

Wellness Engagement (WE) Petersburg 2.0

House Chat Leader Workbook



Wellness Ambassador:

Ward:

HOUSE CHAT WEEK 8

Stress Management

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Gain an understanding of how stress impacts heart health.
2. Learn to recognize common signs of stress.
3. Develop practical techniques for managing stress.
4. Recognize the importance of social support in managing stress and develop strategies for effectively leveraging support networks.

I. Opening (15 minutes)

Week 8 “Look Back Activity”

Welcome to Week 8 of our program. As we gather today, I want to take a moment to acknowledge how far we've come together on this journey towards better stress management and overall well-being. It's hard to believe we're already at Week 8, with just four more weeks left until the conclusion of our program.

This milestone serves as a reminder of the progress we've made and the valuable insights we've gained along the way. As we enter this session, I encourage each of you to reflect on your personal growth and the strategies you've been implementing. While stress is our new focus, let's also take a moment to reflect on the previous topics we've covered. Think about how our discussions on family meals, sugar intake, reducing sedentary behaviors, making small lifestyle changes, and increasing physical activity have impacted you.

I'd love to hear from each of you about your experiences with the different topics we've covered. Take a moment to think back on our conversations about family meals, sugar intake, reducing sedentary behaviors, making small lifestyle changes, and increasing physical activity.

- What stands out to you as your favorite week or session?
- Was there a particular topic or discussion that resonated with you the most?
- Which of these topics left a lasting impression on you, and why?
- Are there any weeks or specific topics where you feel you could benefit from going back and revisiting? Or perhaps there's a particular area where you're finding it challenging to implement the strategies we've discussed?

II. Week 8 House chat Topic & Video (5-10 mins)

Title: Stress Management

- Review Learning Objectives
- Play Session Content Video

Key Points

- Stress can significantly impact heart health, and can increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke.
- Stress affects individuals in various ways, stemming from both positive and negative events. Learning effective stress management is crucial for overall health and well-being.
- Signs of stress vary but may include physical symptoms like headaches or muscle tension, emotional signs like irritability or mood swings, and behavioral changes like changes in appetite or sleep patterns.
- Understanding personal stress triggers is essential for effective stress management.
- Techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness can effectively manage stress.
- Mindfulness meditation or journaling can lower blood pressure and decrease the risk of heart disease.
- Adequate sleep is crucial for both stress management and overall health.
- Engaging in regular exercise, maintaining social connections, and practicing relaxation techniques like meditation can all help reduce stress levels and enhance overall health.
- Eating well, with a balanced diet and limiting sugar, can help manage stress.
- Social support networks play a significant role in stress management, providing emotional encouragement and practical assistance.
- Effective communication with friends, family, or support groups can help alleviate feelings of isolation and provide a sense of belonging.
- Setting boundaries and prioritizing self-care activities can help manage stress levels more effectively.
- Learning to say "no" to additional commitments when feeling overwhelmed is essential for stress management.
- Seeking professional help from counselors or therapists can provide additional support and guidance in managing stress.
- Regularly checking in with oneself and adjusting stress management strategies as needed is crucial for long-term well-being.

III: Individual Activity: “Self-Assessment Questionnaire: Identifying Sources of Stress” (15 mins)

Instructions: Rate your stress levels in various areas of your life on a scale of 1 to 5, identify physical and emotional stress symptoms, and pinpoint one or two significant stressors along with an actionable step to address each.

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the level of stress you experience from each of the following areas of your life, with 1 being minimal stress and 5 being extreme stress:

- *Work or school responsibilities*
- *Relationships with family members*
- *Relationships with friends or peers*
- *Financial concerns or challenges*
- *Physical health and well-being*
- *Time management and feeling overwhelmed with tasks*

- *Specific situations or events that consistently trigger stress reactions*

2. List any additional sources of stress not covered above that you frequently encounter in your life.

3. Reflect on how your body responds to stress. Check any of the following physical or emotional symptoms that you commonly experience when feeling stressed:

- *Headaches or migraines*
- *Muscle tension or pain*
- *Fatigue or exhaustion*
- *Irritability or mood swings*
- *Anxiety or nervousness*
- *Difficulty concentrating or making decisions*
- *Changes in appetite or eating habits*
- *Difficulty sleeping or insomnia*
- *Racing thoughts or racing heart*
- *Feeling overwhelmed or out of control*

4. Based on your responses, identify one or two sources of stress that have the most significant impact on your overall well-being.

5. Consider one actionable step you can take to address or mitigate each identified source of stress.

Remember to answer each question honestly and thoughtfully, as this self-assessment will help you gain insight into your stress triggers and develop strategies for effective stress management.

IV: Group Activity: “Stress Management Exercise:” (10 mins)

Instructions: Please choose between engaging in a soothing body meditation or a calming journaling and coloring activity. Select whichever option resonates with you, allowing yourself to immerse fully in the chosen experience.

A. Soothing Body Meditation

1. Find a Quiet Spot: Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.

2. Close Your Eyes or Gaze Softly: Close your eyes if you're comfortable, or softly focus on a spot in front of you.

3. Take Deep Breaths: Breathe in slowly through your nose, and then exhale gently through your mouth. Repeat this a few times to relax.

4. Focus on Your Breathing: Pay attention to your breath as it goes in and out of your body. Notice how your chest or belly moves with each breath.

5. **Stay Present:** Whenever your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath. Try not to worry about anything else; just be here in this moment.
6. **Relax Your Body:** Let go of any tension you feel in your body. Imagine each part of your body becoming loose and relaxed.
7. **Be Kind to Yourself:** If thoughts or feelings come up, just notice them without judging yourself. Then, gently bring your attention back to your breath.
8. **Finish with Gratitude:** Think about something in your life that you're grateful for, like a person or a happy memory. Take a moment to feel thankful for it.
9. **Slowly Come Back:** When you're ready to finish, take a few more deep breaths and slowly open your eyes. Wiggle your fingers and toes and stretch your body gently.
10. **Notice How You Feel:** Pay attention to how you feel after the meditation. Do you feel more relaxed or calm? Try to carry this feeling with you throughout the rest of your day.

B. Creative Expression: Journaling/Coloring

Instructions:

1. Set a timer for 10 minutes and find a quiet, comfortable space where you can focus without distractions.
2. Choose between coloring or journaling based on your preference:
 - a. **Coloring:** Select a coloring sheet or design that appeals to you. Use coloring pencils, markers, or crayons to fill in the design with colors of your choice. Focus on the repetitive motion of coloring and allow yourself to become fully immersed in the activity.
 - b. **Journaling:** Take out a journal or a piece of paper and a pen. Begin by reflecting on your current thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Write freely without worrying about grammar or spelling. You can journal about anything that comes to mind, such as your day, your goals, or your aspirations.
3. If you're coloring, pay attention to the sensations of holding the coloring utensil, the texture of the paper, and the colors you're choosing. Allow yourself to relax and unwind as you color.
 - b. If you're journaling, let your thoughts flow onto the paper without judgment. Explore your innermost thoughts and feelings and use this time for self-reflection and expression.
4. If your mind wanders during the exercise, gently guide your focus back to the coloring or writing task at hand.

5. Continue with the activity until the timer goes off, signaling the end of the 10-minute session.
6. Take a moment to reflect on how you feel after the coloring/journaling exercise. Notice any changes in your mood, stress levels, or mental state.

This 10-minute coloring/journaling session offers an easy yet potent method to relax, destress, and express yourself creatively. Try adding it to your daily routine for a swift, effective path to relaxation and well-being.

V: Group Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

1. What insights did you gain about your stress levels from completing the inventory, and how do you plan to apply what you've learned to manage your stress more effectively?
2. How did you feel during the meditation session, and are there any aspects of the practice that you found particularly helpful or challenging?
3. Based on your experience with the inventory and guided meditation, what strategies do you intend to incorporate into your daily routine to cope with stress in the future?
4. Reflecting on both the inventory and meditation, what insights or realizations did you have about your stress management habits, and how do you plan to implement positive changes moving forward?

V. Closing (10 minutes)

- A. As we conclude this week's session, I encourage you to carry forward the insights gained from our self-assessment and stress-management exercise. Remember, self-awareness and self-care are essential tools in managing stress effectively. Take the time to prioritize your well-being and utilize the strategies we've discussed to cultivate a greater sense of calm and balance in your life. We look forward to continuing our journey together next week as we explore further ways to enhance our resilience and well-being. Until then, take care and be kind to yourself."

B. Self-Care Commitment Circle (7 minutes)

In today's Self-Care Commitment Circle, let's each share one self-care practice we commit to prioritizing in the coming week. What small step can you take to nurture your well-being?

C. Appreciation and Encouragement:

Express thanks for everyone's participation and encourage them to stay engaged in the chats.

"Thank you all for joining today. Your efforts and progress are impressive. Keep it up, and I look forward to our next chat. Take care and keep moving toward your goals!"

Next Week Prep:

Next Week Preparation:

- Take a minute to think about the key takeaways from today's session regarding stress management and self-care.
- Identify one or two specific action steps you can implement in the coming week to support your well-being.
- Consider how you can integrate these practices into your daily routine and what resources or support you might need to succeed.
- Share your intentions with a friend or family member for added accountability and support.
- Remember to approach these action steps with kindness and flexibility, knowing that progress takes time and effort.
- We'll meet next week to check in on our progress and continue our journey toward greater well-being together, so please come ready to share your insights, experiences, and ideas during our next session!

C. Q&A/ Appreciation and Encouragement:

- Express appreciation for participants' commitment to the learning process and encourage their continued active involvement in the house chats.

“It was so great to see each of you. I look forward to seeing you next week, please remember to participate in your walking groups.”