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AUTHOR Casey, Anita; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This manual is intended for use by persons with psychiatric disabilities who are employed in the community but need help in coping with daily stressors at work. It is designed to be taught to mental health consumers by mental health consumers. Each session includes a review of the previous session; objectives; a list of materials needed; and exercises that involve role plays, discussion, questionnaires, rating scales, and problem solving. The course is divided into 10 sessions covering the following topics: identifying internal and external sources of stress; the three stages of stress and the physical stress response; identifying personal responses to stress in the workplace; learning to relax--progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing exercises; understanding the importance of self-enhancing statements; self-enhancing statements; assertive behavior and stress management; four techniques of assertive behavior; learning to retain stress management techniques; and summarizing and evaluating the course. Appendixes contain a task and stress analysis checklist and a list of approximately 25 suggested readings. (DB)

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METHODS FOR MANAGING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE: COPING EFFECTIVELY ON THE JOB



Thresholds

Anita Casey
Flo Tisdale
Jessica A. Jonikas
Judith A. Cook

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**Methods for Managing Stress in the Workplace:
Coping Effectively on the Job**

Prepared by: Anita Casey, M.A.
Flo Tisdale, M.A.
Jessica A. Jonikas, B.A.
and
Judith A. Cook, Ph.D.

Thresholds Supported Competitive Employment Program for Youth
with Severe Mental Illness*

Judith A. Cook, Ph.D., Project Director
Diane Farrell, M.S., Clinical Director
Mary Wessell-Hansen, M.A., Education Director

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Thresholds
2700 N. Lakeview Avenue
Chicago, IL 60614 (312) 281-3800

Jer. y Dincin, Ph.D., Executive Director

Thresholds National Research and
Training Center
561 West Diversey Parkway, Suite 210-A
Chicago, IL 60614 (312) 348-5522

Judith A. Cook, Ph.D., Director

**Methods for Managing Stress in the Workplace:
Coping Effectively on the Job**

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Introduction

Curriculum Purposes. "Methods for Managing Stress in the Workplace: Coping Effectively on the Job" was designed for persons with psychiatric disabilities who already have secured community employment, but need assistance coping with daily stressors at work. Many of these stressors are experienced by all workers and some are unique to persons with mental illness; learning to cope with any one of them is necessary for an overall sense of well-being. Methods of stress management taught in the curriculum include: identifying personal sources of stress; learning specific relaxation techniques; modifying thoughts to be more self-enhancing and self-encouraging; understanding the importance of assertive behavior; and recognizing how to maintain the learned behaviors.

Instructional Methods. The participants are taught to cope with stress using group and individual discussions, role plays, questionnaires, and rating scales that target their stressors and coping strategies, as well as problem-solving exercises to learn more effective stress management techniques. Group members are expected to bring folders to class in which to save all handouts, lists, and notes. They are encouraged to make cassette tapes of relaxing music and/or self-enhancing statements to be played regularly. Participants are required to keep a weekly journal documenting their stressful situations at work and how they overcome them based on the skills acquired in class. They also are expected to practice regularly stress management techniques on the job to ensure that methods for coping will become integrated into their daily routines.

Each session begins with a list of objectives, as well as the materials needed for that day. We suggest that the teachers, case managers, or mental health consumers who facilitate the curriculum read each session in advance so that they are better able to prepare handouts and their own notes before class. Please note that each instance in which a handout or questionnaire is to be used is marked with an H or Q in the margin of the text.

Moreover, every session is introduced to group members with a review of the previous session in order to provide continuity between sessions, as well as to reinforce their learning. This review also will give feedback to persons administering the curriculum about the instructional methods that are most effective and those that may need some modification. In addition, the instructional methods of choice will be determined by the participants' pre-existing knowledge and the nature of their group dynamic. We believe that this type of flexibility is necessary when working with persons who have long-term mental illness; it is especially applicable if they have thought

disorders and/or side effects from their medications that lead to impaired concentration or difficulty following directions.

Consumers as Instructors. We have designed this curriculum so that it can be taught to mental health consumers by other mental health consumers. Consumer-teachers bring a unique perspective to their role as instructor by incorporating their own experiences and insights into the material they teach. In addition, consumer-teachers offer support and empathy as participants grapple with some of the challenging issues raised by the group. We have found that consumers are able to facilitate discussions most effectively because they do not shy away from sensitive topics and have less difficulty knowing when to be firm and when to be flexible.

Curriculum Structure. The stress management training course is divided into ten weekly lessons. We advise that it be coordinated and supervised by teachers, case workers, or consumers who have had experience helping persons with psychiatric disabilities, particularly in community settings. Again, the curriculum is quite flexible in its design so that the leader can structure the course around his or her organization's goals and work schedules, as well as group members' previous experiences and abilities. There is a possibility that participants may be laid-off or fired during the course of this group. We have designed the curriculum so that members do not have to leave the group if employment is terminated. Instead, these participants will be asked to think about past employment when considering effective stress management techniques.

Individual Stress Management Sessions. The Appendix to this curriculum is designed for instructors who will continue to work separately with participants on their personal issues and stressful situations. Because each individual has different stressors, different symptomatology, and different reactions to both medications and stressors, we believe it is necessary to create an even more flexible way for teachers, case managers, or consumers to help participants enhance coping strategies. This separate program involves analysis of individual job tasks, as well as how individual stressors impact on job retention. It also provides an examination of how stressors in participants' personal lives can affect their abilities to cope on the job.

Stress Management for the Instructor. Often, when helping others to manage their personal stressors, the teachers, case managers, or consumers themselves empathize to such a degree that they become overly-stressed or fatigued. We encourage individuals who lead this course to practice regularly either the methods of stress management outlined in this program or ones with which they are already familiar.

Session 1: Identifying the Internal and External Sources of Stress

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Become familiar with one another, as well as the course structure and purposes;
2. Complete the Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire (adapted from Golden, 1986);
3. Recognize the differences between internal and external stress.

Materials: Name tags
1 copy of the Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire for each participant
Extra paper and pencils

Procedures:

1. Pass out the name tags and explain that the group will only use them until they become better acquainted. Name tags will put everyone on a first name basis and facilitate group cohesion.
2. Introduce yourself to the group. Provide a little personal information and let the participants know why you have been selected to coordinate these sessions.
3. Ask each participant to introduce himself or herself, to tell the group where he or she lives and works, and to describe a favorite hobby.
4. Describe the purposes of the course: to learn about stress in the workplace and to become proficient in managing stress on a daily basis.
5. Provide a course overview including: the number (ten) and length of sessions (one hour each), when and where they will be held each week, and any exceptions that you anticipate based on your schedule or holidays. Inform the group that each participant is expected to keep a journal in which he or she

Adapted for adults from: Golden, B. (1986). Adolescent stress management. Paper presented at The Council on Exceptional Children 64th Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA.

monitors both feelings and experiences at work, as well as in the course.

Also, point out the importance of attending each session. Note that each new session builds upon skills learned in the preceding session, thus regular attendance is very important to each individual's success in this course.

Q1

6. Distribute the Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire, pointing out that there are no grades given for this survey. It is simply used to measure changes in levels of stress due to skills learned in this group. Moreover, it will provide each individual with personal insight about his or her own sources of stress.

Because the format of this survey may be somewhat confusing, thoroughly review the items, and encourage the participants to ask questions at any time while completing it.

When the participants are finished, mention that you will put into list form for each one of them the two most stressful situations he or she marked in all six categories, and that these lists will be given out in the next session. They will then be able to refer to these lists of personally stressful situations as the course progresses.

7. Next, point out that all people experience stress or disruptions in their lives when contending with issues such as death, separation from friends or loved ones, divorce, or losing a job. The sources of stress are both internal and external, both lead to feelings of anxiety. Identifying where stress originates is helpful when learning to overcome this anxiety.

Begin this discussion by explaining the differences between internal and external stress as presented below:

Internal stress. This type of stress originates within the person, regardless of outer circumstances. It is usually due to a low sense of self-worth or a lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed. New workers often feel anxious about whether they will be accepted by co-workers. Others feel apprehensive when they are around many new people in an unfamiliar environment.

Be sure to explain that people also may experience inner stress due to vocational success. Fear can arise when individuals are doing well if they believe that the support of their case managers, family, or friends will be withdrawn. In addition, doing well connotes high expectations which can be quite anxiety-provoking. Convey to the group members that they can still ask for help, encouragement, and reassurance, even when they are successful at work.

External stress. External stress arises from the environment surrounding the individual. Job tasks may be too fast-paced and complex on certain days, or a supervisor may be overly critical or demanding. These are all external situations that could lead to stressful feelings. Perhaps the greatest source of stress is the amount of change -- in relationships with other workers, schedules, job tasks, requests of bosses, or customers -- typical in most work settings.

8. Perceptions of stress. Next, introduce the idea that what an individual considers stressful depends upon his or her unique perceptions. The distinction between internal and external stress is quite subtle at times and may not be easily discerned by group members. An individual does not necessarily experience anxiety because he or she is under pressure; the level of stress is determined by the individual's perception of the situation, regardless of whether the source is internal or external.

For instance, some workers might find that they enjoy a fast-paced, hectic work schedule, while others might find such a routine highly stressful. Of course, all people experience situations that are disturbing to their personal balance. The point is that the same situation can cause very different reactions, depending upon the person experiencing and responding to it. Effective stress management involves learning how either to react or adapt to internal and external pressures so that they do not cause undue anxiety.

You will have to monitor whether or not your group is ready to discuss the idea of perceptions at this point, depending upon how much they already know about stress and stress management. If you believe that

it is too soon in the curriculum to initiate this discussion, be sure to bring it up in Session 3. You will be discussing the idea in depth in Sessions 4 and 5 as well.

9. Ask the participants to come up with some examples of internal and external stressors, and write these on the board. Ask the group to copy this list, so that they will have a reference when completing their homework. If they are ready to do so, pick one of each and discuss how changing their perception of the stressor would make the situation less stressful. For instance, rather than worrying about whether or not they will be accepted by co-workers, new workers could think of a few topics to discuss with their new acquaintances over lunch or break times, including favorite music or sports events.
10. For homework, ask participants to write their first journal entries, discussing their own internal and external sources of stress (or their perceptions of these, if you handled that in this session). Ask them to try to come up with sources that have not yet been discussed. Also, encourage them to be completely honest in their entries, even if the topic is slightly uncomfortable.
11. Finally, tell the group that the next session will deal with the three stages of stress, as well as the typical stress response.

Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire

(Golden, B., 1986)

Directions: Please indicate with a rating of 0-3 (0 being the least stressful and 3 being most stressful) how much stress you have experienced during the last two months due to each item listed in the six categories.

| Not at All Stressful 0 | Somewhat Stressful 1 | Moderately Stressful 2 | Very Stressful 3 |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|

I. Family:

- _____ 1. Pressure from parental expectations
- _____ 2. Conflicts related to discipline given by parents
- _____ 3. Communication problems with parents
- _____ 4. Communication problems with brothers and sisters
- _____ 5. Conflicts with other family members
- _____ 6. Health problems of a family member
- _____ 7. Family financial problems
- _____ 8. Marital conflicts within your family
- _____ 9. Divorce or separation in your family
- _____ 10. Emotional problems of a family member
- _____ 11. Pressure from having only one parent
- _____ 12. Conflicts with step-parents (if you have one)
- _____ 13. Emotional or verbal abuse from family members
- _____ 14. Physical abuse from family members
- _____ 15. Lack of emotional support from your family
- _____ 16. Alcohol or substance abuse in the family
- _____ 17. Parent's profession causing difficulty or stress
- _____ 18. Other (describe briefly) _____

II. Peers:

- _____ 1. Friends put pressure on you to do certain things
- _____ 2. Competition between you and friends
- _____ 3. Conflicts between you and your friends
- _____ 4. Not feeling included with peers
- _____ 5. Feeling lonely
- _____ 6. Feeling like your friends do not support you
- _____ 7. Not feeling close to your friends
- _____ 8. Your role in your group of friends (whatever that may be)
- _____ 9. Other (describe briefly) _____

III. School:

- _____ 1. Pressure from your school work
- _____ 2. Conflicts with your teachers
- _____ 3. The amount of school work given by teachers

Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire

(continued)

| Not at All Stressful 0 | Somewhat Stressful 1 | Moderately Stressful 2 | Very Stressful 3 |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|

III. School (continued):

- _____ 4. Too little learned in school
- _____ 5. Presence of learning difficulties
- _____ 6. The deadlines set by your teachers
- _____ 7. The amount of paperwork given in school
- _____ 8. Tests
- _____ 9. After-school or extra-curricula activities
- _____ 10. Your study skills (whatever they may be)
- _____ 11. The amount of difficulty you have with certain subjects
- _____ 12. Your ability to motivate yourself
- _____ 13. Other (describe briefly) _____

IV. Developmental Issues:

- _____ 1. Confused feelings about becoming a young adult
- _____ 2. Concerns about experiencing physical changes
- _____ 3. Concerns about physical appearances
- _____ 4. Feelings about being either independent from or dependent on someone else
- _____ 5. Questions about sexual expectations
- _____ 6. Questions about your sexual identity

V. Emotions:

- _____ 1. Recognizing how you feel in general
- _____ 2. Handling angry feelings
- _____ 3. Handling depression or loneliness
- _____ 4. Coping with feelings of anxiety or nervousness
- _____ 5. Understanding your own feelings
- _____ 6. Other (describe briefly) _____

VI. Self:

- _____ 1. Coping with self-expectations
- _____ 2. Coping with levels of self confidence
- _____ 3. Recognizing levels of self-discipline
- _____ 4. Handling levels of self-esteem
- _____ 5. Coping with your ability to motivate yourself
- _____ 6. Understanding your ability to comfort yourself
- _____ 7. Handling your own questions about your identity
- _____ 8. Other (describe briefly) _____

Session 2: Three Stages of Stress and the Physical Stress Response

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Identify typical stressors found in the workplace;
2. Recognize the three stages of the stress response, as well as ways to use this information to cope more effectively;
3. Identify several personal stressors at the workplace.

Materials: 2 handouts for each participant
Lists of participants' stressors from Session 1
Extra paper and pencils

Procedures:

1. Review the last session by asking each group member to share at least one internal and external source of stress from his or her first journal entry. Monitor whether or not they understand the differences between internal and external stress. Also, be sure they recognize the importance of perceptions when coping with stress (if you included a discussion of perceptions in Session 1). Then, pass out the lists you made from the survey given in the previous session.

H1

2. Now, give each participant Handout 1, which illustrates various types of stressors at the workplace (Diagram A), as well as the three stages of the typical stress response (Diagram B).

Point out that when an experience represents a threat or is anxiety provoking -- whether or not the source is internal or external -- the stress response is triggered.

Direct the group's attention to Diagram A, and point out that the stress response is much like striking a match, as depicted in this handout; when an individual experiences pressure, the stress response is triggered, causing the nervous system to react or "fire up." Tell the participants that the items listed around the picture are work situations that could initiate the stress response. Read each item aloud, and ask them to underline the events they find to

be stressful in their own lives. Inform the participants that they will be able to discuss these situations later in the course.

Ask group members to look at Diagram B, which depicts three stages of the typical bodily response to stress.

The first stage is **alarm**, in which the nervous system prepares the body to react to the situation. Blood pressure increases, blood vessels and muscles constrict, the heart rate accelerates, and the digestion process is arrested.

In the second stage, **resistance**, the body reacts to this triggering of the nervous system by releasing hormones in order to regain balance. These hormones are channeled throughout the body, helping the individual to cope more effectively with the aforementioned physical reactions to stress.

If the individual persists in perceiving a situation as emotionally and/or intellectually stressful, the body remains in a continuous state of reaction, which leads to the third stage of stress -- **burnout or exhaustion**. Here the strains induced by stress can cause physical or emotional distress.

Convey that, many times, people are able to cope with their stressors in such a way that they do not experience this final burnout. For instance, a new employee may undergo the first two stages of stress during the initial weeks of work while learning job tasks, but may not experience burnout simply because the stress response has been triggered. Reassure group members that they will be learning how to avoid this final stage of the stress response later in the course.

H2

3. Pass out Handout 2, a case study of an individual who is reacting to stress on the job. After reading it aloud, instruct the participants to underline sentences which describe actions or reactions that parallel their own experiences in the workplace. Also, ask them to decide if Rachel's sources of stress are internal or external, as well as how she can alleviate some of her anxiety by

altering her perceptions. For instance, it is quite unlikely that customers are aware of how employees are stocking shelves; therefore, Rachel's belief that they recognize her mistakes is actually an internal source of stress related to a lack of confidence in her own abilities. Moreover, by realizing that customers do not watch her while she works, Rachel could modify her perception of the situation in order to relieve some of the pressure she experiences when working in the presence of others.

4. Ask the participants to copy the phrases they picked out from Diagrams A and B to the end of the list you made from the Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire. If they have experienced stressors in the workplace that are not on this newly revised list, ask them to include them as well. Tell them that they will refer often to this list while learning methods of stress management; thus, it is important for them to be completely honest about the situations that cause stress at the workplace.
5. For homework, ask the participants to take one sentence from Handout 2 that describes a stress response they do not have, and to rewrite the sentence so that it more closely represents something they would experience when stressed. This, too, will help them to get a handle on the ways that they experience stress at work.

For example:

Handout 2: When Rachel arrived at work today, she felt tired and irritable.

Rewrite: When I arrived at work today, I did not feel like seeing or talking to anybody there. I wished everyone would just leave me alone.

Handout 2: Rachel occasionally has trouble focusing on what she is doing.

Rewrite: Sometimes, I get so caught up in watching the customers that I forget what I am supposed to be doing.

6. Next, instruct the group to observe how co-workers deal with stressors they experience in the workplace. Point out that a co-worker can act as a resource to help them prepare for pressures they are likely to encounter at work. Model some ways group members could have a

casual conversation with co-workers about stress management. Through discussions with co-workers about "rush" times, demanding customers, or complicated tasks, the group members will recognize that stress at work is a common occurrence for everyone at one time or another.

7. Tell the participants that in the next session they will have an opportunity to respond to stressful situations commonly reported by consumers competitively employed in the community. For example, they will have the chance to address the issue of scape-goating, which sometimes occurs when non-disabled co-workers feel they can blame workplace mistakes on people who have been identified as "handicapped." Also, they will discuss coping with psychotropic medication side-effects and psychiatric symptomatology on the job.

Diagram A

STRESSORS AT WORK

The following are examples of work situations that can trigger the Stress Response.

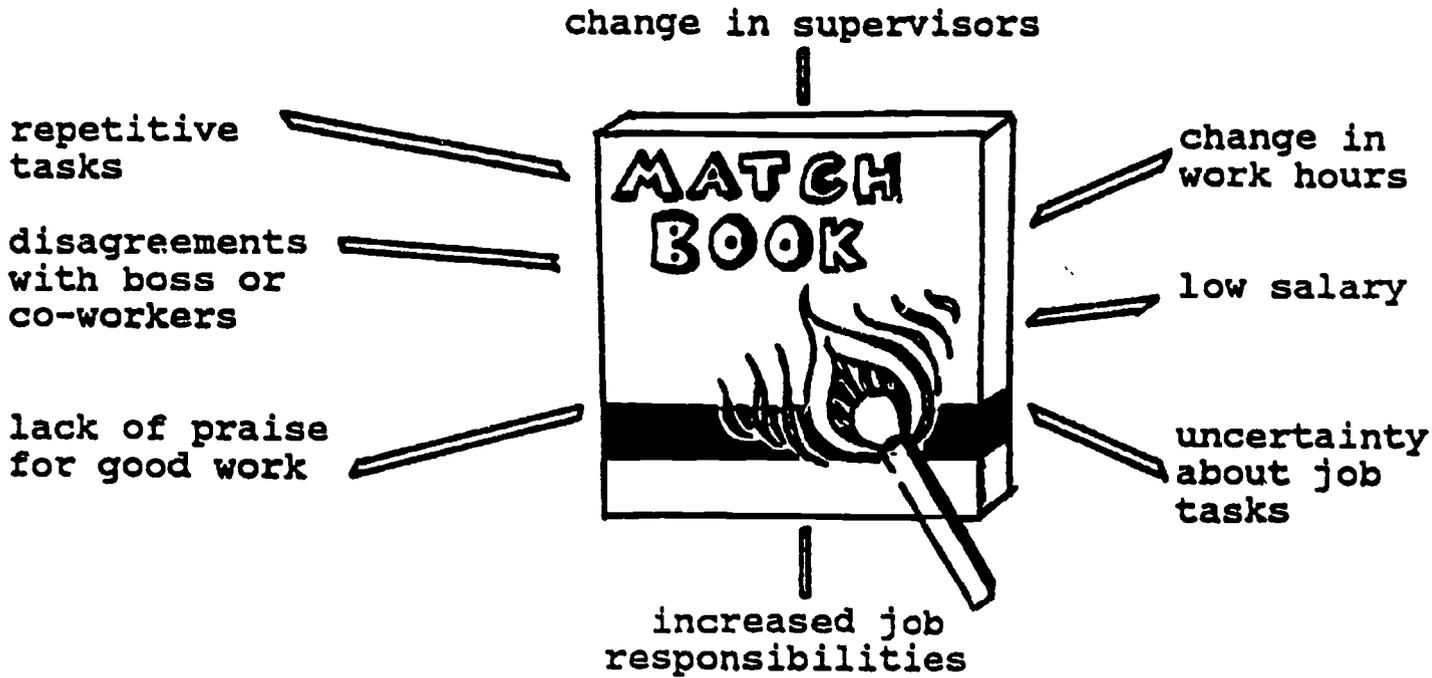


Diagram B

THE THREE STAGES OF THE STRESS RESPONSE

Stage 1

Alarm

Body, emotions and/or mind react to situation



Stage 2

Resistance

Body releases hormones in order to cope with stress



Stage 3

Burnout or Exhaustion

If in Stages 1 and 2 for too long, body becomes overly fatigued



Case Study of Rachel

Rachel is employed at a local bookstore and has just started working a thirty hour week, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Her new responsibilities include helping her boss to order magazines, unpacking and stacking them on the shelves, as well as replacing stock once it is sold.

For the first three weeks of her new job, Rachel felt really good about her performance. However, during the past week, she has begun to have difficulties both at work and at home. She has had trouble sleeping and tossed and turned last night until 3:00 in the morning. When Rachel arrived at work today she felt tired and irritable.

Over the past week, Rachel sometimes has snapped at her boss because she believes he is giving her too many work tasks. In spite of her behavior, her supervisor has been patient and has said things such as, "I know you're new at the job, but you'll have to learn to hang in there when the going gets rough." Rachel worries that her irritability will get out of hand and she will lose her job.

Sometimes, Rachel has trouble focusing on what she is doing. Her performance is especially poor around customers because she feels like they notice her mistakes. Lately, she tends to lose count of the magazines or cannot remember her supervisor's instructions. On her lunch break, Rachel now avoids talking to people because she feels it distracts her even more. She continually rejects lunch invitations from her good friend, Lucille, choosing, instead, to eat alone. She usually has a headache and her stomach bothers her. She wishes she could just curl up in a chair somewhere and go to sleep.

Rachel's problems worry her, but she is not sure what to do. She knows that she should ask for help, so that she does not lose her job; however, she is afraid to ask her family, friends, or case manager for advice because they have been so proud of her success at work. Therefore, she does not say or do anything about her stress and anxiety.

Session 3: Identifying Personal Responses to Stress in the Workplace

You may find it necessary to break this into two sessions, depending upon how much your group already knows about personal stressors.

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Understand why they need to be able to identify their own sources of stress at work;
2. Identify their personal stressors at work by completing the Stress Response Assessment Survey.

Materials: 3 handouts for each participant

Procedures:

1. Review the last session by asking participants to share their journal entries with the class. Take note of repeated sources of stress, so that you can refer to them when discussing stress management techniques later in the course.
2. Tell the participants that they are now going to explore the ways in which the stress response is triggered in their own lives. Review the three stages as discussed in Session 2, and remind them that manifestations of stress can be physical, emotional, mental, or any combination of these three. Point out that, by identifying the ways in which stress manifests itself in their lives, they can learn how to cope with it upon recognition, instead of letting it continue to the point of burnout or exhaustion.

H3

Provide each participant with Handout 3, the Stress Response Assessment Survey. Ask the participants to check the column that best describes their reactions after you read each item. When you have finished the entire survey, ask them to put stars by the items for which they have marked "almost always" and to share these with the class. If you will make them feel more comfortable, start out by sharing your most frequent stress responses. Collect these from the participants, so that you can get an understanding of each participant's personal stressors.

Completion of this task may take a good deal of time, depending upon the group's pre-existing knowledge of their own stressors. Therefore, you may find it necessary to end this session here and fashion the remaining exercises into a separate session. If you do start here, begin with a review of the previous session.

3. If you have not yet explained the concept of perceptions when dealing with stress, do so at this point (see Session 1 for explanation).
- H4 4. Now, ask participants to take out their lists of personal stressors from the first two sessions. Tell them that in order to successfully utilize the stress management techniques presented later in this course, they must divide each of their stressful situations into more manageable components. Distribute Handout 4, and carefully review each of the questions. Explain that the most important part of the analysis of a situation is recognition of the critical moment, or the point at which they are able to alter either the situation itself, or their perceptions of it, in order to alleviate stress.
- H5 5. Provide group members with Handout 5, containing descriptions of stressful situations at work. Using the questions from Handout 4, analyze each of these case studies with the participants. Instruct each participant to analyze one example from their lists of stressful situations to make sure that they recognize the critical moment in their own experiences. Encourage the participants to help one another with this, since it is often easier for someone outside of a situation to analyze its meaning. Ask the participants to be sensitive to the fact that this may be a difficult exercise for some group members.
6. For homework, ask the participants to analyze at least two more of their personal stressors from their lists. Instruct them to use the criteria from Handout 4, and tell them that you will collect this from them at the next session. Remind them that this is not for a grade, but to help them fully understand how to put their stressful situations into a more manageable form.
7. Tell the group that in the next session you will begin to discuss relaxation. Ask them to think about some of their healthy methods of relaxation, such as exercising or listening

to music. Also, ask them to bring in a blanket or mat to lie on while going through the techniques of progressive relaxation. Inform the participants that it may take about an hour and a half to completely lead them through the two methods of relaxation in the next session, and ask them to make sure they will be able to stay later than usual.

Stress Response Assessment Survey

| <u>How My Body Reacts:</u> | <u>Almost Always</u> | <u>Often</u> | <u>Seldom</u> | <u>Never</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Colds, flu or fever | | | | |
| 2. Headaches | | | | |
| 3. Stomachaches | | | | |
| 4. Constipation | | | | |
| 5. Diarrhea | | | | |
| 6. Pounding or irregular heartbeat | | | | |
| 7. Skin rashes | | | | |
| 8. Asthma | | | | |
| 9. Frequent urination | | | | |
| 10. Dizziness | | | | |
| 11. Grinding teeth | | | | |
| 12. Tightness in neck or shoulders | | | | |

| <u>How My Emotions React:</u> | <u>Almost Always</u> | <u>Often</u> | <u>Seldom</u> | <u>Never</u> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Irritability | | | | |
| 2. Depression | | | | |
| 3. Anxiety | | | | |
| 4. Hostility | | | | |
| 5. Distrust of others | | | | |
| 6. Guilt | | | | |
| 7. Frustration | | | | |
| 8. Resentment of others | | | | |

Session 2, Handout 3

Stress Response Assessment Survey
(continued)

How My Mind Reacts:

Almost
Always Often Seldom Never

1. Being caught up in negative worries and thoughts
2. Difficulty with concentrating on a task
3. Inability to focus on what people say to me
4. Difficulty with remembering things
5. Lack of interest in things that were once interesting
6. Confusion
7. Difficulty in telling others my needs and wants
8. Loss of a sense of humor
9. Racing thoughts

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|--|------------------|-------|--------|-------|
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How My Behavior Reflects Stress:

Almost
Always Often Seldom Never

1. Sleeping problems
2. Daydreaming
3. Eating problems
4. Aggression toward other people
5. Withdrawal from other people
6. Lack of eye contact with co-workers or boss
7. Sluggishness
8. Secretiveness
9. Substance Abuse

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|--|------------------|-------|--------|-------|
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Analyzing Stressful Situations at Work

1. Did the situation occur recently?
2. Which reactions from the Stress Response Assessment Survey did you experience during the situation?
3. Briefly answer the following questions about your stressful situation:
 - Who was involved?
 - Where were you?
 - What happened and when?

 - Why was the situation stressful to you?
4. Is the situation likely to be repeated in the same way?
5. Do you believe that this situation will have an important effect on the way you feel about work?
6. Were the responses of the others involved satisfying to you? Why or why not (e.g., very considerate, too hasty, not nice)?
7. At what point did you feel you could honestly change the stressful nature of this situation (this is called the critical moment), so that you would have felt less anxious (for example, before you or others became too angry or before you became too nervous about what was happening)?

Practice Analyzing Stressful situations at Work

Use the questions given in Handout 4 to analyze the following situations. Make sure to identify the critical moment (the point at which the situation at hand can be changed so that it is less stressful for everyone involved).

1. Right after lunch at work last Monday, I was helping Carlos take some expensive coats out of the dry cleaning machines. I do not like working with Carlos because he can be very irritable and likes things done his own way. Also, he makes me nervous because he always watches me work and often makes comments about my performance. That afternoon, all I could think about was the terrible headache I had since 10:00 that morning. Unfortunately, as I put my right hand to my forehead to rub it, I dropped one of the coats on the floor.

"Hey, watch what you're doing," snarled Carlos.

Just then our boss, Mr. Davis, walked up to us. "That's no way to treat an expensive coat, Carlos," said Mr. Davis sternly.

Carlos glared at me and said, "But it was Sid's fault. He was daydreaming again and dropped the coat."

I had to come up with something quickly. "Carlos is lying again," I blurted out.

As Mr. Davis crossed his arms in front of him and looked at us suspiciously, I began to feel guilty for calling Carlos a liar. I worked up my courage and was about to admit my guilt when Mr. Davis said, "That's enough out of both of you. Back to work, and no more sloppiness."

Mr. Davis strode over to his office door, opened it, and slammed it behind him.

Carlos and I silently went back to our work.

2. About six months ago, a man in the shipping department came over to me and said, "Someone just delivered a package for you in the shipping department. You know you're not supposed to have personal packages sent to your work address. I am going to have to talk to your supervisor about what you have done."

I scratched my head and answered, "But I didn't order anything. And, even if I did, I would not have had it shipped here."

The man asked, "Your name's Archibald, right?"

Session 3, Handout 5

Practicing Analyzing Stressful Situations at Work

(continued)

"Archibald?" I said in surprise. "No, my name's Arnold."

The man waved his hand in front of him and said with embarrassment, "Oh, I'm sorry. I've got the wrong person. Never mind."

3. Yesterday, An-Li, my boss, caught me nodding off to sleep in a chair in the back room. I was supposed to be dusting and vacuuming the room.

"Ginny," snapped An-Li, "you don't get paid to take naps! Just look at this mess! I expect this room to be completely clean in fifteen minutes."

I was so scared that I didn't know what to say. I certainly did not want to ruin my very first job because I made a careless mistake. However, I did not say a word, but just stared at An-Li with a frightened look on my face.

An-Li angrily repeated her demand and left the room.

4. I work as a receptionist in a large accounting firm in the city. Part of my job is to answer all phone calls, transfer them, or take messages if the workers are not in their offices. Because I do this very well, my supervisor decided to increase my responsibilities to include helping the secretaries set up appointments for their supervisors.

The other day, ten secretaries asked me to set up several appointments each, and the phone was just ringing off the hook. At one point, two people called who were very angry that the supervisors with whom they wanted to speak were not in, and they began yelling at me. Just then, two more secretaries came to my desk with appointments to be made. I felt like I was going to scream because of all these things happening at once, but my boss was standing right next to me, so I had to remain calm.

I took a deep breath and reminded myself that I could handle this situation if I did one thing at a time. I decided to deal with the angry customers first and let the secretaries wait until I was finished on the phone.

After I finished with the customers, I took the requests from the secretaries who were waiting at my desk. My boss came up to me and told me that I had done a good job.

Section 3, Handout 5

Practicing Analyzing Stressful Situations at Work
(Answer Key)

Use the questions given in Handout 4 to analyze the following situations. Make sure to identify the critical moment (the point at which the situation at hand can be changed so that it is less stressful for everyone involved).

1. Right after lunch at work last Monday, I was helping Carlos take some expensive coats out of the dry cleaning machine. I do not like working with Carlos because he can be very irritable and likes things done his own way. Also, he makes me nervous because he always watches me work and often comments upon how I perform. That afternoon, all I could think about was the terrible headache I had since 10:00 that morning. Unfortunately, as I put my right hand to my forehead to rub it, I dropped one of the coats on the floor.

"Hey, watch what you're doing," snarled Carlos.

Just then our boss, Mr. Davis, walked up to us. "That's no way to treat an expensive coat, Carlos," said Mr. Davis sternly.

Carlos glared at me and said, "But it was Sid's fault. He was daydreaming again and dropped the coat."

(This is the critical moment.)

I had to come up with something quickly. "Carlos is lying again," I blurted out.

(In this situation, the worker obviously did not choose the least stressful alternative, as he or she lied and caused bad feelings.)

As Mr. Davis crossed his arms in front of him and looked at us suspiciously, I began to feel guilty for calling Carlos a liar. I worked up my courage and was about to admit my guilt when Mr. Davis said, "That's enough out of both of you. Back to work, and no more sloppiness."

Mr. Davis strode over to his office door, opened it, and slammed it behind him.

Carlos and I silently went back to our work.

2. About six months ago, a man in the shipping department came over to me and said, "Someone just delivered a package for you in the shipping department. You know you're not supposed to have personal packages sent to your work address. I am going to have to talk to your supervisor about what you have done."

(This is the critical moment.)

Session 3, Handout 5

Practicing Analyzing Stressful Situations at Work
(Answer Key continued)

I scratched my head and answered, "But I didn't order anything. And, even if I did, I would not have had it shipped here."

(In this situation, the worker made the correct choice to remain calm and avoid feelings of stress.)

The man asked, "Your name's Archibald, right?"

"Archibald?" I said in surprise. "No, my name's Arnold."

The man waved his hand in front of him and said with embarrassment, "Oh, I'm sorry. I've got the wrong person. Never mind."

3. Yesterday, An-Li, my boss, caught me nodding off to sleep in a chair in the back room. I was supposed to be dusting and vacuuming the room.

"Ginny," snapped An-Li, "you don't get paid for catnaps! Just look at this mess! I expect this room to be completely cleaned in fifteen minutes."

(This is the critical moment.)

I was so scared that I didn't know what to say. I certainly did not want to ruin my very first job, because I made a careless mistake. However, I did not say a word, but just stared at An-Li with a frightened look on my face.

(In this situation, the worker became too stressed to pick any alternative in order to avoid feelings of stress for himself or herself, as well as for An-Li.)

An-Li angrily repeated her demand and left the room.

4. I work as a receptionist in a large accounting firm in the city. Part of my job is to answer all phone calls, transfer them, or take messages if the workers are not in their offices. Because I do this very well, my supervisor decided to increase my responsibilities to include helping the secretaries set up appointments for their supervisors.

The other day, ten secretaries asked me to set up several appointments each, and the phone was just ringing off the hook. At one point, two people called who were very angry that the supervisors with whom they wanted to speak were not in, and they began yelling at me because of this. Just then, two more

Practicing Analyzing Stressful Situations at Work
(Answer Key continued)

secretaries came to my desk with appointments to be made. I felt like I was going to scream because of all these things happening at once, but my boss was standing right next to me, so I had to remain calm.

(This is the critical moment.)

I took a deep breath and reminded myself that I could handle this situation if I did one thing at a time. I decided to deal with the angry customers first and let the secretaries wait until I was finished on the phone.

(In this situation, the worker follows company policy and decides first to help the angry customers. This decision obviously pleases her boss.)

After I finished with the customers, I took the requests from the secretaries who were waiting at my desk. My boss came up to me and told me that I had done a good job.

Session 4: Learning to Relax: Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Deep Breathing Exercises

Be prepared to take an hour and a half to complete this session.

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Understand the concept of relaxation, including the differences between healthy and unhealthy methods of relaxing;
2. Learn the importance of several relaxation techniques, as well as how to practice them on a daily basis.

Materials: Extra blankets or floor mats
Copies of completed Stress Response Assessment Surveys
2 handouts for each participant

Procedures:

1. Begin by collecting the homework from last session. Ask a couple of volunteers to share what they have written, in order to review the method of analyzing stressors. Remind them that you are available after class to help anyone who is still having trouble with this analysis.
2. Initiate a discussion about relaxation by pointing out that it is the opposite of the stress response in that it restores the body to its natural balanced state. The physiological reactions mentioned in the alarm stage of the stress response (see Session 2) -- increased blood pressure, constricted blood vessels and muscles, and accelerated heart rate -- return to normal upon relaxation, helping one to feel calmer and more in control. The relaxation response provides relief from the internal and external sources of stress, as well as from the perceptions of stress (Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988).

Point out that feeling anxious when in a stressful situation is not a necessary reaction, but rather, a learned reaction. Therefore, just as one learns to react to stress by becoming upset, one can learn to relax instead.

Davis, M., Eshelman, E.R. and McKay, M. (1988). The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook (Third Edition). Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

3. Now, ask each participant to share one way they have found to relax on a fairly regular basis. To prompt discussion, share a few of your own methods (e.g., talking to a friend, exercise, meditation, etc.). Also, ask each one to share a way of coping that is considered unhealthy (e.g., smoking, sleeping all day, over-eating, substance abuse, etc.), in order to initiate a discussion about the differences between healthy and unhealthy stress management techniques. Tell them that you will be teaching several healthy ways to cope with their stressors and that they will learn to rely progressively less on unhealthy strategies.
4. Write the healthy stress management techniques participants offer on the board, and tell them to copy these on to the same page of stressors made in the first two sessions. Then, tell them that every time they experience one of their common stressors they can instantly remind themselves of some methods of relaxation by reviewing this new list of healthy stress management techniques.
5. Define for the participants the concept of progressive relaxation, a method of deep muscle relaxation designed to reduce stress, including that which is related to work (Jacobson, 1929). Remind the participants that their bodies respond to anxiety-provoking thoughts and events with physical, emotional, and/or mental tension. When they recognize their common physical reactions to stress (the other two will be addressed in future sessions), they can engage in the following progressive relaxation exercise, so that they can alleviate the prolonged or repeated anxiety that leads to burnout or exhaustion.

Give out copies of the participants' Stress Response Assessments Surveys, and ask them to briefly review their bodily reactions to stress.
6. Ask the participants to move all chairs out of the center of the room, so that they can comfortably lie down on their blankets or floor mats. If there are participants who feel uncomfortable about lying down, allow them to do the exercise in their chairs.

Jacobson, Edmund. (1974). Progressive relaxation. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Midway Reprint.

Lying down is recommended not only because it is an easier position for beginners, but also because the exercise is initially most effective if the head is supported. Eventually, the participants should be able to do this exercise in the workplace; therefore, you will need to practice this with them while sitting up in future sessions.

7. Tell the group members that you are going to lead them through an exercise of progressive relaxation (adapted from Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988). Explain that they will be required to do this short and simple exercise every day, so that they will learn how to respond to stressful situations in a calm manner, naturally and automatically.

Ask them to use "reinforcing" statements similar to the following when going through the exercise in order to enhance their ability to relax (the value of such statements will be discussed more fully later in Session 7, Procedure 1):

- ** I am releasing all of my tension.
- ** I am feeling calm and rested by letting go of my stress.
- ** I am relaxing and smoothing out all muscles.
- ** I let all my tension dissolve away.

Each muscle (or muscle group) is tensed from five to seven seconds and then relaxed for twenty to thirty seconds. Have the participants repeat this sequence at least once; if an area remains tense, the exercise should be repeated up to five times. To further amplify the value of this exercise, tell the participants to notice the contrast between the sensations of tension and relaxation.

- a. Make both hands into fists, simultaneously tightening biceps and forearms (hold for 5 to 7 seconds). Relax for 20 to 30 seconds, and repeat a reinforcing statement.
- b. Wrinkle up the forehead. At the same time, press the head as far back as possible, roll it clockwise in a complete circle, and then, reverse. Now, wrinkle up the muscles of the face by frowning, squinting eyes, pursing lips, hunching shoulders, and pressing the tongue to the roof of the mouth (hold this entire position for 5 to 7 seconds). Now relax for 20 to 30 seconds, and repeat another reinforcing statement.
- c. Arch the back, while taking a deep breath into the chest, and hold this position for 7 seconds. Then, relax the body for half a minute. Now take a deep

(Progressive relaxation techniques continued)

breath, pressing out the stomach. Again, hold for 7 seconds, and then, relax for 30 seconds, while repeating a reinforcing statement.

- d. Pull feet and toes back towards face, tightening shins for 7 seconds. Relax for 30 seconds. Curl toes, simultaneously tightening calves, thighs, and buttocks (hold for 7 seconds). Finally, relax the whole body for an entire minute. Take in a deep breath, and repeat a reinforcing statement while exhaling.

H6

Pass out: Handout 6, a summary of the procedures for progressive relaxation. Tell them to use this in learning how to perform the exercise by themselves at home and, eventually, at work. Emphasize that they are required to run through it at least once a night from now on.

Reassure them that most people have somewhat limited success when they begin deep muscle relaxation, but improve considerably with practice. At first, it may take 20 minutes to attain even partial relaxation, but eventually, it will be possible for them to relax their entire bodies in only a few minutes.

8. Point out to the participants that deep breathing exercises have been proven effective in overcoming stress. Most people take very shallow, quick breaths when under stress, exacerbating the physical manifestations of their anxiety. Therefore, deep breathing is beneficial when trying to stay calm and keep a clear head in a stressful situation. Go through the following exercise (again, adapted from Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1988) with the participants, and tell them that they will be able to use it at work or at home when under pressure. They should remain in the positions they found most comfortable when practicing deep muscle relaxation on their own.

As with progressive relaxation, ask participants to repeat this sequence at least one time. Instruct the group members to try to clear their minds of all thoughts or images while breathing, but not to worry if they cannot, since it usually takes months of practice to accomplish this feat.

- a. If they are on the floor, tell them to bend their knees and move their feet about eight inches apart, with their toes turned slightly outward. If they are seated or

(Deep breathing techniques continued)

standing, tell them to keep their feet about eight inches apart, with toes turned outward. Whatever position they are in, they must always make sure that their spines are completely straight.

- b. Instruct them to quickly scan their bodies for signs of tension (e.g., sore neck or upset stomach).
- c. Now, tell them to place one hand on their abdomens and one on their chests.
- d. Ask them to inhale slowly and deeply through their noses, until the air in their abdomens pushes their hands up. They should not take in so much air that they feel uncomfortable. Point out that their chests should move only a little and just with their abdomens.
- e. When they feel at ease with the previous step, tell them to smile slightly, inhale through their noses, and exhale through their mouths. They should make a quiet, relaxing, whooshing sound like the wind as they gently blow air out of their bodies. Ask them to concentrate a moment on relaxing their mouths, tongues, and jaws.
- f. Repeat steps d and e about five times. When done, ask them to scan their bodies for tension, and examine whether or not they feel less stressed.

H7

Pass out Handout 7, a summary of the procedures for effective deep breathing. As with progressive relaxation, they will need to practice deep breathing at home, at least once a day so that it becomes automatic to them. Henceforth, when they recognize their stress responses firing up, they can immediately engage in deep breathing to remain clear headed and calm.

Inform them that it is best to do either of these exercises in a private place while at work, such as an empty lounge or the washroom.

9. When practicing either progressive relaxation or deep breathing exercises, participants can also engage in meditation, another beneficial way to reduce the physical and emotional manifestations of intense stress. Because there are as many methods and techniques for successful meditation as there are philosophies behind it, we do not find it appropriate to fully discuss it in this curriculum. However, do mention it as a viable option for stress management, especially for people who are interested in

spirituality. Explain that physically it is much like progressive relaxation or deep breathing, but with more emphasis on the purification or reduction of thoughts and images. They also may enter a meditative state by deeply concentrating on a soothing idea or spiritual image.

Point out that even if not religious, they just like anyone else, hold beliefs about the meaning and purposes of life and life events. They may not have given much thought to their feelings about this, therefore, encourage them to do so; a significant part of stress management is being able to recognize that all events -- even those that are negative -- have some sort of purpose and meaning. Convey to them that they are free to choose these meanings for themselves and that they can reject others' beliefs, yet they should still be tolerant of different ideas.

Ask the participants to consider seriously some of their beliefs about inner and outer experiences and to write about them in their journals. The recognition of some of their deepest beliefs may help when learning to manage stress. Also, suggest that they discuss their thoughts with their caseworkers, family, or friends. If appropriate, ask their caseworkers to give them some time to talk about this as well.

10. Inform the participants that you expect them to have questions about the large amount of information covered in this session, and that you will be available after this class or before the next. Also, tell them that you will run through progressive relaxation and deep breathing again before beginning Session 5.
11. Tell them that their homework is to practice both relaxation techniques every night for a week and to record their experiences (e.g., whether they are more relaxed, calmer, able to use them at work, or confused about the steps to follow, feel silly, more anxious, etc.). Explain that these experiences will be checked by you in the next session.
12. Also, tell them that the next session will be devoted to the value of positive thoughts and statements about oneself; thus, they are to come to class with an example of a negative

and a positive thought about their work performances. For example, an employee may be yelled at by the boss for forgetting to punch out on the time clock in the evening. A negative thought about this would be, "I am never going to make it in this job because I just cannot seem to remember anything." A more positive thought about it would be, "I made a mistake yesterday by forgetting to punch out, but because I now understand that this upsets my boss, I will leave a note on my desk to remind myself to do it every night."

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

When you recognize your common physical reactions to stress, begin the following progressive relaxation exercise, so that you can overcome the prolonged or repeated anxiety that often leads to burnout or exhaustion. It is best to do this exercise in a private place while at work, such as an empty lounge or the washroom.

Each muscle (or muscle group) is tensed from five to seven seconds, and then, relaxed for twenty to thirty seconds. You are to repeat this sequence at least once every night; if an area remains tense, repeat the exercise up to five times. Notice the contrast between the sensations of tension and relaxation as you complete the exercise.

In order to reinforce the relaxation, use "reinforcing" statements similar to the following when going through the exercise:

- ** I am releasing all of my tension.
- ** I am feeling calm and rested by letting go of my stress.
- ** Let all my tension dissolve away.

1. Make both hands into fists, simultaneously tightening biceps and forearms (hold for 5 to 7 seconds). Now relax (for 20 to 30 seconds), and repeat one of the reinforcing statements above.
2. Wrinkle up your forehead. At the same time, press your head as far back as possible, roll it clockwise in a complete circle, and then, reverse. Now, wrinkle up the muscles of your face by frowning, squinting eyes, pursing lips, hunching shoulders, and pressing your tongue to the roof of your mouth (hold all this for 5 to 7 seconds). Now, relax for 20 to 30 seconds, and repeat a reinforcing statement.
3. Arch your back, while taking a deep breath into your chest, and hold this position for 7 seconds. Then, relax your body for half a minute. Now, take a deep breath, pressing out the stomach. Again, hold for 7 seconds, and then, while repeating a relaxing statement, relax for 30 seconds.
4. Pull feet and toes back toward face, tightening shins for 7 seconds. Relax for 30 seconds. Curl toes, simultaneously tightening calves, thighs, and buttocks (hold for 7 seconds). Finally, relax your whole body for an entire minute. Take in a deep breath, and repeat a reinforcing statement while exhaling.

Session 4, Handout 6

A DEEP BREATHING EXERCISE

As with progressive relaxation, repeat this sequence at least one time every night. Try to clear your mind of all thoughts or images while breathing, but do not worry if you cannot, since it takes time and practice to accomplish this feat. Again, it is best to do this exercise in a private place while at work, such as an empty lounge or the washroom.

- a. If you are on the floor, bend your knees, and move your feet about eight inches apart with your toes turned slightly outward. If you are seated or are standing, keep your feet about eight inches apart with toes turned outward. Whatever position you are in, always make sure that your spine is completely straight.
- b. Quickly scan your body for signs of tension (e.g., sore neck, upset stomach, headache, etc.).
- c. Place one hand on your abdomen and one on your chest.
- d. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, until the air in your abdomen pushes your hand up. Do not take in so much air that you feel uncomfortable. Your chest should move only a little and just with your abdomen.
- e. When you feel at ease with the previous step, smile slightly, inhale through your nose, and exhale through your mouth. Make a quiet, relaxing, whooshing sound like the wind as you gently blow air out of your body. Concentrate a moment on relaxing your mouth, tongue, and jaw.
- f. Repeat steps d and e about five times. When done, scan your body for tension, and examine whether or not you feel less stressed.

Session 5: Understanding the Importance of Self-Enhancing Statements

Objectives: The participant will:

1. Define both self-defeating and self-enhancing statements;
2. Understand how to distinguish these statements from one another;
3. Identify some of the self-enhancing and self-defeating statements that they have made while at work.

Materials: 3 handouts for each participant

Procedures:

1. Review the last session by asking group members to share some of their experiences when they practiced progressive relaxation and deep breathing. Then, quickly run through each while the participants are seated, so that they become familiar with how to do both in an appropriate position while at work.
2. Begin this session by reviewing the importance of perceptions in how one interprets any situation, including those that are stressful. While it is true that all individuals experience inner and outer stressors, it is also true that they can reduce anxiety by learning to think about or interpret these situations in a calmer or more accurate way.

H8

The chart from Handout 8, based on the one developed by Davis, Eshelman and McKay (1988), will clarify this concept. As proposed by Ellis and Harper (1961), in between an event and the physical reaction and/or emotion is a perception or thought -- either realistic or unrealistic -- that defines one's actions or reactions. This implies that one can work to lessen one's personal anxiety, anger, and depression by changing attitudes or "self" statements. Sometimes, this may be difficult for persons who have mental illness, depending on where they are in the cycle of their illness.

Ellis, A., and Harper, R. (1961). A Guide to Rational Living. North Hollywood, CA: Wilshire Books.

Nevertheless, altering perceptions can help participants feel better, and thus is worth mentioning.

3. Next, inform them that negative statements tend to be self-defeating while positive ones can be self-enhancing. In other words, the more self-enhancing statements they make, the better they will feel about themselves and their capabilities.

H9

In order to help them distinguish self-defeating statements from self-enhancing ones, carefully go over Handout 9 with the participants. Then, read aloud the case studies from Handout 10, and ask the following questions:

H10

- a. What job responsibilities do both Leon and Barbara have?
- b. Do you think Leon is beginning to have trouble carrying out his responsibilities because he really cannot do the job, or because he is saying self-defeating things to himself that make him believe he cannot do the job?
- c. Do you think Barbara is more successful at carrying out her responsibilities because she is more capable than Leon, or because she is saying self-enhancing things to herself and planning things that encourage her to continue working?

Point out that in Handout 10, Leon's self-defeating statements become Barbara's self-enhancing statements.

4. Now, using the chart from Handout 8, ask them to take one of Barbara's statements and one of Leon's, and analyze how these statements influence emotions.

Prompt them by writing the following example on the board:

Environmental event: Worker is overwhelmed by customers' demands.

Perceptions or thoughts:

either

self-defeating statement: (by Leon) "I can't

make it today, not with all these impatient people demanding that I take their orders immediately."

or

Self-enhancing statement: (by Barbara) "I am new at this, but I can handle it if I stay calm. Maybe if I jot the orders down, using my own personal shorthand, I'll be able to keep all these orders straight."

Emotional-Physical Reaction:

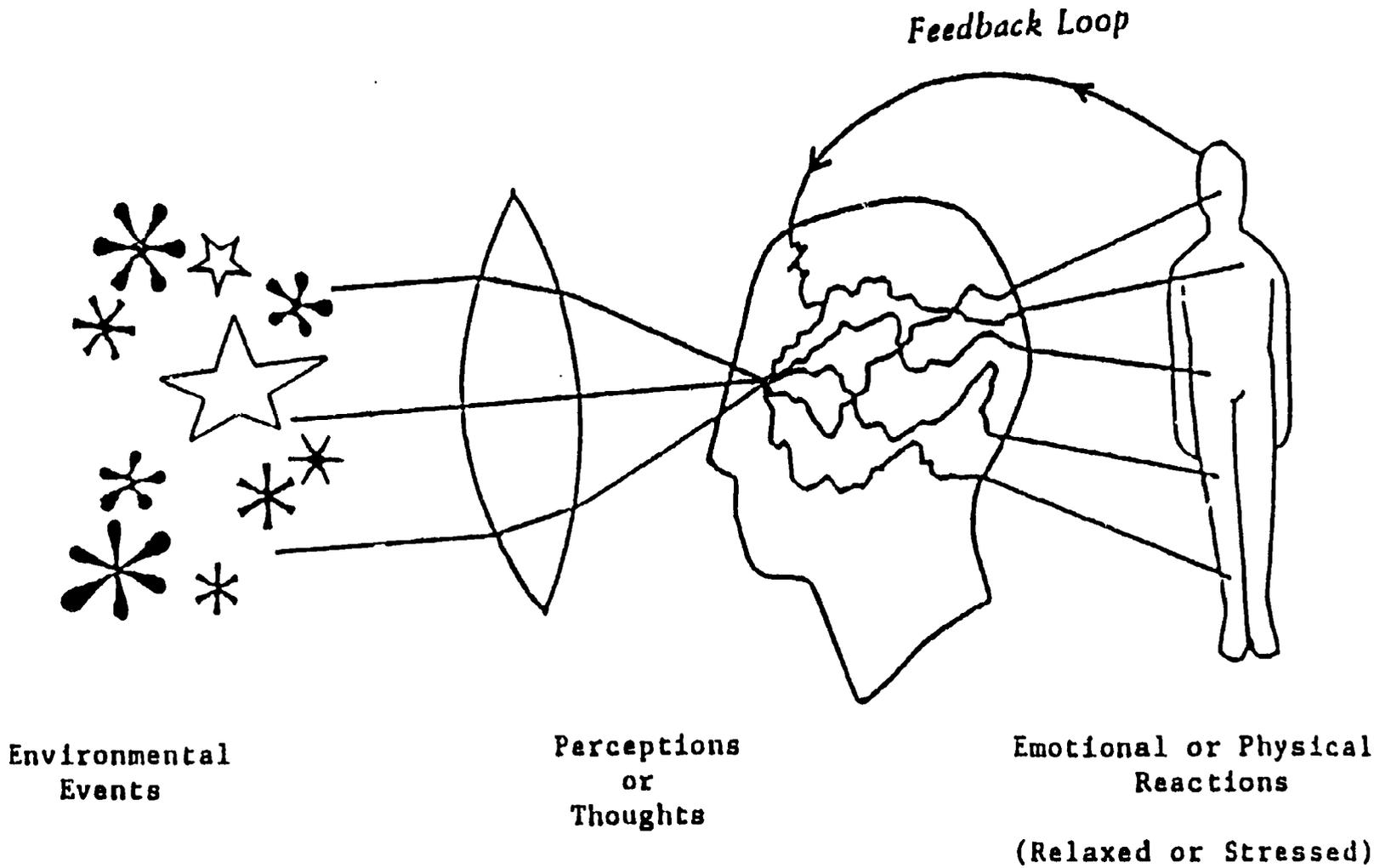
Because of his self-defeating statement, Leon experiences anxiety, anger, resentment, and depression.

Because of her self-enhancing statement, Barbara feels calm, more confident, more in control, and happier.

Ask the participants what other things Leon could have done to control his stress besides using self-enhancing statements, such as a quick deep breathing exercise before he became overwhelmed with anxiety.

5. Ask each participant to share one self-defeating and one self-enhancing statement he or she has made recently at work. They can use the ones from their journals, if thought to be appropriate.
6. For homework, ask the participants to use the chart from Handout 8 to analyze the situations they have just shared, as you did in class.
7. Inform them that the next session will cover how to change their own personal self-defeating statements into self-enhancing ones, as well as give them several examples of typical self-enhancing thoughts.

Perceptions of the Environment and Their Effects on Attitudes



Adapted from: Davis, M., Eshelman, E.R. & McKay, M. (1988). The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook (Third Edition). Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Session 5, Handout 8

Distinguishing Self-Defeating from Self-Enhancing Statements

When I make a self-defeating statement, I:

1. Make an "absolute judgement" about myself, which means I use words like "always" or "never;"

example: "I always make mistakes at work. I will never be able to keep this job."

2. Try to interpret or analyze other people's statements at face value, without knowing all the facts;

example: "My boss barely said hello to me today when she came in. She rarely does that, so she must be unhappy about something I did yesterday."

3. Exaggerate the conditions referred to in a comment;

example: "My boss just told me that he is unhappy with the way I cleaned my tables this morning. I might as well face the fact that he does not like me."

4. Leap to conclusions about myself or the situation;

example: "My co-workers haven't invited me to the baseball game next month. They must not want me to go along."

5. Am being overly critical of myself;

example: "The work I have been doing lately is only average. Even though my boss approves of it, I know I can be doing much better."

6. Overlook certain positive aspects of a situation by focusing only on the negative ones;

example: "Even though I learned quite a bit today from the comments my boss made about my work, I feel really stupid about some of the mistakes I've made. He probably won't ask me to do important tasks anymore."

7. Predict the future outcome with little evidence to support by predictions.

example: "I accidentally threw away an important letter that my boss has been expecting for weeks. She's probably going to fire me."

Do not worry if you find yourself making these kinds of statements fairly often, as it is quite common for most everyone.

Distinguishing Self-Defeating from Self-Enhancing Statements

(continued)

When I make a self-enhancing statement, I:

1. Think or say something positive;

example: "I have made mistakes at work, but have done a lot of things correctly, too. I think that my boss is happy with my overall performance."

2. Provide myself with a realistic view of the situation;

example: "Just because my boss does not speak to me during the day does not mean I have done something wrong. Maybe she is busy or having a bad day."

3. Use my thoughts or perceptions to structure my behavior;

example: "Since I usually get overwhelmed when I have to take orders from a lot of customers, I am going to write them all down from this point on to avoid any confusion."

4. Make sure the perception is appropriate for the situation;

example: "I know that my boss will be very angry because I threw away that important letter, but I doubt it will be enough to get me fired."

5. Make sure that I do not become overwhelmed in negativity.

example: "My boss pointed out quite a few of my recent errors in our meeting this morning. But he also noted that I have improved, and that he likes how motivated and enthusiastic I am about my job."

By using self-enhancing statements, you will reduce the stress and anxiety you experience in certain situations. Do not worry if it is difficult occasionally for you to think in this way. With practice, you can learn to make these statements on a regular basis.

Session 5, Handout 9

Case Study of Leon

Leon has been working at a concessions stand at the city zoo for one month and has been doing very well. One sunny day in May, the zoo is very crowded, and by afternoon, long lines are forming at the concessions stand. As Leon becomes swamped with orders, he thinks to himself, "So far things have been pretty slow at work, and I have been doing well. But I cannot make it today, not with all these impatient people demanding that I immediately take their orders."

A scowling woman steps up to the counter and demands, "Four cokes, three hot dogs, two bags of chips, and five of those big pretzels."

"How am I ever going to remember that enormous order?" Leon asks himself. "Half the time, I cannot even remember my keys!" Hoping the woman will not start calling him names, Leon sheepishly asks, "Could you repeat that order, please?"

Obviously annoyed, the woman again gives him the order. Leon tries to concentrate, but all he hears is himself saying, "I am not good at remembering things."

As the afternoon wears on, Leon has more and more trouble remembering orders. By the end of his shift, he is completely stressed and exhausted.

Case Study of Barbara

On this same day, Barbara is working with Leon at the concessions stand. Barbara, too, has only been at the concessions stand one month, and this is her first experience taking orders from a large crowd of people.

Barbara says to herself, "I have been holding my own on the job for a month, but this is the real test. I know I have had trouble in the past remembering things, so I wonder what I can do to help myself this time? Maybe if I jot down the orders, using my own personal shorthand, I will be able to keep everything straight. 'S' will stand for sodas, 'HD' for hot dogs, 'P' for pretzels, and 'CH' for chips. Now, I am ready."

A man walks up to Barbara and says, "I hope you can remember this one. I am ordering for a big family."

"No problem," Barbara thinks to herself. "I have my system all worked out."

After Barbara gives the man everything he had requested, she thinks to herself, "Good for you, Barb!" She then continues to give people what they order, and by the end of the day, she feels good about herself and confident about her abilities.

Session 3, Handout 10

Session 6: Self-Enhancing Statements

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Learn to change their own personal self-defeating statements into ones that are self-enhancing;
2. Formulate four different kinds of self-enhancing statements to reduce stress at work;
3. Identify some ways to reward themselves for engaging in these new attitudes and behaviors.

Materials: 2 handouts for each participant

Procedures:

1. Begin by asking participants to quickly and quietly run through either a progressive relaxation or a deep breathing exercise. Give them about five minutes to finish.
2. Review the last session by asking participants to share their journal entries with the class. Ask them whether they found it helpful to break down their stressful situations using the chart from Handout 8. Make sure they understand correctly the difference between the event and their perceptions of the event, as it is often difficult for the individual involved in a situation to make that distinction.
- H11 3. Now that participants are familiar with the differences between these types of statements, pass out Handout 11, which illustrates how to change a self-defeating thought into one that is more positive. Read each example aloud for them and discuss anything that remains unclear.
- H12 4. Divide the participants into groups of two or three, and pass out Handout 12. Ask each group to discuss how they would change the given self-defeating statements into those that are self-enhancing. Spend a little time with each group to answer any questions they may have. Also, remind them that there are numerous self-enhancing statements, and that it is acceptable for each one of them to have different ideas about what to say.

5. Now, explain to the group that there are four kinds of self-enhancing statements which will help them to better cope with their stressors; these are orienting, road map, back-up, and self-reinforcing statements.

- a. Orienting statements are formed before individuals even enter into a situation. These statements are based on how they anticipate they will behave or react once they are actually in the situation.

Example:

"In the past, I have done really well at work for about a week, and then, I begin to panic. That is when I start to forget everything I am supposed to do and wonder whether I can continue to work.

This time, before I let it go that far, I am going to start making lists of tasks that must be completed every day, so that I do not forget anything or feel too anxious."

- b. Road map statements are those that people make when breaking down what they must accomplish step-by-step. This is similar to a vocational strategy called task analysis.

Example:

"This morning, my boss gave me an enormous task to complete. It was so much work that I became overwhelmed and have not been able to complete any of it. She needs it done by tomorrow, and I am afraid I will not be able to do it.

Okay, I need to stay calm by doing a deep breathing exercise. Then, I will break the job into smaller tasks, so that I first complete what I know how to do. After that, I will have to ask my co-workers how to finish the rest."

- c. Back-up statements are used to help people handle a situation while it is actually happening.

Example:

"I have so many magazines to unpack from these boxes, I just do not think I can do it before I leave, even though my boss requested it.

Now wait a minute. I need to stay calm, and remember that I have been able to finish large tasks in the past. If I just keep working hard, I will most likely get them all unpacked. If I do not, at least my boss will know that I tried my hardest."

- d. Self-reinforcing statements are rewards that people give to themselves for effectively handling a situation.

Examples:

"So far so good."

"I am a little scared, but at least I am still in control."

"Great! I finished the job without filing anything incorrectly."

6. Add that they ought to reward themselves often for practicing all of these new attitudes and behaviors. In addition, encourage them to reinforce each other in their endeavors because, due to the personal sharing that they have done in class, they have a better understanding of one another's struggles and accomplishments.

Ask them to give some examples of ways they are planning to reward themselves, such as exercising, working on a hobby, reading a good book, shopping for new clothes, doing artwork or writing, or listening to music.

7. Ask the participants to choose two of their stressful work situations from their lists (made in the first two sessions) for which they could formulate orienting, road map, back-up, and/or self-reinforcing statements. Then, tell them that their homework is to create these sentences, as they did in class today. Let them know that it is difficult to be objective about one's own stressful situations, so they ought not to worry if they

can not come up with each type of sentence.
However, do encourage them to try.

8. Inform them that the next session is devoted to the value of assertive behavior and that they should start thinking about the ways in which they are assertive at work. In addition, remind them that they are to be practicing physical relaxation techniques regularly and that they should be able to report to you whether or not they have noticed a difference in their levels of stress.

Self-Defeating and Self-Enhancing Statements

Note the differences between the following sentences in each example.

1. **Self-defeating:** "Because I have never been very good at organizing things, I know I will never figure out how to put these files in order."

Self-enhancing: "I know that I have some trouble organizing things, but maybe I can learn a technique that will help me. I will ask my co-workers for advice."

2. **Self-defeating:** "Because I always have been shy, I will never be able to take this job as a cashier. I would be too nervous about having to talk to so many people every day."

Self-enhancing: "I know I am shy, but I need to start out slowly, trying not to worry or force myself to begin conversations. First, I will work on just greeting the customers. Then, once I'm more used to the job, I will feel better about making conversation."

3. **Self-defeating:** "I am extremely angry right now because my boss told me that I am not doing a good job today. I have never been able to control my temper, and I think I am going to lose it any second. If I yell at my boss, I'll probably lose this job."

Self-enhancing: "I have a problem with losing my temper, but I am not going to let it get to me. Rather than getting too angry, I will relax, take several deep breaths, and count to ten. Then, I will ask my boss if we can calmly talk about my mistakes, so that I do not make them again."

4. **Self-defeating:** "I do not want to go to my new job today. I have always had trouble making friends because I never know what to say to anybody."

Self-enhancing: "I know I have some problems when I'm around new people. This time, however, I am going to think of several topics I could discuss with co-workers before I even get to work, so I don't panic and go blank."

5. **Self-defeating:** "I have such a horrible memory I will never remember all these instructions. I just know that I'll end up embarrassing myself if I ask for help."

Self-enhancing: "I have had some trouble remembering things in the past, so I am going to write down whatever my supervisor teaches me. If I do have questions, I will not feel embarrassed to ask because everyone needs help sometime or another."

Session 6, Handout 11

Changing Self-Defeating Statements to Self-Enhancing Statements

Change the following self-defeating statements to self-enhancing statements:

1. **Self-defeating:** "I have never been good at getting places on time. I know I'm going to lose my job if I don't start getting there right at 9:00."

Self-enhancing:

2. **Self-defeating:** "I am tired all the time because I have to work twice as hard as anyone else here. I do not want everyone to think I need special treatment."

Self-enhancing:

3. **Self-defeating:** "My boss just told me that she is giving me more work to do because I've been doing such a good job lately. I am afraid that I will never be able to handle all of this."

Self-enhancing:

4. **Self-defeating:** "Boy, I forgot another delivery to one of our customers again today. I bet my boss is going to really be mad this time -- he may even fire me."

Self-enhancing:

5. **Self-defeating:** "I'm in trouble now! I can't remember when I'm scheduled to work next, but I'd feel foolish calling the store again to ask for my schedule."

Self-enhancing:

Session 6, Handout 12

Session 7: Assertive Behavior and Stress Management

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Gain an understanding of the differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors;
2. Recognize that they will feel more self-assured and confident when they interact in an assertive manner while at work.

Materials: 3 handouts for each participant

Procedures:

1. Review self-defeating and self-enhancing statements, and collect the participants' homework. Remind them that using self-enhancing statements while engaging in progressive relaxation techniques, deep breathing exercises, or meditation is an extremely effective way to reduce stress.

Ask volunteers to share any experiences they have had in changing their self-defeating thoughts to self-enhancing thoughts. Make sure to praise their efforts.

2. Begin a discussion about the value of assertive behavior. Tell the participants that they are assertive when they stand up for their rights, express personal beliefs and values, accept compliments or criticisms comfortably, disagree without losing their tempers, or say no when they do not want to be involved in something. It does not mean that they must be angry, intolerant, or selfish, but instead, that they should be aware of their personal rights and needs. Too often, people with disabilities are not encouraged to see themselves as equal to others and, as a result, allow themselves to be exploited or mistreated.

H

3. Pass out Handout 13, an exercise illustrating the differences between aggressive, passive, and assertive behaviors. Go through the first three examples with the group, and discuss how passive interactions cause the individual to experience stress, while aggressive ones lead others to feel stress. As noted by Davis, Eshelman, and McKay (1988), it is generally the assertive interactions that lead to the best feelings for everyone involved. Then,

help them to complete the remaining two examples from the handout.

H14

4. Distribute Handout 14 to the group. Read each situation aloud as they read with you. Afterward, ask if they think Narissa and Roberto were acting in their own best interests or just being pushy. Make sure they explain why they feel the way they do.

Point out that had Narissa believed that the most important thing was always to make other people happy, she would have hidden her true feelings and would have agreed to do what Louise had wanted. However, because Narissa truly felt that what Louise was asking her to do was unfair, she risked not pleasing her and refused to comply with her wishes.

In Roberto's case, he initially felt that his boss ought to know automatically what Roberto wanted. He finally realized that he had to make his needs known in order to get them met.

5. Tell the group that incorrect assumptions about oneself and others often interfere with the ability to express one's needs, ideas, or values, leading to internal stress. In other words, when people are not assertive about what they need and believe, they often cause themselves and others undue stress.

The following ideas will help the participants to act more assertively. After discussing each point, ask them to review their lists of stressors and to pick out two situations (preferably two they have yet to consider) in which stress could be reduced by using these concepts. Ask them to share these situations with the class.

- a. An individual cannot possibly please everyone, all the time, in every situation;
- b. If one tries to please others without taking personal needs into account on a regular basis, one is simply encouraging others to believe that their behaviors or requests are reasonable, even if they are not;
- c. If the participants believe that someone else is being unfair, they must stand up for their rights, even if it means

displeasing the other person. This does not mean that they must be rude or selfish, instead, they should be aware of how doing things that seem unfair is causing undue stress. Encourage the participants to fully discuss such situations with case workers, family, or friends, before deciding what actions to take.

d. Most people would like to deal fairly and pleasantly with others. However, they will not be able to do so if the people with whom they are interacting do not make their needs or ideas clear. While it is not always easy to express oneself, it is important, so that others do not make incorrect assumptions.

6. For homework, ask participants to write about how they can use these four ideas to better cope with the stressors they have just shared with the class.

H15

Handout 15, which summarizes the ideas, will help them with this assignment. Also, remind them to be aware of whether they are making self-enhancing statements more often -- both at work and in other situations -- and to write about these as well.

7. Inform them that the next session will cover four basic techniques of assertive behavior useful to them when trying to stand up for themselves on a regular basis.

Understanding the Differences Between
Aggressive, Passive, and Assertive Behaviors

Review the first three examples and complete the remaining two.

1. Ryan: Could you please explain this task to me? I cannot remember exactly how to fill out these forms, and Ms. Bostic needs them by noon today.
- Lucy: Look, I have my own work to do by noon today. I certainly do not have time to help someone who cannot remember things.
- Ryan: Oh, of course. I guess it is inappropriate of me to ask for help. It's just that Ms. Bostic told me that you could explain everything because you've done the forms so many times.
- Lucy: Yes, I have done them, but that doesn't mean I have extra time. You will just have to figure them out yourself. And you better not say anything to Ms. Bostic about it either!
- Ryan: Okay, okay! I'm sorry I even asked you!

In this example, Ryan is being assertive in asking for help, but Lucy is acting aggressively in her refusal. While it is true that she has her own deadlines to meet, she does not need to be threatening and rude in her response.

2. Tyrone: Hey, Jules, come over here! Mr. Dillon asked me to take this draft over to the printer so that we get it back by 5:00 today. I don't feel like doing it; you don't seem too busy, so do this for me, okay?
- Jules: Well, I am supposed to finish this data entry today.
- Tyrone: Please, it's just too hot out, and you know how I hate the heat.
- Jules: Yeah, I hate it, too. But, I guess I can do this for you, if I stay late to finish my own work.
- Tyrone: Thanks, I knew you'd come through!

Jules is behaving in a passive manner, as he is going to do what Tyrone has asked, even though he does not want to and will not be able to finish his own work. In this case, Tyrone is not necessarily aggressive or assertive, but definitely inconsiderate and inappropriate.

3. Marcia: I'm telling you, if I hear one more word about how to stay healthy and in shape from anyone in this office I'm going to scream!
- Barry: Why? Do you think they are wrong?
- Marcia: I think that they are all the same -- obnoxious. Maybe I don't want to stay healthy, and that is my business!
- Barry: You are right, it is your choice. But not everyone who believes in staying fit is obnoxious. That is an unfair assumption.

Session 7, Handout 13

Understanding the Differences Between
Aggressive, Passive, and Assertive Behaviors
(continued)

- Marcia: Oh yeah? Well, I have yet to meet anyone who is into it that hasn't annoyed me to death!
- Barry: Well, maybe you've been a little oversensitive about the whole thing. I am into health and you like me.
- Marcia: If you continue to talk about it, I sure won't!
- Barry: Okay, we do not have to discuss it anymore if it upsets you this much. But that does not mean I think you are being entirely fair to me.

Even though Marcia is obviously free to express her beliefs, she is doing so in an overly aggressive manner, causing Barry feelings of discomfort. Barry is responding in an assertive way, by calmly standing up for himself and his beliefs, even in the face of aggression.

Decide whether the following dialogues contain aggressive, passive, or assertive statements:

4. Mary: Hey, Jack! Everyone from the Department is going out for dinner tonight. Why don't you come along?
- Jack: Thanks for asking, but I think I'll pass this time.
- Mary: What are you talking about? You have to come, it will be so much fun! Do you think you're too good for us?
- Jack: Really, it's nice of you to want me there, but I'm just too tired to go tonight.
- Mary: Oh, come on! It's not like we're going to keep you out half the night or anything! Don't be such a drag!
- Jack: I'll go next time. Tonight is just not good for me.
- Mary: Okay, but people are going to think you're stuck up.

In what manner would you say Jack is responding? And Mary?

5. Aldo: Ellie, can I borrow some money to take my friend out to dinner tonight? I seem to be running low on cash.
- Ellie: You know I'd normally say yes, but I am fairly low myself this month.
- Aldo: Please, I promised her we'd go out when she arrived, but now I don't have the money!
- Ellie: Well, I'm broke, too, but. . .
- Aldo: Come on, I'll pay you back in a couple weeks. I can't let her down! Don't be so cheap!
- Ellie: Okay, okay, here's the money.

How is Ellie acting? And Aldo?

Answer key: 4. Jack is being assertive. Mary is being aggressive. 5. Ellie is being passive and Aldo aggressive.

Session 7, Handout 13

Case Study of Narissa

Narissa arrived at work on time this morning and immediately started slicing potatoes to make french fries for the busy lunch hour. Louise, who helps Narissa make fries, just straggled in fifteen minutes late, which she has done for the past three mornings. She tells their boss that she overslept because her alarm did not go off. Louise walks over to Narissa's work area and says under her breath, "Boy, that was one wild party I went to last night."

Louise then stretches, yawns, and tells Narissa that she will help her as soon as she gets back from the employee washroom. Ten minutes later, Louise returns, puts on an apron, fishes around for a potato slicer in a drawer, and begins slicing potatoes. Suddenly, she turns to Narissa and says, "Do me a favor, Narissa? I went to bed really late last night, and I am so tired that I can barely stand up. How about if I catch up on a little sleep in the lounge and you finish up the potatoes? Our boss stepped out for an hour, so he will never know. I know I have been doing this to you a lot lately, but I promise I will make it up to you."

Narissa looks Louise directly in the eye and says, "No, it is not a deal, Louise. I do not think that you are being fair to me. You know that I do not mind helping you out sometimes, but you have done this to me every day this week."

Case Study of Roberto

Roberto is working in the mail room of a law firm in the city. Whenever he needs to sharpen his pencil, he has to walk over to a secretary's desk down the hall. He believes that it would save him a little time every day if he had a pencil sharpener to use in his work area. Roberto would like to ask his supervisor for the sharpener but is afraid to ask. He has been hoping that his boss will notice Roberto's frequent trips to the secretary's desk.

One day, Roberto finally works up his courage, steps into his supervisor's office, and asks, "Since my job calls for a lot of paperwork, how about getting me a pencil sharpener of my own so I do not have to bother Lynn all the time to use hers? I would really appreciate it."

His supervisor thanks him for the good suggestion, and Roberto has a pencil sharpener of his own within the week.

Four Ideas to Remember When Acting Assertively

You cannot possibly please everyone, all of the time, in every situation. If you try to do so, you will cause yourself a great deal of stress. This does not mean that you are to be selfish or never make sacrifices for your family and friends; rather, just be certain that the things to which you agree are not making you anxious and unhappy.

If you try to please others without taking into account your own needs on a regular basis, you are encouraging these people to believe that their behaviors or requests are reasonable and that they can continue to ignore your feelings. This does not mean that you are responsible for the unfair things that happen to you; however, you do have some control over how people treat you, and you will feel better if you make your needs known some of the time.

If you believe that someone else is being unfair, you must stand up for your rights, even if it means displeasing the other person. Again, this does not mean that you are to be rude or selfish; instead, be aware of how doing things that seem to be unfair is causing you undue stress. It is often difficult for anyone to be completely objective about the treatment they are receiving in all situations; therefore, before you take any action, be sure to discuss the details with your caseworker, family, or friends.

Most people would like to deal fairly and pleasantly with others. However, they will not be able to do so if the people with whom they are interacting do not make their needs or ideas clear. It is not always easy to express yourself, but it is important, so that others do not make incorrect assumptions about what you believe or need.

Session 8: Four Techniques of Assertive Behavior

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Understand the four basic techniques of assertive behavior;
2. Be able to demonstrate assertive behaviors in many situations while at work.

Materials: 2 handouts for each participant

Procedures:

1. Ask the participants to share what they wrote about how certain situations would be less stressful if they were to express their personal ideas and needs. If they have not already done so, encourage them to actually use these ideas when confronted with similar situations in the future. If they have expressed themselves, ask them to share with their classmates whether or not it reduced levels of stress.
2. Begin by reviewing the definition of assertive behavior. Inform the participants that when trying to be more assertive they should use the following:
 - a. Assertive requests;
 - b. Assertive expressions;
 - c. Assertive refusals;
 - d. Defensive statements.

Write these on the board, so that you can refer to them throughout this session. Then, inform them that there are several ways to use each of these techniques, depending on the situation with which they are faced.

H16

3. Distribute Handout 16 to the participants. Go over each of the given situations, and be sure they understand the different ways to use each of these four techniques.

H17

4. Because this is quite a bit of information to assimilate, tell the participants that they are going to practice using these techniques in situations like ones they may face at work. Pass out Handout 17, a series of role plays designed to help the participants practice assertive behaviors.

Ask the participants to break down into groups of two, assign one or two case studies to each group (repeat examples if necessary), and ask them to create role plays which they then will present to their classmates. Allow time for rehearsal before asking each group to present its scenarios. Also, remind them to refer to Handout 16 while creating their role plays. Be sure to spend time with each group in order to answer questions or to provide help and encouragement.

After each group presents, prompt others to make comments about how levels of stress were reduced in each instance. Point out that each group created different ways to handle the same situations, all of which proved to be effective stress management techniques. In other words, make the point that it is perfectly acceptable for each individual to find different ways to utilize the methods of stress management taught in this course.

5. For homework, ask the participants to choose a situation at work that causes them stress in the beginning of the week and to write about which of the four techniques they used to handle it. This time, ask them to pick a new situation, instead of one that appears on their lists, so that they learn to use these techniques more spontaneously. If they were not able to use the techniques in these situations, they are to explain why and how they could when faced with similar situations in the future.

Then, instruct group members to try the techniques again later in the week and to write about whether or not their experiences were easier, more difficult, or the same.

6. Inform the group that in the next session they will practice ways to maintain all of the stress management techniques they have learned in this course.

Four Techniques of Assertive Behavior

The following suggestions will help you to engage more effectively in assertive behaviors.

ASSERTIVE REFUSALS

When assertively refusing to do something:

1. Say "no" as clearly and plainly as you can, without being unnecessarily rude or mean;
2. Provide an alternate course of action to the person making the unfair request;
3. Offer a reason that explains why you are refusing, but do not make excuses, as if your refusal is unreasonable.

ASSERTIVE REQUESTS

When assertively requesting something:

1. Clearly state what you want the other person either to do or to say;
2. Try not to make it seem as though you are demanding or forcing this person to do something;
3. Be sure that you ask in a polite manner.

ASSERTIVE EXPRESSIONS

When assertively expressing positive opinions or feedback:

1. Tell the person exactly what behavior or attitude you are praising;
2. Compliment the behavior immediately after it occurs;
3. Give your praise in a genuine and enthusiastic way.

When assertively expressing feelings about receiving positive feedback:

1. Listen carefully to what is being said;
2. Thank the person before any other response;
3. Give the person some additional facts about the situation being complimented, if it seems appropriate;
4. Indicate, if you wish, how the positive feedback makes you feel. For instance, you can say, "Thank you, that makes me feel great."

Four Techniques of Assertive Behavior
(continued)

When assertively expressing negative opinions or feedback:

1. Avoid starting out with a negative statement, which will most likely upset or alienate the person receiving the feedback. Rather, try first to say something more positive or neutral about their behavior;
2. State your understanding of the problem, but avoid anything that might seem like a personal attack on the other person. For example, instead of calling someone a liar, try saying that it does not seem as if he or she is being up front with you;
3. Try to discuss ways to alter the situation in the future.

When assertively expressing feelings about receiving negative feedback:

1. Let the other person finish giving the negative feedback before you begin to respond;
2. Do not deny the problem or get defensive. Even if the person is incorrect, the problem must be resolved; the best way to do so is to avoid an argument or angry feelings;
3. Ask for specifics -- such as what you did wrong or what you failed to do -- so that you can correct future behavior;
4. State, if appropriate, how the feedback makes you feel, and assure the person that you will do your best to remedy the situation.

DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES

When using a "time out" in order to prevent an outburst of anger:

1. State that you are uncertain or angry about the issue, but that you need time to think about it before responding;
2. Say exactly how much time you need and exactly when you will give a response to the person.

When using a "negative assertion" to defend your actions:

1. Acknowledge that you made a mistake, or at least, that you might have made one;
2. Make a statement related to the behavior, such as, "It is strange that the doors were unlocked this morning because I always check to see that they are locked before I leave at night."

Four Techniques of Assertive Behavior
(continued)

3. Make sure that both people feel satisfied with the result of the interaction.

When using the "anger starvation technique" to defend your actions:

1. Acknowledge that the other person is angry or upset;
2. Do not accuse the person of having a problem with anger because he or she is expressing it at you;
3. Suggest that you are willing to talk about the situation that is making this person angry after everyone involved calms down.

When using the "broken record technique" to defend your actions:

1. Clearly state your position, idea, or belief;
2. Repeat your statement until the person understands what you are saying or what you believe. It is best to use this technique when you are finding it too difficult to reason with someone.

When using the "defensive clipping technique" to defend your actions:

1. Clearly state a simple yes or no to the person's questions or statements;
2. Do not add any ideas or beliefs, so that the person will get to the point as quickly as possible.

Practicing Assertive Techniques

Role play the following examples with a classmate.

1. Assertive Refusal

Your boss has just asked you to work through your break for the fourth day in a row. However, he has not asked any of your co-workers to skip their breaks.

2. Assertive Request

You need someone to answer the phone because you are going downstairs for a few minutes to check on some inventory.

3. Assertive Expression, when giving negative feedback

Your hands are covered with flour, and the co-worker that you have asked to get some butter out of the refrigerator has refused to assist you.

4. Assertive Expression, when receiving negative feedback

Your boss tells you that she is not happy with you because you have the habit of coming to work 10 to 15 minutes late every morning.

5. Assertive Expression, when giving positive feedback

You notice that a co-worker who has completely ignored you for an entire month is making sure that she greets you with a cheery good morning every day.

6. Assertive Expression, when receiving positive feedback

Your boss compliments you on your efficiency when sorting the mail.

7. Defensive Time Out

Your boss says that you are doing very well and suggests that she would like you to work 5 additional hours per week. You are angry because you have told her numerous times that you are happy with your schedule as it is.

Practicing Assertive Behaviors

(continued)

8. Defensive Negative Assertion

You forgot to lock the office door when you left work yesterday evening, and your boss confronts you with your mistake first thing the next morning.

9. Anger Starvation Defensive Technique

A co-worker will not stop yelling at you because you accidentally spilled some white typewriter correction fluid on her new, black, wool skirt.

10. Broken Record Defensive Technique

A co-worker keeps asking you if he can have a cigarette. You have already told him that you, too, are running low, but he pays no attention and keeps asking.

11. Defensive Clipping Technique

A co-worker obviously wants to borrow the newspaper that you just bought during break. She keeps interrupting you while you are reading, but then refuses to come right out and ask for the section she wants.

Session 8, Handout 17

Session 9: Learning to Retain Stress Management Techniques

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Understand the value of the rehearsal technique when deciding the best way to handle a repeatedly stressful situation;
2. Learn several ways to maintain the behaviors learned in this course.

Materials: 1 handout for each participant

Procedures:

1. Review the last session by asking participants to share their journal entries. Ask them to discuss whether the assertive techniques were helpful and why or why not. Use this feedback to structure your presentation of the techniques in future sessions.
2. Introduce the fact that many people may find it easier to respond to certain stressful situations by rehearsing what they would like to say or do before confronted with the event. The rehearsal technique will be most useful when dealing with stressors that occur on a regular basis since it is not a spontaneous method. Although the stressful situation might not happen in the same way every time, the rehearsed response from prior situations can be appropriately altered to better fit the current predicament.

Also, point out that they have probably already used this technique in many situations, including rehearsing or practicing for plays, recitals, or oral reports in school.

3. Ask each participant to pick out a stressful work situation for which he or she could effectively rehearse methods of coping. The situation should be one that occurs frequently and that they have had trouble handling in the past. Give them a few examples, such as disagreeing with the decisions of their supervisors or finding it too difficult to ask for help when assigned certain tasks.
4. Pass out Handout 18, a summary of the steps to take when running through a rehearsal. Ask them to write brief answers to the first two questions based on the situations they

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have just chosen. Now, tell the participants to break into groups of two to complete the handout. Spend time with each group to answer questions and to monitor whether the coping strategies they choose are effective and appropriate to their situations.

Remind them to ask caseworkers, family members, or friends to help them rehearse their responses to stressful situations in the future. Convey that they should rehearse with the person who will be the most objective when deciding the best responses or behaviors.

5. Point out to participants that, since this curriculum focuses on confronting stressors in the workplace, there are many alternate ways to deal with stress that you were not able to discuss in class. There are a vast number of effective stress management techniques; different methods work well for different people. Convey that the techniques presented in this curriculum are intended not as concrete solutions, but as a starting place when they begin to consider personal methods of coping with stress.
6. Also, be sure to mention that a healthy diet (low in sugar, salt, and caffeine) and regular exercise are two ways that they can prepare their bodies and minds to cope with stressors in all situations. A healthy diet and exercise are not easily accomplished and may take months to incorporate into a daily schedule, but are worth the effort nonetheless. Encourage participants to discuss their diets with a nutritionist or physician and to read more about healthy diets and exercise in the near future.
7. Pass out Handout 19, which gives some suggestions about how to maintain the stress management techniques you have presented in this course. Go over each one, and ask the participants to add to the list any ideas that they believe are missing.
8. At this point, inform the participants that if they are interested in continuing to work on their coping skills, individual sessions for stress management are available. Tell the group that in these sessions they will have the opportunity to analyze and deal with stressors at work more closely, particularly

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those that they may not have felt comfortable sharing with the class.

9. For homework, ask the participants to practice rehearsing their responses to a stressful work situation with their caseworkers, family, or friends. Encourage them to write in their journals about whether they were able to cope with the situation in the way they had practiced, and whether or not it relieved some of their stress.
10. Remind the participants that the next session is the last. They should think about the things they gained from this course, as well as the things they would like to see improved.

Rehearsing Your Responses to Stress

The following steps will help you to rehearse effective responses to your stressful situations.

1. Select or think about a situation that is causing you to feel stressed. It will help to start with one that occurs often and to which you have not responded very well in the past. Describe this situation using Handout 4 from Session 2.
2. Choose the end result you would like to accomplish in this situation. At this point, do not think about how you will actually achieve the end result, but only what that result would be. Try to be fair and realistic.
3. Now, discuss with your caseworker, a family member, or friend the things you will actually say or do to cope with the situation. Try to think of solutions that are assertive (not aggressive) and that are satisfying to everyone involved. Also, give some thought to the risks involved if you respond in the ways you have chosen.
4. Practice these responses or behaviors with the person you have chosen to see if they are effective and appropriate. Then, switch roles and play the person who is causing you to feel stressed. This also will help you to make sure that you are treating the other person as you would like to be treated.
5. Discuss whether or not you are satisfied with your response. In deciding, talk about whether you maintained eye contact, as well as appropriate voice volume, facial expressions, and body posture. Ask the person with whom you are rehearsing whether or not your message was clear.
6. If you and the person with whom you are practicing find that you are not satisfied with the rehearsal, try it again with the necessary changes in mind.
7. If there is time, try to practice the final version a day or two in a row, just to make sure that you remember everything once in the stressful situation.

Session 9, Handout 18

Some Ways You Can Remember Stress Management Techniques

The following suggestions will help you when trying to retain all of the techniques covered in this course.

1. Continue to write in your journal, carefully recording your stressors, as well as the ways in which you coped with them. By doing this, you can decide whether or not you have handled the situations in the most effective ways. Because you will be writing about your experiences **after** you have calmed down, you are more likely to be objective in your decisions.
2. It is important to stay in touch with friends (especially those from this group, if possible) or groups that can help you when things get rough at work.
3. Every so often, review your handouts, notes, and old journal entries from this course. You may find that you rediscover some ideas for managing your stress about which you had forgotten.
4. Try telling others about the stress management techniques you have learned, especially if they mention that they are stressed.
5. Make a cassette tape that you can listen to when feeling anxious. On this tape you can include music that you like, as well as some of your own self-enhancing statements. It is a good idea to listen to this tape before or after work, particularly on days that either will be stressful or have been stressful.
6. Remember that other behaviors -- such as exercising, maintaining a balanced diet, or recognizing humor in certain situations -- also can reduce stress.
7. Try to anticipate problems that may crop up at work and rehearse how you would deal with them if they do. For instance, if you know that you tend to lose your temper when criticized by the boss, think of ways to react calmly to him or her before you find yourself in that situation. Or, if you know that you have trouble making friends, rehearse some things that you could talk about before you even get to work.

4. Encourage the participants to review the materials that they have saved in their folders and their journal entries on a regular basis. By doing such a review, they will find helpful information and advice when they run into work situations that were discussed in this course.
5. When speaking to the participants individually and/or as a class, express your own feelings about separating from the group, and model an appropriate way to say goodbye. Encourage each participant to find an acceptable way to say goodbye to each other and to you.
6. Remind the group that individual stress management sessions are available.

Session 10: Summarizing and Evaluating the Course

Objectives: The participants will:

1. Integrate the different experiences that they had in the Managing Stress at the Workplace curriculum;
2. Complete the Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire and the Managing Stress at the Workplace Course Evaluation, as well as provide verbal feedback about their satisfaction with curriculum materials to staff;
3. Recognize and express their feelings about leaving the group and share these in an appropriate manner with other group members and staff.

Materials: 1 Stress Questionnaire for each participant
1 Course Evaluation for each participant

Procedures:

Q1

1. Before class, review the introduction and first session for a summary of course goals. To begin this session, administer again the Young Adult/Teen Stress Questionnaire. Then, briefly review each of the preceding lessons with the participants in order to help them summarize the things that they have learned, as well as to recognize the ways they have met course goals.
2. Also, ask participants to share their personal reactions to the information given in this course, as well as to the instructional methods you have used. Prompt them by giving your own reactions to the way things went. At this point, do not encourage discussion of their feelings about one another or saying goodbye, but stick to feedback about actual course structure. They will be able to explore their feelings at the end of this session.

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3. Instruct the participants to complete the Managing Stress at the Workplace Evaluation, and tell them that they are not expected to put their names on it. Be sure to thank them for their input about this and the program in general.

MANAGING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE COURSE EVALUATION

Mark True (T) or False (F) after the following statements:

1. The information covered in this course seemed relevant to issues in the workplace. _____
2. I will use what I have learned in this group at work fairly often. _____
3. I learned that I already knew some effective methods for managing my stress before I joined this group. _____
4. I feel more confident about my abilities to cope with stress because I participated in this course. _____
5. I feel better about working since I took this class.

6. The stress management techniques covered in this course are simple and efficient enough to use every day at work.

7. I liked this course. _____
8. It helped me to talk about some of the stressful situations I have experienced at work. _____
9. If I could change or improve this course, I would:

10. Please write any other comments that you may have about this course:

APPENDIX

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Individual Sessions for Stress Management

This information was designed specifically for case managers, vocational teachers, and consumers who are helping individuals to reduce their personal stress.

In order to help an individual cope with personal stressors at work, first review under what circumstances he or she experiences unique stressors, preferably by going to the actual workplace. Notice in particular the ways in which the individual completes actual job tasks and interacts with supervisors or co-workers. In addition, it would help to consider other job-related stressors (such as the loss of public assistance or SSDI, family interactions, or family perceptions of career/job goals and choices, the reporting of hospitalizations to employers and co-workers, and dealing with unmet career goals) and their impact on employment. Observe current methods of stress management as well.

This review will help you to develop a sense of the areas in which the individual needs assistance, including any one of the following, either separately or in combination:

1. Learning to clarify employee/employer roles;
2. Realizing conflict resolution/reduction techniques unique to the job;
3. Developing a sense of belonging at the job;
4. Teaching thorough sequential work skills;
5. Separating personal life from the workplace;
6. Planning long-term career goals to reduce impulsive acts;
7. Encouraging recreation and social activities outside of the job setting.

Once you and the participant have decided together on which areas to focus, you can begin to develop an **Individual Stress Management Strategy** specific to the individual and stressful area. Start by completing the Task and Stress Analysis Checklist about both job responsibilities and social interactions, so that the individual will learn to break stressors into a more manageable form. You may need to set up a plan to maintain boundaries between his or her personal life and job activities. Use any of the exercises from this curriculum that seem particularly relevant or useful.

In order for this person to maintain these stress management strategies, the case manager, vocational teachers, consumer-teachers, and other team personnel must regularly reinforce or review the mutually formulated plan. Of course, even though the individual will be actively involved in planning and implementing the most effective techniques for stress reduction, significant others need to be available to provide support, as well as to evaluate his or her success with the strategies.

Individual needs will be highly variable and require an array of creative responses. A particularly good book of exercises is The Centering Book (Hendricks and Wills, 1975). Tell the participant that making a personal tape of individual stress management exercises will be a useful tool. Suggest that it is helpful to listen to the tape during breaks on the job or on the way to work.

Practicing Situational Analysis to Develop an Individual Stress Management Strategy

Mario is a bright, personable, but very nervous bagger at a local grocery store. He articulately described how the sight of all the groceries pouring down the conveyor belt toward him was overwhelming, rendering him unable to pack the bags properly. This was particularly problematic on Saturdays, the busiest day. Mario was ready to resign, but was willing to try some alternatives. His caseworker went to the store with him one Saturday and observed his situation. Then, they completed a Task and Stress Analysis Checklist and several possibilities for stress management evolved. These techniques included: choosing a slower cashier with whom to work; arranging an alternating schedule of cart retrieval and bagging; working a shorter day on Saturdays; and using break time to practice deep breathing techniques with accompanying instruction on an individual tape player. Mario and his case worker decided that he needed to utilize a combination of these techniques. As a result of these efforts, Mario was able to overcome most of his stress and was able keep his job.

Ella possessed the skills and personality for her cashiering and stocking job with a national drug store chain, but certain sights and situations related to waiting on customers would trigger remembrances of early childhood abuse. At these times, Ella would rush away from her position to the back room. As there were several triggering stimuli, the first task was to label these to bring them to a conscious level. Once labelled, the problem was addressed both in individual therapy and by constructing a script to which Ella could listen in order to calm herself after these shocks. Eventually, Ella realized that she could not anticipate all such triggers in a workplace that demanded interaction with the public, so she appropriately found a job that provided a different kind of stimulation. She began working for a veterinarian and now is feeling much better about her abilities and her job.

As you can see, one must develop a level of understanding and trust for these interventions to work, but the benefits to the individual are tremendous.

Task and Stress Analysis Checklist

Completed by: _____

Date: _____

Workplace: _____

Environment (e.g., large or small office, factory, restaurant, city, rural, etc.):

Is there a potential loss of income (e.g., SSDI): _____

TASK ANALYSIS

Time span: 1 minute 1 hour longer

Number of steps in activity: _____

 Repetitious or New Learning

Rate of work:

 Slow Fast Not a factor

Equipment used, if any: _____

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|---|---|---|------------------|
| | Easy | | | | Very Hard |
| Degree of difficulty: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Technical knowledge: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|---|---|---|-------------|
| <u>Physical factors:</u> | Low | | | | High |
| Coordination: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Lifting/Strength: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Moving from place to place: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attention span: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|

Number of people present: _____

Task and Stress Analysis Checklist

(continued)

Length of orientation time:

| | Low | | | High | |
|-------------------------|-----|---|---|------|---|
| Memory required: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Public contact: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Co-worker interactions: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Types of interpersonal interactions:

| | Low | | | High | |
|--------------------------|-----|---|---|------|---|
| Giving & receiving help: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Sharing equipment/tools: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Depending on others: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Competing: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Verbal or nonverbal: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Low | | | High | |
|---|-----|---|---|------|---|
| Job fit to person's interests, culture, history, skills: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Academic knowledge: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Problem-solving: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Sensory discrimination (colors, textures): | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Inherent frustration: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Verbal or non-verbal communication (circle one or both)

Task and Stress Analysis Checklist

(continued)

Instructions Individual Will Follow to Manage Stressors:

A. Type of directions (e.g., oral, written, diagram):

B. Unit of learning (e.g., number of steps taught at one time):

C. Style of instruction (e.g., modeling, feedback, trial and error, practice/repetition, reality testing):

D. External prompts (e.g., audio, visual)

Overall rating of stress-inducing factors for the individual:

HIGH

MEDIUM

AVERAGE

LOW

STRESS MANAGEMENT SUGGESTED READINGS

- Alberti & Emmons. (1970). Your perfect right. San Luis Obispo: Impact.
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- Burns, D. (1980). Feeling good: The new mood therapy. New York: William Morrow.
- Carrington, P. (1984). Releasing. New York, New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc.
- Davis, M., Eshelman, E.R. & McKay, M. (1988). The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook (Third Edition). Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
- Dempsy, M. & Tihista, R. (1981). Your stress personalities. California: Presidio Press.
- Elkind, D. (1981). The hurried child. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley.
- Ellis, A. & Harper, R. (1961). A guide to rational living. North Hollywood, CA: Wilshire Books.
- Ginott, H. (1975). Teacher and child. New York: Avon.
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- Gunther, Bernard. (1968). Sense Relaxation. New York City: Macmillan.
- Hendricks, G. & Wills, R. (1975). The centering book. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
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- Jacobson, E. (1957). You must relax. New York, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Leider, R. & Harding, S. (1987). Taking charge. Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden.
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STRESS MANAGEMENT SUGGESTED READINGS

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- Rathbone. (1969). Relaxation. New York, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schultz, J.H. & Luthe, W. (1959). Autogenic training: A psycho-physiological approach to psychotherapy. New York: Grune and Stratton.
- Sehnert, K.W. (1986). Stress/Unstress. Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden Foundation.
- Selye, H. (1976). The stress of life (revised edition). New York, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Spreads, C. (1978). Breathing: The ABC's. New York: Harper and Row.
- Winn, M. (1983). Children without childhood. New York: Pantheon.
- Wolpe, J. & Wolpe, D. (1988). Life without fear. Oakland CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Stress Management Cassette Tapes

- Hazelden Foundation, (1988). Serenity: Recovery, Subliminal Audio. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Hazelden Foundation.
- Pulos, L. (1988). Self-Hypnosis and Subliminal Reinforcement, Cassette One and Two. New Rochelle, New York.