



EXERCISE FOR STRESS RELIEF WORKSHOP

FACILITATOR GUIDE

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This facilitator guide is a companion document to the Exercise for Stress Relief Workshop and corresponding materials. It is intended to guide facilitators in the presentation preparation and facilitation. This guide includes preparation tasks, suggested materials, high-level outcomes, the agenda and presentation outline. The outline includes suggested talking points. These are only suggestions and subject to change based on the facilitator's needs, available presentation time, audience, etc.

Session length: 1 hour

Course description

This one-hour course is designed to help participants understand how exercise can reduce feelings of stress and create a personalized exercise for stress relief action plan.

Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, participants will be competent in these areas and will have knowledge to do the following:

1. Identify stressors.
2. Identify barriers and solutions to implementing exercise to manage stress.
3. Create a weekly exercise plan to help alleviate stress.

Facilitator dos and don'ts

Do:

- Stay within your professional scope of practice.
- Refer participants to qualified fitness, medical or mental health professionals when appropriate.
- Provide respectful, equal and fair treatment to all participants.

Don't:

- Diagnose, treat or prescribe treatment for physical or mental health conditions.
- Make dietary or supplement recommendations.
- Use words like "treat," "heal" or "cure."

Planning and materials

Below is a list of materials and event tasks that may be appropriate for events. Not all materials and tasks are suitable for every event. Specifics about the materials and tasks will be communicated by the field engagement specialist. Please reach out to your field engagement specialist if you have questions.

Pre-event tasks		✓
✓ Review materials.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator Guide • Workshop worksheets • Workshop Sign-in Sheet 		
✓ If there will be an event table, confirm these items have been received:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tablecloth • Holder for flyers 		
✓ Confirm location contact's name and contact information.		
Event tasks		✓
✓ Introduce yourself to the location contact.		
✓ Set up event table (if needed).		
Workshop agenda		✓
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting by Participating Location (PL) staff and Tivity Health® representative • Remind participants to sign in. Share the sheet with PL staff for eligibility check. 	<i>5 min.</i>
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction by Tivity Health representative • Exercise for Stress Relief • PL staff check member eligibility during presentation • PL staff prepare Facility Enrollment Packets • PL staff return Sign-in Sheets to Tivity Health representative 	<i>50 min.</i>

Wrap-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thank members for their time and participation.• Remind members to take home information and follow up on next steps.• Direct members to PL staff, who should be available for enrollment.• Suggested options – not required:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ PL staff can provide tours of location.▪ Direct members to an area where they can socialize.	<i>5 min.</i>
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Presentation outline

This workshop uses worksheets, not a PowerPoint slide deck, to guide the discussion. The tone should be conversational and inclusive.

Throughout the presentation, engage participants by asking questions, telling stories or having participants share ideas. Take a “mental snapshot” of participants’ feedback to help you learn about your audience. Use this information throughout the presentation to help guide your conversation and provide answers.

Please note that all talking points are suggestions, and they’re not meant to be said exactly as written. Highlight or add items that are important to the audience or health plan and deliver the presentation in your own voice/words. If needed, remove talking points that do not meet the allotted presentation time.

Time	Talking points	Notes
<p><i>5 min.</i></p> <p><i>Welcome and Introductions</i></p>	<p>Welcome and introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourself and welcome participants. • Introduce the topic. 	
<p><i>2 min.</i></p> <p><i>Facilitate discussion.</i></p>	<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage participants by asking questions. For example, ask participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How many believe physical activity has benefits? ▪ Is stress management a benefit of physical activity? ▪ Do stress level and lack to time affect participation in physical activity? ▪ How much time does one have to participate in physical activity to decrease stress levels? • Acknowledge responses. • Good news: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many types of physical activity can decrease stress. ▪ A little bit of physical activity can go a long way. ▪ Physical activity should not be overwhelming and add stress. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It should be enjoyable and feel good. 	
<p><i>3 min.</i></p> <p><i>Share information about the effects of stress over the short and long terms.</i></p>	<p>Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not all stress is bad. ▪ Good stress, stress associated with increased productivity, is known as eustress. ▪ Bad stress, stress experienced over a long period of time and that has negative health consequences, is known as distress. ▪ Some stress is inevitable and it's something people experience daily. ▪ Over a short period of time, fight, flight or freeze feelings, which are caused by the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, can benefit us.¹ ▪ This stress response can keep us alert, encourage us to act and be productive. ▪ However, over time, if the stress is constant and we don't have the opportunity to recover, high stress can cause negative effects such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ anxiety ○ depression ○ digestive problems ○ headaches ○ heart disease ○ memory and concentration impairment¹ ○ weight gain ▪ Ask participants how they feel during times of stress. 	
<p><i>2 min.</i></p> <p><i>Discussion and white board</i></p>	<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let participants know there are many causes of stress. 	

<p><i>activity (if time allows)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common causes of high amounts of stress include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the death of a loved one ▪ divorce ▪ job loss ▪ increased financial obligations ▪ getting married ▪ moving to a new home ▪ chronic illness or injury ▪ emotional problems such as depression, anxiety and anger ▪ taking care of an elderly or sick loved one ▪ traumatic events such as a natural disaster, theft or violent event² <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there's time, ask participants to add their own stressors to the list. Write these on the whiteboard or other place if available. 	
<p><i>5 min.</i></p> <p><i>Lead "Identify Your Stressors" worksheet activity 1.</i></p>	<p>Worksheet activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that participants may or may not have experienced one of the major stressors recently. But, even if they haven't, they've likely experienced some stress. • Identifying their reason(s) for stress, positive and negative, allows them to develop a plan for dealing with their stressors. <p><i>Activity 1: Identifying Your Stressors</i></p> <p><i>Have participants take out their "Identifying Your Stressors" worksheet. Complete activity 1.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have participants take a few minutes to think about their stressors. • Have them write down or "check" stressors they are currently experiencing. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no correct answers or correct number of stressors. 	
<p>10 min.</p> <p><i>Lead Activity 1, "Identify Your Stressors," and Activity 2, "Exercise Ideas."</i></p>	<p>Discussion and activity</p> <p><i>Continue to lead activity 1: Identify Your Stressors.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that participants have identified some of their stressors, remind them that regular, moderate-intensity exercise can help them cope with stress by improving their self-esteem, improving their sleep and increasing endorphins. • The key is to find activities they enjoy and that they can fit into their schedule on a regular basis. • Share that exercise doesn't have to be complicated, expensive or overly time-consuming to be effective. <p><i>Encourage participation and engagement by asking one or two participants to share their favorite way to exercise. Or ask participants to name some enjoyable forms of physical activity. Ask them to elaborate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes these forms of exercise enjoyable? <p><i>This activity can be done as a large group or in smaller groups of two to five people, depending on the overall size of the group, seating arrangements and available time.</i></p> <p><i>Next, ask participants to identify two to three activities on the worksheet that they can do, and would enjoy doing, regularly (one to three times each week).</i></p> <p>Remind participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't need to commit to hours of exercise. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise should fit into their life and not add to their stress. • All they need is 10 to 30 minutes of time. If that seems like too much time, start with an amount of time they think is realistic. This will be different for everyone, and that is okay. <p>Here are a few ideas to get the group thinking or for you to add to the conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample exercises activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ biking ▪ body weight exercises ▪ dancing ▪ exercise classes ▪ hiking ▪ rolling ▪ rowing ▪ running ▪ sports ▪ strength training ▪ swimming ▪ tai chi ▪ walking ▪ walking the dog ▪ walking or biking as transportation (example: to the store) ▪ yoga <p>Participants can also add other physical activity ideas in the blank spaces. If participants can't think of any forms of physical activity they want to do, have them think back to things they've enjoyed in the past, even as a child. If that doesn't spark ideas, encourage participants to pay attention to things that catch their attention or interest them. Ideas may come from the news, conversations with friends, online or magazine articles.</p>	
<p>10 – 15 min.</p> <p>Lead activity 2, "Exercise</p>	<p><i>Continue to lead activity 2: Discussion and activity on how to identify solutions to exercise barriers.</i></p>	

<p><i>Barriers and Solutions.”</i></p>	<p>After participants have identified forms of exercise they enjoy or would like to try, have them identify their biggest barriers to doing the activities. Barriers may include (to name a few):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of time • little interest in exercise • no childcare • no spouse or significant other/partner care • inadequate transportation • distance • weather conditions • physical pain or discomfort • lack of energy • unsure of what to wear • cost <p>Have participants brainstorm a solution for each barrier and write it in the space next to each barrier. For example, if weather is the biggest barrier to walking outside, consider walking early in the day (if heat is an issue) or renting an exercise video for days when it rains.</p> <p>If time allows, have participants work with partners or in small groups to share ideas and brainstorm solutions. Or you can have willing participants share a barrier with the group and ask the group to brainstorm possible solutions.</p> <p>The group may also enjoy hearing the types of physical activities others are interested in trying as well as their solutions to any barriers that might arise.</p> <p>Encourage participants to keep their list accessible when they get home so they can refer to it when they're feeling overwhelmed or like they're hitting barriers. It can serve as a good reminder of activities they're interested in as well as solutions to barriers.</p> <p>Remind participants:</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise is an effective way to manage stress, and it's most effective when it's done regularly (even for short amounts of time). 	
<p><i>5 min.</i></p> <p><i>Lead activity 2: "Deep Breathing."</i></p>	<p>Activity</p> <p><i>Lead the deep breathing activity.</i></p> <p>Tell participants now that they've identified their stressors, you're going to lead them in a deep-breathing exercise designed to help them relax. Go through the directions on the worksheet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sit comfortably with both feet on the floor and your hands in your lap. 2. Close your eyes and notice the pattern of your breath as you inhale and exhale. Is it soft or loud, slow or quick, shallow or deep? 3. Next, pay attention to the muscles in your face, upper back and neck. Are they tight? Is your jaw tight? Are your shoulders raised? Let them relax. Soften the muscles in your face, and lengthen your neck as if an invisible string is attached to the top of your head and pulling it upwards. 4. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of 2 to 4 seconds. Then purse your lips and exhale for a count of 4 to 6 seconds. Continue this pattern. Notice the feeling of the air entering your body and filling your lungs and then the feeling of exhaling. 5. Feel your belly push out toward your hand as you inhale and pull in toward your spine as you exhale. Work on finding a pattern that works for you while making sure you exhale for a longer time than you inhale. 6. Continue for 1 to 3 minutes. 	

	<p>Tell participants they can stop, and ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel? • Do you notice a change from when we started? • Is this something you think you can do, or would do, when you start to feel your stress level rising? • Deep breathing can be done almost anywhere, including in the airport or at the bus/train station. 	
<p><i>3 min.</i></p> <p><i>Review resources lead activity 4, “At-home Stretches” (if there’s time).</i></p>	<p>Resources and activity (if time allows)</p> <p><i>Refer to the worksheet resources.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The worksheet includes directions and illustrations for 3 exercises you can do at home. No equipment is required for these exercises. • These can serve as a good resource on days when you can’t make it to a class or have just a short amount of time. <p><i>If there’s time, take participants through each of the at-home stretches.</i></p>	
<p><i>5 – 10 min.</i></p>	<p>Closing</p> <p><i>Review what you covered.</i></p> <p><i>Leave time for Q and A.</i></p> <p><i>Wrap up the session by reminding participants that exercise is an effective way to help reduce stress.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be enjoyable and fit into your lives. • You brainstormed ideas for exercise as well as solutions to barriers. • And you practiced a simple deep-breathing exercise you can do anywhere. <p>Thank participants for their time.</p>	

References

1. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). (2019, March 25). *Stress Management*. Retrieved from Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037>
2. WebMD. (2019, March 19). *Causes of Stress*. Retrieved from WebMD: <https://webmd.com/balance/guide/causes-of-stress#1>
3. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2019, March 12). *Manage Stress Workbook*.

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