**Signs OF STRESS**

**Physical Symptoms:**
- Fast heartbeat
- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Sleep difficulties
- Fast breathing
- Backaches
- Nausea or Indigestion
- Sweating hands/perspiration
- Tight neck & shoulders

**Feelings/Emotions:**
- Afraid (e.g., to make decisions)
- Feeling anxious, tense, nervous, jumpy, or unable to relax
- Feeling hostile, angry at minor things
- Self doubt
- Lack of interest
- Sad/depressed
- Crying
- Feeling powerless to change things

**Actions/Behaviors:**
- Exaggerating behaviors (e.g., hard workers turn into workaholics; quiet people turn into loners)
- Withdrawing from friends, family, teammates, or colleagues
- Working harder, but getting less done
- Smoking more
- Scapegoating, blaming others, finding fault, being critical or hard to please
- Having fights about everything and nothing
- Pretending that nothing is wrong
- Overuse of alcohol
- Grinding of teeth at night

**Mental/Thoughts:**
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Constant worry
- Loss of sense of humor
- Drop in performance
- Forgetfulness
- Poor concentration
- Inability to make decisions
- "This is horrible/unbearable."
- "I'm not good enough."
- "I'm going to flunk out of school."
- "I'm going to go crazy."

**Spiritual Symptoms**
- Emptiness
- Loss of meaning
- Doubt
- Unforgiving
- Martyrdom
- Looking for magic
- Loss of direction
- Cynicism
- Apathy
- Needing to "prove" self

**Relational Symptoms**
- Isolation
- Intolerance
- Resentment
- Loneliness
- Lashing out
- Hiding
- Loss of direction
- Clamming up
- Lowered sex drive
- Nagging
- Distrust
- Lack of intimacy
- Using people
- Fewer contacts with friends
Guided Mindfulness & Relaxation Audio

(cont'd) simply focus again on the present moment. One way to do this is by paying attention to your body. For example, is your breathing fast or slow, deep or shallow? Meditation may bring up certain feelings or emotions. If this happens, don't try to rid your mind of these feelings. Just focus on what you feel at the present moment. Don't get lost in the thoughts that those feelings might trigger.

Progressive muscle relaxation
Have you ever had an aching back or pain in your neck when you were anxious or stressed? When you have anxiety or stress in your life, one of the ways your body responds is with muscle tension. Progressive muscle relaxation is a method that helps relieve that tension.

Key points

In progressive muscle relaxation, you tense a group of muscles to gain some control over the level of tension, and you relax them to become less tense than before. You work on your muscle groups in a certain order. If you have trouble falling asleep, this method may also help with your sleep problems.

Guided imagery and visualization
Have you ever been in the middle of a stressful situation and wished you could be somewhere else—like lying on a tropical beach? Guided imagery helps you use your imagination to take you to a calm place.

Key points

Because of the way the mind and body are connected, guided imagery can make you feel like you are experiencing something just by imagining it.

You can do guided imagery with audio recordings, an instructor, or a script (a set of written instructions) to lead you through the process.

You use all of your senses in guided imagery. For example, if you want a tropical setting, you can imagine the warm breeze on your skin, the bright blue of the water, the sound of the surf, the sweet scent of tropical flowers, and the taste of coconut so that you actually feel like you are there.

Imagining yourself in a calm, peaceful setting can help you relax and relieve stress.

Note: This text was adapted from WebMD
Stress Management via Downloads for Computers and MP3 Players

Breathing, Meditation, Visualization, Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Breathing exercises for relaxation
Have you ever noticed how you breathe when you feel relaxed? The next time you are relaxed, take a moment to notice how your body feels. Or think about how you breathe when you first wake up in the morning or just before you fall asleep. Breathing exercises can help you relax, because they make your body feel like it does when you are already relaxed.

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as increased heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure, all decrease as you breathe deeply to relax.

Key points

The way you breathe affects your whole body. Breathing exercises are a good way to relax, reduce tension, and relieve stress.

Breathing exercises are easy to learn. You can do them whenever you want, and you don't need any special tools or equipment.

Guided meditation
Meditation means different things to different people, and there are many ways to do it. This topic focuses on a kind of meditation called mindful meditation. This practice may help you relax and relieve stress.

Key points

The goal of mindful meditation is to focus your attention on the things that are happening right now in the present moment. The idea is to note what you experience without trying to change it.

Meditation can help you relax, because you are not worrying about what happened before or what may occur in the future.

You don't need any special tools or equipment to practice this meditation. You just sit in a comfortable position in a chair or on the floor. Or you can lie down, if that is more comfortable for you.

If your mind wanders, don't worry or judge yourself. When you become aware that your thoughts are wandering,