



Complementary & Alternative Medicine Program

Stress Management Homework

Breathing Exercise:

Imagine that you are a balloon. As you inhale, you *inflate* the balloon. As you exhale, you *deflate* the balloon.

Begin by breathing into your stomach area (expand your stomach as you *inflate* the balloon).

Slowly and gently push the air higher into your chest and lungs (keep your shoulders down and relaxed).

Hold for a moment.

Release the air, first from the lungs and then gently squeeze the air out of your stomach (as you *deflate* the balloon).

This takes practice! Be patient and keep trying throughout the day.

Meditation Exercise:

Begin by practicing the above breathing exercise. This time, really focus and concentrate on the air coming into and moving through and out of your body. When you exhale, imagine that you are blowing the stress out of and away from your body. When you inhale, imagine that you are breathing in calmness and peace.

Repeat.

As you practice this technique, thoughts and distractions will pop in to your mind, this is expected, our minds are very busy. Simply allow the thoughts to pass, returning your focus to your breath.

Visualization Exercise:

Begin by practicing the above two exercises. When you feel calm, imagine a place or a memory that makes you feel calm and safe (a walk on the beach, the woods, your sofa).

Now use all of your senses to focus your mind on this place. What does it smell like?

How is the temperature? What are you hearing?

Use as much detail as possible.

It may help you to write about this image. The goal is to rehearse this visualization so it will be easier to recall it each time you try. This way, in times of crisis, the image will be readily available in your mind.

Guided Imagery:

There are many commercial recordings of guided imagery available to help you to visualize. These recordings include step-by-step instructions to guide the listener through

an environment. Additionally, these recordings may include music or nature sounds geared to help you to relax.

Journaling:

Writing down your thoughts and feelings is an excellent way to relieve stress. It is important to let your writing flow freely, without being concerned for spelling, grammar or handwriting. Allow your thoughts to wander, write lists, and write letters that you don't send. Remember that this journal is your special place for you to vent. If you write something that is very upsetting or secretive, you can tear the page out and rip it up! This is an excellent way of letting go of disturbing thoughts and emotions.

Hobbies:

Hobbies are an incredibly valuable way to reduce stress! It is important to spend time focusing on something other than daily problems and concerns. Re-ignite an old passion or find a new one! The key to making a hobby work is to make it readily accessible; have a table set up with a jigsaw puzzle, a model airplane, or a scrapbook. It is not necessary to spend long amounts of time on your hobby, but if it is easy to access then you can spend 15 minutes between other activities to focus and relax your mind.