



8 WEEK HEALTH CHALLENGE

CREATE A HEALTHIER YOU

**WEEK 7
RELAXATION TIME**

Week 7: **Relaxation time**

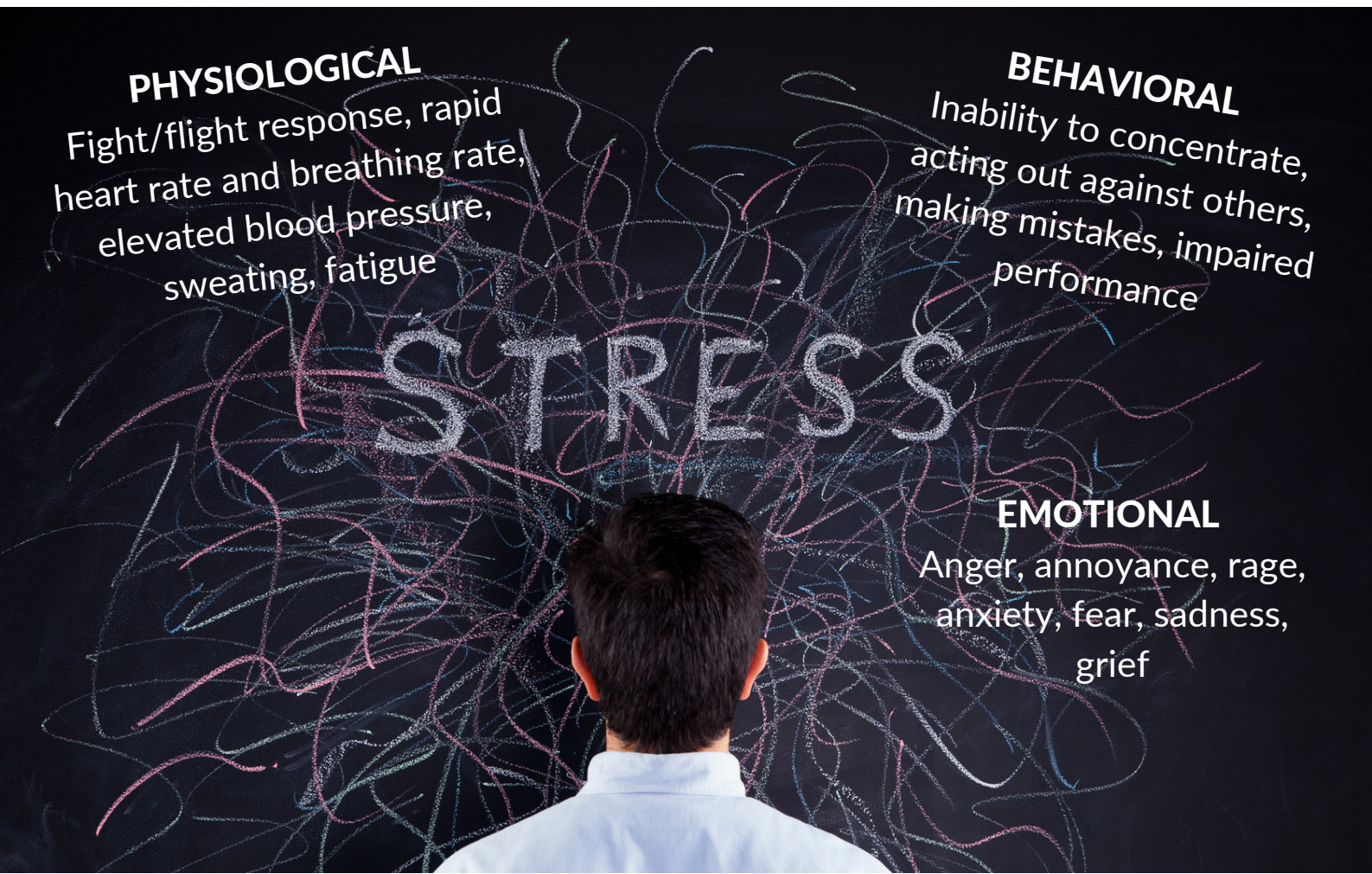
Your Challenge: Do 5 min of stretching or meditation per day

Stress Management

Stress is anything that threatens or is perceived to threaten your well-being. And often comes in the form of pressures (internal and external), changes in life (positive and negative changes), frustration & conflict.

Stress may result from large-scale catastrophic events OR from an accumulation of minor everyday stressors such as traffic and work deadlines. Individually they may be fairly benign, but in combination they can cause harmful effects on your physical and mental health.

Stress in the body can look like:



Thinking Realistically can help...

“The world will end if I don’t meet this deadline.”

Ask yourself:

- Is there evidence for my thoughts?
- Am I being realistic or rational thinking this way?
- Is it helpful to think in this way?
- What would happen if I believed my thoughts?
- What would happen if I didn’t believe my thoughts?



Coping and Stress management:

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:

- Perform regular exercise, our body releases ‘happy chemicals’ called endorphins which helps make us feel good
- Consume a balanced diet, our gut microbiota produces 95% of our body’s serotonin, one of our ‘happy hormones’ and key for regulating mood
- Reduce intake of nicotine and caffeine, these can increase levels of stress hormones

Problem Solving:

- To reduce worrying about problems, break them down into smaller and more manageable problems and then individually think of solutions

Me Time:

- Maintain a healthy work-life balance and find time for you. Eg. have a bath, read a book, spend time with your family or do a pleasant activity

Socialise:

- Maintain your social supports, meet up with or talk to your family and friends.
- Discuss your thoughts with others, don’t bottle them up

Time Management:

- Don’t try and do everything yourself this instant, take one day at a time.

Relaxation techniques: Breathing

Breathing is an automatic function of the body that is controlled by the respiratory centre of the brain. When we feel stressed, our breathing rate and pattern changes as part of the 'fight-or-flight response.

Scientific studies have shown that controlling your breath can help to manage stress and stress-related conditions.

Controlled breathing can cause physiological changes:

- lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- reduced levels of stress hormones in the blood
- reduced lactic acid build-up in muscle tissue
- balanced levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood
- improved immune system functioning
- increased physical energy
- increased feelings of calm and wellbeing.

Note: Some people find that concentrating on their breath actually provokes panic and hyperventilation. If this happens to you, look for another way to relax.



The following links will take you to some deep breathing practices you can follow along to:



Technique 1: Breathing awareness:

1. Find a quiet, comfortable position that you can relax into yet stay alert.
2. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
3. Inhale, feel your belly and chest rise, hold, exhale, feel your belly and chest fall. Inhale, feel the cold air entering through your nostrils. Hold. Exhale, feel the warm air passing out your nostrils.
4. Continue this process for another few minutes.

<https://youtu.be/-IJD-Vzw1fY>

Technique 2: Box Breathing

1. Find a quiet, comfortable position that you can relax into yet stay alert.
2. As we breathe through this practice, imagine we are drawing a box with your breathe during this practice.
3. Inhale, for 1, 2, 3, 4
4. Hold, 1, 2, 3, 4
5. Exhale, 1, 2, 3, 4
6. Hold 1, 2, 3, 4
7. Continue on your own.

<https://youtu.be/ikhGNeGfoQU>

Technique 3: Progressive muscle relaxation

1. Find a quiet, comfortable position that you can relax into yet stay alert.
2. Start breathing gently and slowly.
3. Inhale, scrunch up your feet, hold, exhale and relax.
4. Inhale, squeeze your legs, hold, exhale and relax.
5. Inhale, squeeze your bottom, hold, exhale and relax.
6. Inhale, squeeze your tummy muscles, hold, exhale and relax.
7. Inhale, squeeze your shoulders, hold, exhale and relax.
8. Inhale, squeeze your arms, hold, exhale and relax.
9. Inhale, squeeze your face, hold, exhale and relax.
10. Inhale, squeeze your whole body, hold, exhale and relax.

<https://youtu.be/qHOTH0MxiSQ>

Relaxation technique: Stretching

Why?

- Promotes blood flow
- Keeps you mobile
- Prevents and manages muscle aches and pains
- Relaxing

Spinal stretches:

Neck stretch - <https://youtu.be/Vt2YxIRn-Bs>

Cat cow - <https://youtu.be/8M3MHis6FxU>

Downward dog to upward dog - <https://youtu.be/A5AzbUhMol4>

Supine spinal twists - https://youtu.be/92DbG6L_iU8

Childs pose - https://youtu.be/ZssA_LhICME

Cobra stretch - <https://youtu.be/iwJtY8hvGZs>

Rag doll stretch - <https://youtu.be/Zofx5C22GQ8>

Lower body stretches:

Legs up the wall - https://youtu.be/G2J7x_Gw0hY

Deep squat stretch - <https://youtu.be/diCFzK6B7JA>

Supine glute stretch with a wall - <https://youtu.be/1jSUfx2fqrA>

Lunge stretch - <https://youtu.be/ndBsWCMNcEc>

Quad stretch - <https://youtu.be/WUjurN9kp8k>

TFL stretch - <https://youtu.be/KBu-2-jNzhw>

Couch stretch - <https://youtu.be/Y6BxrAlfgbA>

Supine glute stretch - <https://youtu.be/lyE4-jbV13U>

Calf stretch - https://youtu.be/hYzSSD_P298

Kneeling hamstring stretch - https://youtu.be/S_5LA0TMI9M

Upper body stretches:

Chest stretch - <https://youtu.be/ZA5N6ONon4Y>

Thread the needle - <https://youtu.be/vdrtWu0V1BA>

Triceps stretch - https://youtu.be/QzJ2rAd_HvY

Wrist stretches - https://youtu.be/hnEdRI_uRWE

**Hold each
stretch
for 60s,
repeat 2-3x**