGHTS

When you find that you are thinking inaccurate, irrational thoughts, you need to challenge them and replace them with more accurate, rational statements. When you do, you are more likely to be in control of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and experience fewer symptoms of stress.

Ask yourself:

- What specific thoughts do you need to reduce and cope with the feelings you are having?
- How do you want to feel and act in this situation?
- What thoughts do you need in order to feel and behave the way you want?
- What can you say to yourself to keep from punishing yourself if you’re not handling the situation as well as you’d like?

AN EXAMPLE

Review the thoughts from the example in *Step 1*: “*What’s the use. I tried to follow the tips to quit smoking and yet I am still smoking. This program will never work. I’ve always been a smoker, I’ll never be able to quit. I’m terrible. I might as well give up on cardiac rehabilitation.*”

- **What is actually true about the situation?**
This HIPRC participant smoked 2 cigarettes one day instead of a pack daily.
- **What facts may he be forgetting or ignoring?**
This is the first time that he has smoked since leaving hospital. Overall, he is still progressing toward his goal of quitting smoking.
- **How might he be exaggerating his thoughts and feelings by catastrophizing and thinking that there are no other options?**
Smoking 2 cigarettes doesn’t mean life is terrible or horrible (irrational idea #3: demanding). It is not true that because he didn’t quit smoking in the past that he will never be able to quit smoking (irrational idea #9: ancient history). It is not realistic to believe that he will not have a “slip”. Quitting smoking requires a long-term commitment. It’s not a “quick fix” (irrational idea #6: perfect solution). He is not a terrible person because he smoked two cigarettes (irrational idea #12: shame). Saying “It’s no use” is catastrophizing and thinking there are no other options (irrational idea #8: irresponsibility).
- **What’s the worst thing that could happen?**
Continuing to smoke would be a bad thing. It could increase his risk for heart attacks and strokes.

- **How likely is that to happen?**

It is likely that he will have an occasional slip, but a slip doesn't mean that he will return to his old ways. The mentor will not allow him to "slip through the cracks."

- **What is probable or likely to happen?**

He will learn from the slip and get back on track quickly.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Using the same example, see how changing the inner dialogue from irrational to rational thoughts can produce different feelings and behaviours.

A ACTIVATING EVENT	B YOUR THOUGHTS	C YOUR FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS
Smoked 2 cigarettes	<i>"It's true, I did smoke 2 cigarettes. It's not what I wanted but it's not awful. It doesn't mean that I am a bad person or that I will never quit smoking. I will recommit to my quit smoking plan and call my mentor to get some tips."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel disappointed • Call mentor • Resume quit smoking plan.

STEP 4: FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF

How you evaluate your abilities, strengths, and weaknesses is called your self-estimate or self-esteem. Your self-esteem evolves and changes over time and is a learned behavior. Children develop their self-esteem through the praises and criticisms of parents, teachers, and others. Supportive, encouraging adults can foster high self-esteem in a child as the child acts out positive statements such as "You can do it" or "You are a good boy/girl."

As an adult, you continue to evaluate yourself and develop your self-esteem. One of the primary ways you evaluate yourself is through your "self-talk" or the inner dialogues you continually have with yourself. Using positive "self-talk" or affirmations can help you feel empowered, improve your self-esteem, and help you feel more confident. Having negative thoughts about your appearance and your body can contribute to a poor self-image and low self-esteem, and sabotage your efforts to make changes in your health and lifestyle. You will now practice positive self-talk.

PRACTICE POSITIVE “SELF-TALK”

You talk to yourself all the time, whether you are aware of it or not. What you say to yourself plays an important role in determining how you feel about yourself and how you act. For example, if you tell yourself “I can’t possibly fit exercise into my schedule while I’m on vacation,” then the likelihood that you will be active is minimal. But if you say, “I really enjoy walking and I will find ways to be active while on vacation,” then you are empowering yourself to stay active. Your self-confidence will be high and you will feel good about yourself.

YOUR THOUGHTS (SELF-TALK)	YOUR FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS
<i>“I can’t possibly fit exercise into my schedule while I’m on vacation.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discouraged • Remain sedentary
<i>“I really enjoy walking for sightseeing.” “I will find ways to be active while on vacation.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced self-esteem • Happy and confident • Daily walks for a week

You have learned how your thoughts (your self-talk) can determine your feelings and behaviors. You can also match feelings and behaviors that have already occurred with self-talk to perpetuate the feelings and behaviors you desire in the future.

ACTIVATING EVENT	YOUR THOUGHTS (SELF-TALK)	YOUR FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy and confident • Daily walks for a week 	<i>“I enjoy walking each day. Otherwise I wouldn’t be doing this.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy and confident • Daily walks

Here are some suggestions to help you make your self-talk more positive.

- **Be aware of your negative, self-defeating thoughts.** Reflect on your thoughts before, during, and after a difficult situation.
- **Analyze and challenge your thoughts.** Ask yourself if your thoughts are true and accurate. Are you thinking rationally or irrationally? For example, if you are tempted to overeat, ask yourself “Am I really hungry? Am I really going to feel better if I eat? Is something else bothering me?”
- **Substitute more positive, helpful self-statements.** For the example given above, say “I’m not really hungry. I can wait until dinner to eat. If I wait five minutes, the hunger will pass. Eating will not make me feel happy. I will take a short walk before dinner.”
- **Don’t create negative self-fulfilling prophecies.** Remember, you are likely to do what you think. You will take your own advice.

PRACTICE DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are positive, motivating statements that you say to yourself regularly. For best results, say affirmations out loud to yourself at least five times while looking in the mirror. Repeat affirmations with real commitment. A good time to practice affirmations is while standing in front of the mirror after you brush your teeth in the morning or before going to bed.

Write your affirmation on an index card and carry them with you. Use “I am,” “I can,” or “I will” rather than “I am not” statements. After repeating the affirmation, use visualizations to create a picture in your mind of the way you want to be.

Here are some affirmations that may help you with your program. Write others that are likely to work for you.

Nutrition and Weight Management Affirmations

- I will learn to prepare healthier foods.

Physical Activity and Exercise Affirmations

- I can be more active than I am now.
- I am enjoying being more active.
- I am healthier because I am active.
- I am feeling better because I am active.
- I am feeling more energetic.
- I am confident that I can stay active

Stress Management Affirmations

- I can cope with _____.
- I can relax.
- I can control what I think, how I feel.
- I can control my actions.
- I can make positive changes to my lifestyle.
- I can learn from a slip.
- I can get back on track quickly.
- I will try again.
- I can do it.

Your affirmations will change as you progress through the program. For example, if you are just getting started with exercise, “I will be healthier if I am active” may be an appropriate affirmation for you. After you have been exercising regularly for more than six months, “I am very confident that I can stay active” would better match where you are in the process of change.

Practice affirmation for at least one month and evaluate the results.

- Are affirmations helping you achieve your goals?
- Are affirmations helping you feel better about yourself?
- Are affirmations helping you follow your Heart Institute Prevention and Rehabilitation Centre (HIPRC) plans?

MANAGING TIME

When asked why they don't take better care of themselves, most people say they don't have enough time. Lack of time is often blamed for not exercising, eating poorly, and feeling stressed.

Is time a stressor for you? Do you feel that your time is out of your control or controlled by outside demands? If so, you may feel greatly stressed and pressured by time demands.

Time management can help you increase your efficiency and reduce unnecessary self-imposed demands. The objectives of time management are to reduce wasted time, increase time spent on enjoyable and healthful activity, achieve a balance between work, play, and self-care, and ultimately improve your sense of well-being. In this kit you will:

- Step 1:** Assess your values and your time
- Step 2:** Consider how you use your time
- Step 3:** Understand the concept of balance
- Step 4:** Learn ways to use time more efficiently

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR VALUES AND YOUR TIME

CHECK YOURSELF

Your values (what’s important to you) give direction to your life. How you spend your time says a lot about your values.

Below are some important values listed in no particular order. Review the list and add any values that you feel are important. List the values in rank-order from “most” to “least” important with #1 being most important. For each value, rate the amount of time and effort you are currently spending in this area of your life as high (H), moderate (M), or low (L).

VALUES	RANKING FOR IMPORTANCE	RATING FOR TIME AND EFFORT
Marriage or other significant intimate relationship		
Health		
Children and family		
Spiritual needs		
Status/recognition from others		
Intellectual stimulation		
Material things (things money buys)		
Creativity		
Work satisfaction		
Pleasure (having fun; doing things you like)		
Power		
Financial security		
Friendships		
Physical attractiveness/appearance		

Which values did you rate high on importance (in the top five) and high on time and effort?

Which values did you rate high on importance (in the top five) and low on time and effort?

Which values did you rate lower on importance and high on time and effort?

Should you consider using your time differently?

STEP 2: CONSIDER HOW YOU USE YOUR TIME

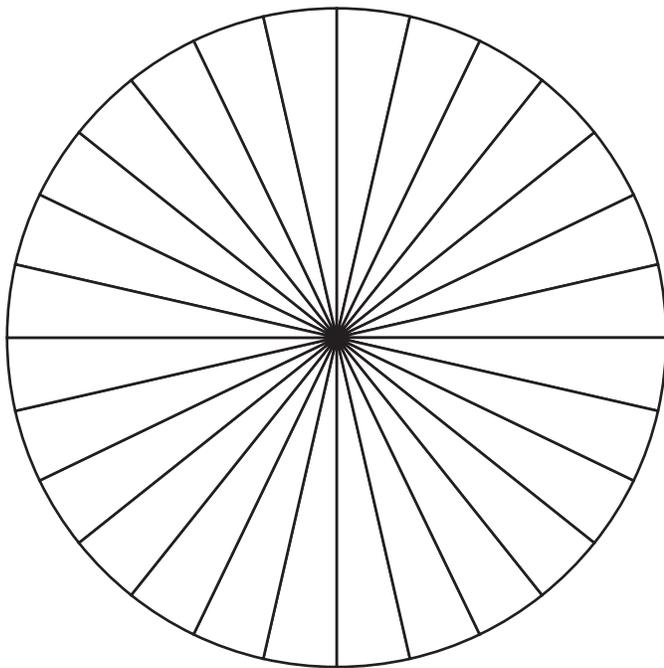
Everyone has the same amount of time – 168 hours per week. How you spend your time represents your values, priorities and the choices you make. Other people who seem to have more time than you, have made different choices about using their time.

What are your major time commitments? You may not be aware of how you really use your time. Think of a typical week for you. Write in the number of hours you spend in each of the activities listed below. You may want to keep a log for a week and record what you do in one-hour blocks of time to have a more accurate record. The total for the three areas should equal 168 hours for one week.

PRODUCTIVITY/WORK HOURS PER WEEK		RELATIONSHIPS HOURS PER WEEK		SELF-CARE HOURS PER WEEK	
	Working on-the-job		Interacting with spouse or significant other		Eating meals
	Commuting to and from work		Interacting with your children		Sleeping; napping
	Job-related working at home		Doing other parenting activities (meetings, carpooling, shopping)		Relaxing
	Working around the house (cooking, cleaning)		Interacting with the family all together		Exercising and physical activity
	Running errands		Interacting with other family members		Grooming and personal hygiene
	Doing hobbies		Interacting/socializing with friends and neighbors		Reading (non-work related)
	Doing any other work (volunteer work)		Socializing with friends from work		Playing; having fun
			Any other non-work socializing		Meditating; worshipping; reflecting
					Doing other things for yourself
	Total hours working per week		Total hours maintaining relationships per week		Total hours performing self-care per week

Divide the circle below to identify the proportion of your time you spend in each of the three areas. Each section represents six hours. For example, if you spend 30 hours per week maintaining relationships, you would allocate five sections of the circle for “Relationships.”

Note: 1 section = 6 hours



What are your major time commitments?

STEP 3: UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF BALANCE

Balance is a term that is frequently used when discussing stress management. Balance means a lifestyle of moderation in which you divide your limited time and energy fairly among the three important life areas: work, relationships, and self-care. People can get out of balance by placing an extreme overemphasis on one or two of the life areas while neglecting the remaining area or areas.

BALANCE AND WORK

Workaholism is compulsively devoting an excessive amount of time and energy to work or other productive endeavors. It goes beyond enjoying and being very committed to your work. Do any of these characteristics sound like you? Check any that apply.

Do you:

- Lose perspective and become overly preoccupied with work?
- Work long hours and bring work home?
- Refuse to delegate, believing that you are the only one who can do the job?
- Refuse to take vacations or remain preoccupied by work during vacations?
- Have difficulty enjoying free or unstructured time?
- Deny that you have any control over the workload?
- Blame someone else for why you must work so much?
- Deny the harmful impact that your work demands place on you and your family?
- Define success as money, possessions, power, position, or exceptional professional achievement?
- Base your self-esteem on external factors (position, possessions) rather than unconditional self-acceptance from within?
- Indicate a high value on family and health but spend almost no time supporting these priorities?
- Place stress on co-workers or family members due to your level of stress?

Only you can decide if your work hours and demands are excessive. If you suspect an imbalance, asking for the opinions of close friends, family members, or even co-workers can sometimes be helpful.

BALANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Basic social needs are met through relationships with others and are critical to your well-being. Research on social support suggests that people with strong social networks practise healthier lifestyles, enjoy better health, and live longer than people who are isolated. Reaching outside yourself can give your life great meaning and joy. It takes time and energy to nurture and maintain relationships, but the rewards are worth the effort. Your self-esteem and sense of purpose in life increase when you share a common goal or bond with others.

But just like work and productivity, too much of a good thing can lead to imbalance. Some people spend so much time and energy doing for others that they neglect themselves and their work. Do any of these characteristics sound like you? Check any that apply.

Do you:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Spend most of your time either working or nurturing others? ▫ Feel you must anticipate and meet all the needs of your spouse or significant other? ▫ Feel you must anticipate and meet all the needs of your children? ▫ Feel selfish or guilty if you take time for your- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> self? ▫ Encourage others to be overly dependent upon you? ▫ Feel resentful when the more you do the more others expect from you? ▫ Feel taken for granted? ▫ Feel unappreciated? |
|---|--|

Reaching outside all the time will leave you exhausted. Living only for yourself will leave you lonely and empty. Finding the balance is the key to a rich and contented life.

BALANCE AND SELF-CARE

Good self-care is the foundation upon which the other two priority areas are built. If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to nurture your relationships or engage in productive work. All of these areas are interrelated. Poor self-care will affect you not only in that area, but also in some or all of the other areas as well. Do any of these characteristics sound like you? Check any that apply.

Do you:

- Neglect grooming and personal hygiene?
- Abuse your health with alcohol or tobacco?
- Feel you are not worthy of self-care?
- Feel selfish if you take time for yourself?
- Deny your lack of self-care?
- Deny the negative impact of self-neglect on your health?
- Deny the negative impact of self-neglect on your relationships and productivity?
- Hold others responsible for your self-care needs?

When you allow time for your own needs to balance out the time you spend doing for others and doing your job, you'll probably be surprised at how much more you accomplish all around.

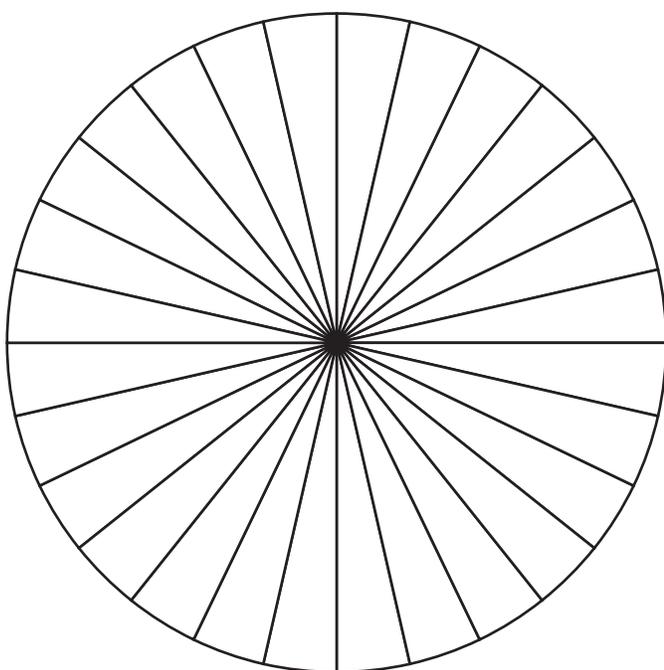
RE-CONSIDER HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPEND YOUR TIME

Refer to the activity in Step 2 of this kit. Divide the circle below to show how you would like to spend your time to take better care of yourself and achieve balance in your life.

At different times in your life you may have to be out of balance temporarily due to unusual circumstances. For example, if a family member is seriously ill, you may need to devote an unusual amount of time to that person. An accountant may have to work unusually long hours during tax season.

At some point, however, balance must be reestablished. If allowed to continue indefinitely, imbalance may result in significant stress symptoms. Finding your balance is a day-to-day matter. Being able to change as your circumstances change is key to balance and a healthy, satisfying life.

Note: 1 section = 6 hours



Does your life currently look out of balance?

What aspect of your life is currently over-emphasized?

What aspect of your life is currently under-emphasized?

What are some steps you could take to bring your life into more balance right now?

STEP 4: LEARN WAYS TO USE TIME MORE EFFICIENTLY

No matter how many demands or responsibilities you may have, there are ways to use your time more efficiently in all areas of your life. Good time management will benefit your physical and emotional health. You'll have the time you need to plan your meals, shop for and cook healthy food, be physically active, and practice stress management techniques. And, you won't have to compromise your work or relationships to be healthy. Time management begins with you taking personal responsibility for how you spend your time.

SET PRIORITIES

Take five to ten minutes at the beginning of each day to set priorities and make a list of what you want to accomplish that day.

Try this approach. Draw a square and divide it into four boxes. Write the various tasks that you need to do into the boxes as shown below.

<p>Important and Urgent *Do these tasks first</p>	<p>Important, But Not Urgent *Set priorities</p>
<p>Unimportant and Urgent *Delegate if you can</p>	<p>Unimportant and Not Urgent *Don't spend any time on these tasks</p>

Ask yourself:

- Are there tasks that are crucial for the day?
- Are there tasks that could wait?
- Are all of the tasks necessary?
- Could you break tasks down into smaller tasks that are easily and quickly accomplished?
- Could you start the next day's list at the end of the day while projects are still fresh on your mind?
- Could you use a day planner/calendar to help schedule your time?

Mark tasks off as they are completed and feel good about your progress.

IDENTIFY TIME WASTERS AND INTERRUPTIONS

Give up some of your perfectionistic ways. Perfectionists waste a lot of time by compulsively overdoing many tasks that could require much less time for an acceptable outcome.

- In what areas of your life could you be “average”?
- Are you confusing high standards with unrealistic, perfectionistic standards or goals?

Examine your weekly log for blocks of wasted time.

- Are so many meetings necessary and should they last so long?
- Are you doing things that others should be doing?
- Could you listen to professional development CDs while driving?
- Do you stay calm (practise relaxation) when interruptions or delays occur?

Get organized. One hour spent organizing or developing a system can save many hours of wasted time down the road.

- Could you organize your closet and drawers better?
- Would it help to hang a key holder next to the door?
- Could you develop a system for paying your bills?

Arrange your work time efficiently.

- Do you plan difficult tasks at times when your energy is at its peak?
- Do you know how much time a task is likely to take and match the task to the time available?
- Do you avoid spending significant time on minor decisions?
- Do you handle a piece of paper only once – act on it, pass it to someone else, or throw it away?
- Do you minimize interruptions?

DELEGATE AND DELETE

Just say no! Probably the single most important time management skill, saying “no,” may also be the hardest for most people.

- Can you learn to consistently protect your time by setting firm limits with other people who ask for it?
- Can you suggest someone else to do the task?
- Can you agree to do something but not all that was requested?
- Can you say “no” without feeling guilty?

Negotiate and delegate. You’ll never know what someone else might be willing to do unless you ask.

- Do you currently do tasks that someone else could handle?
- Are your standards set so high that no one else could possibly meet them to your satisfaction?
- Are you comfortable asking for help?

Buy time with your money. Spend some of your money to pay someone else to do those mundane but time consuming services you are currently performing.

- Could you spend less on buying things and spend more on buying time?
- Could you pay someone else to cut the grass, wash the car, or help with housecleaning?
- Is quality of life determined more by what you acquire or by what you do with your time?

What are your best time management tips?

What are three things you will do to use your time more efficiently in the next week?
1.
2.
3.

Time management will help you free up time. Don't use time management to find a new obligation to squeeze into your day (unless it's related to healthy living!), but to ease the burden of over-commitment.

FINDING TIME FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE

- Be aware of the times you are very inactive. Think about how much time you spend sitting and reclining. Plans ways to substitute lifestyle activities for sedentary activities.
- Check your luggage or stow it in a locker and walk through the terminal while waiting for a plane.
- Explore a new city by walking, jogging, or cycling to see the sights.
- Walk through parks and museums.
- Fit in short bouts of brisk walking several times during the day.
- Discuss work issues with co-workers while walking.
- Combine social activities with exercise – dancing, ice skating, hiking, cycling.
- Find opportunities for you and your spouse or significant other and friends to exercise together. Use the time to talk.
- Ride a stationary cycle while reading the newspaper or a book.
- Walk on a treadmill, stretch, or perform strength training exercises while watching the news on T.V.
- Burn extra calories by doing chores around the house as quickly as possible. You will accomplish things you need to do.

FINDING TIME FOR HEALTHIER EATING

- Make a weekly meal plan and shop from a list
- Take your breakfast with you if you are in a hurry. Leave the clean-up until later.
- Cook foods to freeze for future use. Make a double recipe and freeze what is left in individual portion sizes for quick meals another time.
- Prepare your own ingredients ahead of time and save the cost of buying pre-prepared items. Try prewashed, precut vegetables at busy times.
- Make a smoothie for breakfast or lunch. Blend frozen fruit with yogurt and top with wheat germ, flax or oatmeal.
- Learn to use your microwave effectively to prepare quick and healthy meals
- Eat high fiber cereals with fresh or frozen fruits for lunch or dinner.
- Have on hand the supplies you need to prepare and store foods safely – aluminum foil, plastic bags, freezer wrap, etc
- If you are eating at a restaurant, take half home for later. If you are eating at a chain restaurant, check the nutrition information online before you go.

GETTING THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

Having a strong social support system buffers the impact of everyday stresses and provides others to whom you can turn in times of need. The overall function of social support is to enhance the well-being of the person receiving the support. People who are supported are more mentally and physically healthy than people who are isolated and without supportive relationships. For example, studies have shown that happily married people generally have fewer illnesses and lower mortality rates than single (divorced, widowed, never-married) people do. And, unhappily married people have been found to have even poorer health than singles. Even studies with animals have shown that animals that were exposed to stress in the presence of their mothers or litter mates developed fewer health problems than those who were exposed to stress in isolation.

Achieving goals in any type of endeavor is always enhanced by support from others. Behind every successful person is generally at least one supporter. A parent, spouse, teacher, boss, coach, or friend can be a powerful asset in goal attainment. The information in this kit will help you assess your social support system in general and specifically related to your health and lifestyle goals. In this kit you will:

Step 1: Identify types of social support

Step 2: Develop new support systems

Step 3: Understand co-dependency

STEP 1: IDENTIFY TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

There are numerous types of social support. The following types of support can be provided by almost anyone:

- **Affection and emotional support:** *“I love you.” “I care about you.” “You are important to me.” “I’m on your side.”* Emotional support may be offered even if the person giving the support is not in total agreement with the person receiving the support. This type of support comes from people who can share the joys of success as well as the pain and frustrations of challenges.
- **Appraisal support:** *“You did a good job.” “You played a good game.” “You tried hard.”* This type of support is usually related to performance of a specific task. Supporters can also challenge and question the person in an emotionally supportive way. *“Did you do your best to achieve your goals?” “What could you do differently to overcome an obstacle?”*
- **Information support:** *“I would advise you to ____.” “Facts show that ____.” “There are risks associated with ____.”* It is important to have people to go to as good sources of reliable and valid information.
- **Empathy:** *“I know how you feel.” “I feel the same as you.”* People who share similar experiences, priorities, values, and views can provide a way to check perceptions and perspectives in a social context. *“You’re right about that.”*
- **Sustaining support:** *“Don’t give up now.” “You can do it.”* Having a supporter who is there to encourage and motivate over the long-term is important.
- **Listening:** *“I hear what you are saying.”* Listening support means hearing what is said without giving advice or making judgments.

THE ROLE OF YOUR MENTOR

There are other important types of social support that can be provided effectively only by individuals with expertise in the area of concern. Your mentor has specialized training and education, experience, and expertise in broad areas of health and lifestyle management. He or she serves as your coach, guide, and role model to help you achieve your health and fitness goals. In addition to some of the types of social support discussed above, your mentor is prepared to provide the following unique types of social support:

- **Technical appreciation:** *“I know it isn’t easy to lose weight.” “Giving up cigarettes will be difficult for you.” “I know that change is not easy.” “Here’s what you can expect.”* Having technical knowledge about a task or topic makes this type of support special and different from the support of a person who is less knowledgeable. The technical information provided is trusted.
- **Technical challenge:** *“What will you do this week to eat less fat?” “What kept you from exercising last week?”* This type of support keeps you from becoming stale or complacent and challenges your way of thinking. It stretches, encourages, and leads you to greater creativity, excitement, and involvement. Holding you accountable for your actions is a reason for technical challenge. This type of support is provided by individuals who know as much or more about the task or topic as the person receiving support.

Working one-on-one with a mentor is one of the features that makes the program unique. Here are a few comments from participants about their relationships with their mentors.

“My mentor has been a great source of information as well as encouragement and advice.” – Dale

“I credit my success to my mentor who is a fabulous motivator and whose concern is evident.” – Linda

“Thank you to all the people at HIPRC, especially my mentor, who has become a true friend.” – Miriam

“My mentor is great and always has something good to say.” – Archie

“The motivation from the mentor was inspirational and encouraging. He always said: ‘Ask me whatever you need to know. If you need us, we are here. If you are having a bad day, call me. There is always someone you can talk to.’” – Deidre

“It was easy. I just did what they told me to do. The support from the mentor was great!” – John

SOCIAL SUPPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Use the survey below to evaluate the breadth of your social support for making lifestyle changes. For each type of social support, use the scale to answer the questions. Circle one answer. You will use your responses to this needs assessment to plan ways to get the support you need.

0 = None 1 = Very Rarely 2 = Rarely 3 = Occasionally 4 = Very Often 5 = Constantly

Affection and emotional support

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Appraisal support

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Information support

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Empathy

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Sustaining support

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Listening

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Technical appreciation (from mentor or other health professional)

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

Technical challenge (from mentor or other health professional)

How much of this type of support do you need?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How much of this type of support do you currently receive?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Are you satisfied with the quality of this support?	Yes			No		

STEP 2: DEVELOP NEW SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Think about the goals you have achieved in the past – playing a sport, getting through school, getting a job, or adjusting to a loss or major life change. Who supported you? What type of support did he/she provide?

ACCOMPLISHMENT	SUPPORT PERSON(S)	TYPE(S) OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

HOW BROAD IS YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM?

Everyone needs support from others. Having a strong social support system buffers the impact of everyday stresses and provides others to whom you can turn in times of need.

Ask yourself the following questions:

	Do you have neighbors you know by name and with whom you sometimes socialize?
	Do you ask your neighbors for assistance if you need it?
	Do you have a good support system at work?
	Do you have several very close friends to whom you confide your concerns, worries, and emotions?
	Are you married or involved in another emotionally intimate primary relationship? If yes, is this relationship healthy, supportive, and characterized by a sense of “teamness,” rather than by frequent conflict?
	Do you maintain regular contact with your extended family?
	Do you have several people you could turn to for help in a time of crisis?
	Are you rarely, if ever, lonely?

If you answered “No” to three or more of these questions, you may need to consider taking steps to broaden your social support system.

It is important for you to decide the type of support you need and want at this time and who you want to support you. Use the information from the Social Support Needs Assessment in Step 1 to identify the areas where you need to develop new support systems to help you achieve your health and fitness goals. Focus on types of support where a gap exists between what you need and what you currently receive or where the quality of support is unsatisfactory. While there are advantages to having more than one source of support (in case someone is unavailable to you), most people find that the quality of the support is often more important than the quantity of support. Once you have identified the type or types of support you need and want, consider who can provide it. Not everyone is capable of providing support. Even close friends, relatives, and associates may, in fact, be unsupportive. Remember that your mentor and other health care professionals are available to provide specialized technical support.

MY SUPPORT SYSTEM

TYPE OF SUPPORT NEEDED AND WANTED	WHO	HOW I WILL ASK FOR SUPPORT
<p>Affection and emotional support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise my successes • Understand frustrations and challenges • Sympathize when there are setbacks • Other (you define) 		
<p>Appraisal support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about progress toward specific goals • Comment on changes that have occurred • Challenge me to do my best • Other (you define) 		
<p>Information support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer my questions • Provide reliable and valid information • Suggest resources • Other (you define) 		
<p>Empathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm my values • Participate in activities at my level • Be a role model • Other (you define) 		
<p>Sustaining support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask, “How can I help?” • Create a supportive environment • Encourage me to keep trying • Other (you define) 		
<p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear without giving advice • Hear without making judgments • Ignore setbacks • Other (you define) 		

TYPE OF SUPPORT NEEDED AND WANTED	WHO	HOW I WILL ASK FOR SUPPORT
<p>Technical appreciation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand your problem • Have technical knowledge about the task/topic • Other (you define) 		
<p>Technical challenge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic goals • Monitor progress • Analyze and solve problems • Other (you define) 		

If you were unable to list more than one name for any of the areas above, you may wish to consider strategies for increasing the depth of your social support system in that area.

In the example below, this HIPRC participant has determined that she needs more appraisal support and empathy.

EXAMPLE:

TYPE OF SUPPORT NEEDED AND WANTED	WHO	HOW I WILL ASK FOR SUPPORT
<p>Appraisal support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about progress toward specific goals • Comment on changes that have occurred • Challenge me to do my best • Other (you define) 	<p>Hal (husband) Karen (sister)</p>	<p>I will explain that their support is very important to me and ask them to inquire about progress after each HIPRC visit. If they notice that I am not following my meal plans, they should ask me why I am not following my plans.</p>
<p>Empathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm my values • Participate in activities at my level • Be a role model • Other (you define) 	<p>I will ask my mentor to find an HIPRC “buddy” for me.</p>	<p>We will agree on ways to help each other stay on track. We will exercise together at least once a week.</p>

ASKING FOR SUPPORT

Once you know the type of support you want and who might provide it, it is your responsibility to specifically and directly ask for it. Don't expect others to read your mind or know what you need. Support is defined by the person needing the support rather than by the person providing it. Identifying and communicating the types of support needed avoids "hurtful" behaviors from others that may have been intended to be "helpful."

Could you identify someone other than your mentor to serve as a healthy role model to help you achieve your lifestyle goals? Your role model should be the same sex and about the same age as you. You should have similar backgrounds, interests, and values. As you achieve your health and fitness goals and maintain your healthy lifestyle, you can serve as a role model and supporter to others.

Asking for support becomes less difficult if you remember the times that you have been supportive to others. How did you feel in your supportive role?

TYPE OF SUPPORT PROVIDED	PERSON(S) SUPPORTED	FEELINGS ABOUT MY SUPPORTIVE ROLE

TIPS FOR BROADENING YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

These tips will help you broaden your social support system in general.

- Call, write letters, and send e-mails to long-distance friends you have known for a long time.
- Keep in close touch with extended family members who live far away.
- Join a church or synagogue and get involved.
- Be a good neighbor. Plan social activities. Offer to help out.
- Don't sit back and wait for others to call. Call them first.
- Be a good listener. Ask "Do you want some advice, or just a good listener?"
- Confide in others and let them get to know the real you.
- Be an interesting person to know. Talk about something other than your work or children.
- Develop a genuine interest in others. Ask questions of others.
- Get a pet. Pets provide companionship and a feeling of safety.
- Become a volunteer. You'll be less preoccupied with your own problems.
- Join organizations, clubs, and groups with similar interests to your own.
- Develop reciprocal relationships. Be a "taker" and a "giver."

What will you do to build your social support system?

List at least one specific action you will take.
1.
2.
3.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

You can find numerous resources to support your healthy lifestyle in your community. Check your local newspaper for community calendars and meeting notices for a variety of health-related resources. Your local United Way office may also have a directory of community resources or will be able to refer you to a local resource.

- **Work-site health promotion programs:** Many employers provide health resources as a benefit to their employees. These resources might include health fairs, screenings, and educational programs, as well as memberships to fitness centers. Some employers have established Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to assist employees in finding and using specialized community resources for special problems (abuse, violence, substance abuse, anger management, depression, eating disorders, addiction problems, etc.).
- **Voluntary health organizations:** Every community or county is served by voluntary health organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Canadian Cancer Society, and the Canadian Diabetes Association. Policies, programs, and services vary from organization to organization. Some organizations provide resources free of charge while others require a nominal fee. You can trust that the recommendations and information provided by the major recognized voluntary health organizations are credible.
- **Health care providers:** While the primary focus of most health care providers (doctors, hospitals, clinics, etc.) is on clinical services, many provide some community health education services, especially non-profit systems and systems affiliated with university medical schools. Support programs for families coping with the consequences of various diseases and conditions are often available through your health care providers.
- **Insurance Plans:** Some plans pay for preventive exams and screenings. Find out what is covered by your health plan. Some provide a self-care manual to help individuals and families make decisions about how and when to access services from the health care system.
- **Community and government agencies:** There are community, county, provincial, and federal agencies that provide health resources. Check your telephone directory for contacts in your area. A few of the more prominent agencies include: Health Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and Public Health Units. Most agencies also have websites on the Internet.
- **Retail businesses:** Many retail businesses offer health resources, products, and services. Whether you are buying health-related resources such as dietary supplements, exercise shoes, cooking equipment, or health club memberships, beware. Many products and services make claims that cannot be supported by scientific research.

Are there community resources you should investigate as sources of support?

List them here.
1.
2.
3.

STEP 3: UNDERSTAND CO-DEPENDENCY

A co-dependent is someone whose mission is to cure or “fix” someone he or she loves. In reality, the helper sometimes becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Rather than providing genuinely helpful support to the person, the co-dependent goes beyond simply caring to become involved in such counter-productive acts as monitoring, surveillance, and nagging. In an effort to solve the other person’s problems, the co-dependent becomes controlling of the other’s behavior. When these misguided efforts to help fail, co-dependents may become critical, blaming, and punishing of the person who needs help.

Co-dependent relationships frequently develop around health-related behaviors. Whether the behavior is smoking, overeating, alcohol use, or physical inactivity, co-dependent relationships are stressful for both parties. As one person is attempting to make significant changes, the other may initially feel threatened and uncertain. Adapting to the “new person” can be difficult. In extreme cases, there may even be instances of sabotaging progress so old familiar patterns can re-emerge. If this can be recognized for what it is – a fear of change – then positive communication can take place.

If you suspect that you might be involved in a co-dependent or unhealthy relationship, you should seek professional help from a qualified professional.

TIPS FOR THE HELPER

- Let go of the need to control others’ behaviors.
- Try to care about the person’s problem without taking on the job of “fixing” him or her.
- Offer support in general. Say “How can I help?”
- Put the responsibility for solving the problem back where it belongs.
- Communicate that any changes must be made for and by the individual alone.

TIPS FOR THE PERSON NEEDING HELP

- Accept your responsibility for your health and well-being.
- Don’t blame others for your lack of progress.
- Don’t make excuses for your behaviors. It keeps you focused on obstacles rather than solutions.
- Point out to any well-meaning but misguided people that although you may appreciate their (inappropriate) efforts to help you, their particular approach is not what you really need. Then help clarify what type of help and support you really want, if any.
- Communicate assertively to express your needs.
- Set limits and defend your boundaries against intrusions by others.



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