

SELF-CARE*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

- 🕒 **Time:** 15 minutes
- ➔ **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
 - Discuss the importance of self care and social support;
 - Create a self care contract for themselves.
- ★ **Training Methods:** Brainstorm, Large Group Activity
- ✓ **In This Activity You Will...**
 - Discuss stress and ways to manage stress (5 minutes)
 - Lead the group in one self-care activity (10 minutes)
- ✂ **Materials:**
 - Handout - 101 Ways To Take Care of Yourself and Reduce Stress
 - Handout - Self-Talk
 - Handout - Changing Negative Thinking into Positive
 - Handout - Practicing Self-Care
 - Handout - 10 Things You Can Do to Enhance Your Emotional Well-Being
 - Handout - Self-Care Contract
- ✂ **Preparation:**
 - Review the handouts and choose one activity from them to facilitate with the full group.

Instructions

1. In this next section we want to talk about stress. Stress not only impacts our health and well-being but it can impact the work we do and how well we do what we do. As peers we need to think about these issues especially since we are dealing with a very serious health issue (HIV) that is impacting our clients and even some of us. Stress can make any health condition worse so it is imperative that we find ways to manage stress.
2. Ask: What is stress? Webster defines stress as “a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation.”
3. Ask: What are some problems that stress can cause? (heart disease, high blood pressure, irritable bowel syndrome, etc.)
4. Ask: What are some benefits of stress? (learn coping strategies, deal with emergencies, motivate us, etc.)
5. Ask: What are ways you manage stress? Take a few answers, and then point out the handout, 101 Ways to Take Care of Yourself and Reduce Stress. Give the group a few minutes to look over.
6. Lead the group through the one self-care activity that you chose previously.
7. Give the group a few minutes to fill out the “self-care contract”.
8. Have participants share what they have written in their contracts with their neighbor.

* This module comes from the Lotus Women’s Peer Education Training Manual, Center for Health Training and Women Organized to Respond to Life Threatening Diseases (WORLD), 2008. .

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[The training] helped me to learn how to keep myself healthy 'cause you can't really help other people if you're not healthy inside in your thoughts and your emotions.

Graduate from the Lotus training program



Summary

Wrap up session by making the following points:

- It's not about removing stress from our lives, it's about managing it!
- Remember we can turn to one another as resources when feeling stressed.
- If we don't take care of ourselves, we'll have nothing left to offer others that we want to support.
- Use your new knowledge of lab tests and lab values to be a partner with your doctor.
- Live smarter, healthier, and happier by being in control.

* This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit. This module comes from the Lotus Women's Peer Education Training Manual, Center for Health Training and Women Organized to Respond to Life Threatening Diseases (WORLD), 2008.

101 WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND TO REDUCE STRESS

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier
2. Prepare for the morning the night before
3. Avoid tight fitting clothes
4. Avoid relying on chemical aids
5. Set appointments ahead
6. Don't rely on your memory...write it down
7. Practice preventative maintenance
8. Make duplicate keys
9. Say no more often
10. Set priorities in your life
11. Avoid negative people
12. Use time wisely
13. Simplify meal times
14. Always make copies of important papers
15. Anticipate your needs
16. Repair anything that doesn't work properly
17. Ask for help with the jobs you dislike
18. Break large tasks into bite size portions
19. Look at problems as challenges
20. Look at challenges differently
21. Unclutter your life
22. Smile
23. Be prepared for rain
24. Tickle a baby
25. Pet a friendly dog or cat
26. Don't know all the answers
27. Look for the silver lining
28. Say something nice to someone
29. Teach a kid to fly a kite
30. Walk in the rain
31. Schedule play time into every day
32. Take a bubble bath
33. Be aware of the decisions you make
34. Believe in yourself
35. Stop saying negative things to yourself
36. Visualize yourself winning
37. Develop your sense of humor
38. Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better today
39. Have goals for yourself
40. Dance a jig

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SESSION HANDOUT # 1 of 6 (cont.)

101 WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND TO REDUCE STRESS (CONT.)

41. Say hello to a stranger
42. Ask a friend for a hug
43. Look up at the stars
44. Practice breathing slowly
45. Learn to whistle a tune
46. Read a poem
47. Listen to a symphony
48. Watch a ballet
49. Read a story curled up in bed
50. Do a brand new thing
51. Stop a bad habit
52. Buy yourself a flower
53. Take time to smell the flower
54. Find support from others
55. Ask someone to be your “vent partner”
56. Do it today
57. Work at being cheerful and optimistic
58. Put safety first
59. Do everything in moderation
60. Pay attention to your appearance
61. Strive for excellence NOT perfection
62. Stretch your limits a little each day
63. Look at a work of art
64. Hum a jingle
65. Maintain your weight
66. Plant a tree
67. Feed the birds
68. Practice grace under pressure
69. Stand up and stretch
70. Always have a plan “B”
71. Learn a new doodle
72. Memorize a joke
73. Be responsible for your feelings
74. Learn to meet your own needs
75. Become a better listener
76. Know your limitations and let others know them too
77. Tell someone to have a good day in pig Latin
78. Throw a paper airplane
79. Exercise every day

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SESSION HANDOUT # 1 of 6 (cont.)

101 WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND TO REDUCE STRESS (CONT.)

80. Learn the words to a new song
81. Get to work early
82. Clean out one closet
83. Play patty cake with a toddler
84. Go on a picnic
85. Take a different route to work
86. Leave work early (with permission)
87. Put air freshener in your car
88. Watch a movie and eat popcorn
89. Write a note to a far away friend
90. Go to a ball game and scream
91. Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight
92. Recognize the importance of unconditional love
93. Remember that stress is an attitude
94. Keep a journal
95. Practice a monster smile
96. Remember you always have options
97. Have a support network of people, places and things
98. Quit trying to “fix” other people
99. Get enough sleep
100. Talk less and listen more
101. Freely praise other people

P.S. Relax, take each day one at a time...
You have the rest of your life to live.

Examples of Rational Self-Talk

I'll just relax and do the best that I can.

I've had to deal with this before and I managed pretty well.

This is really a pain in the neck and I sure don't like it, but I won't panic.

I'll just take one thing at a time, stay calm, and see it through.

I know it won't help to get upset. I can't control what someone else does.

Examples of Coping Self-Talk

I'll take one step at a time.

I'll just think calmly about what I can do.

I'm in control; I can handle this.

Relax. Take a deep, slow breath.

It's okay to be a little anxious; it doesn't mean I can't handle it.

These feelings will pass.

Examples of Reinforcing Self-Talk

I did it, and it worked.

That wasn't so bad.

I'm really getting better at dealing with this stress.

I've learned more about myself and these feelings.

I like how I handled this.

Next time, I'll know what works for me.

Don't worry about things that you have no control over, because you have no control over them.

Don't worry about things that you have control over, because you have control over them.

— Mickey Rivers

CHANGING NEGATIVE THINKING INTO POSITIVE

Rewrite the negative messages below, using more powerful and positive words. Look for messages that are realistic, that you have control over, and that are helpful.

1. I know I'm going to be so nervous I'll blow it.

Even though I'll be nervous, I'll try my hardest.

2. There's no way I can get this done! No way!

3. I can't stand her; she makes me sick.

4. I can't believe I screwed that up so badly! I'm so stupid!

5. He just has it in for me; there's nothing I can do.

6. It's not even worth trying. Everyone else is so much better than I am.

7. I've tried this a million times. It's just not worth it. I can't do it and I know it.

8. No one cares if I'm there or not! Why should I go?

9. I'm always late. I just can't help it!

10. I'm so ugly (or fat, or???) . I can't stand the way I look!

PRACTICING SELF-CARE

Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun
- Take time to be sexual—with yourself, with a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones

Psychological Self-Care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Have your own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are not expert or in charge
- Decrease stress in your life
- Notice your inner experiences• Let others know different aspects of you
- Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance
- Practice receiving from others
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes

PRACTICING SELF-CARE (CONT.)

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Find ways to increase your sense of self-esteem
- Reread favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, people, relationships, places, and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things to make you laugh
- Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- Play with children

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time with nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Meditate, Pray
- Sing
- Spend time with children
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe

Excerpted from: Saakvitne, K. W., & Pearlman, L. A. (Eds.). 1996. Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization. New York: Norton

TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO ENHANCE YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IF YOU ARE HIV +

By J. Buzz von Ornsteiner, Ph.D.

1. **Build a strong, supportive, trusting relationship with an HIV/AIDS doctor.** You should be able to freely discuss everything and anything and, if needed, to challenge your doctor's advice.
2. **Develop consistent contact with a health care case manager** who can help to make the rocky road to benefits and services easier for you. One mold does not fit all, so try to find a case manager that you trust, even if you have to switch to a new one.
3. **Join an HIV/AIDS support group.** Find out if they use an ongoing, drop-in format or if they are time-limited and require pre-enrollment. Also find out about the training and qualifications of the group leaders.
4. **Get a therapist,** preferably a good licensed psychologist or certified social worker. Remember anyone can state they are a "therapist"; request more information about their background and experience. Keep looking until your instincts tell you that you have found a good match.
5. **Attend workshops or other HIV/AIDS events** so that you can find out as much as you can about HIV/AIDS. You must be the expert on this disease and be on top of any new developments and programs.
6. **Stay informed about your HIV/AIDS medications** by seeking out information from any and all sources, including people, Web sites, and periodicals. The more you know about the medication you are taking and its potential side effects, the more you know what to expect about your emotions and mental well-being.
7. **Address any substance use issues you may have** by looking into substance use programs and groups. Consider working towards being clean and sober.
8. **Exercise regularly and maintain good nutrition** because the mind and the body are closely linked, and physical health enhances mental health.
9. **Work if you can for income** but also work for the structure and well being that employment can provide. Everyone can benefit from structure, and we all need to feel we are productive members of this world.
10. **Seek a sense of belonging outside of HIV/AIDS** such as by starting a hobby, traveling and exploring, getting a pet, starting or finishing school, or volunteering. The bottom line is to keep your stress low; keeping your stress low will help you to keep your immune system high.

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SESSION HANDOUT # 6 of 6

MY SELF-CARE CONTRACT

I, _____, do hereby agree to begin to focus on
my health and to take better care of myself as of _____,
and to continue it for a period of _____.

What I plan to do is: _____
_____.

The barriers/challenges I think I may have in meeting my goals are: _____
_____.

The people who support me and what I want of them are: _____
_____.

My short-term (daily) rewards will be: _____.

My long-term reward(s) will be: _____.

Signature

Witness