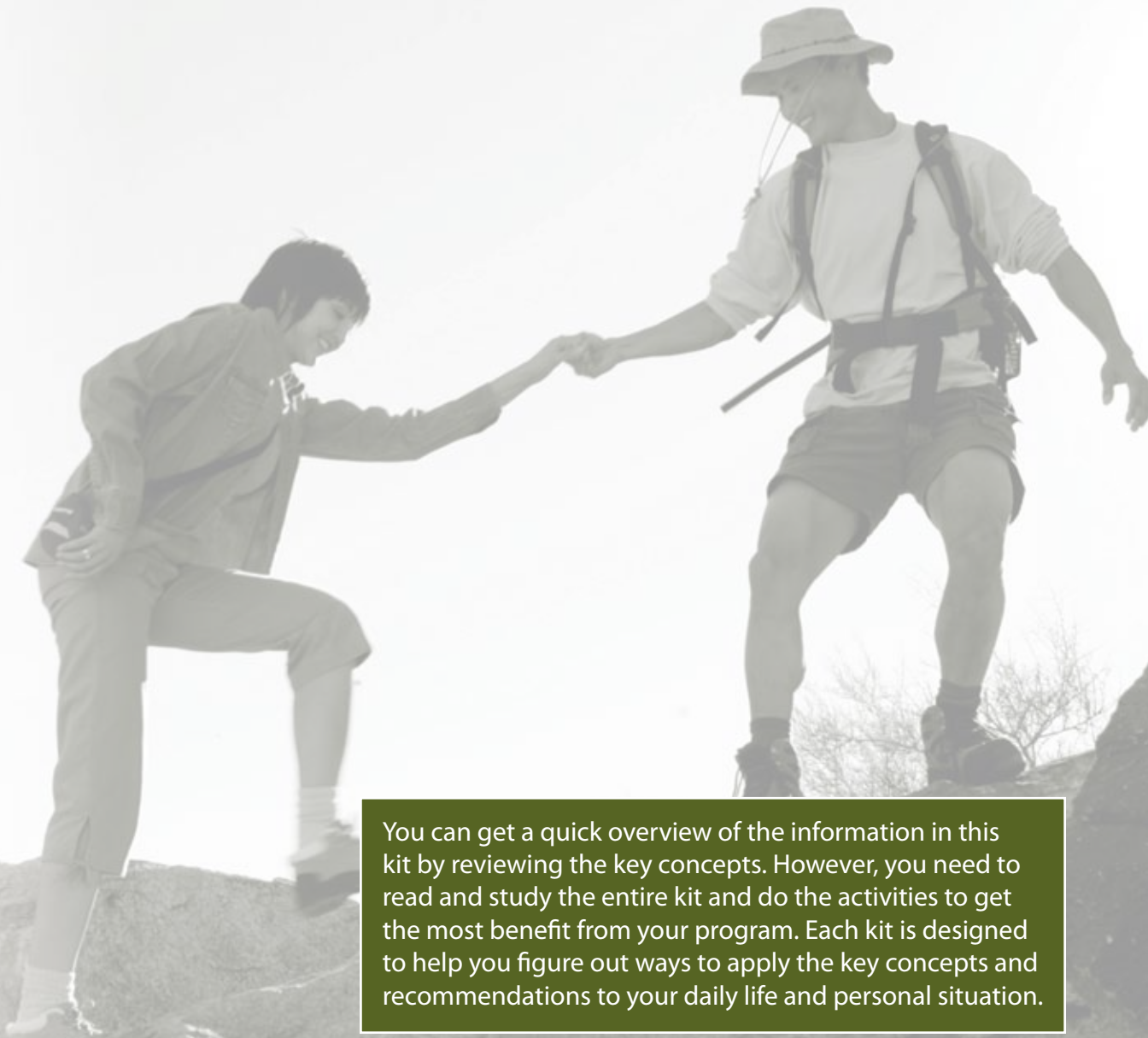


Learning to Relax

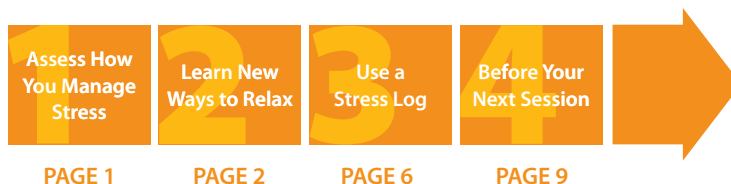


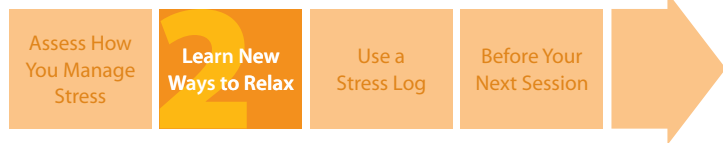
You can get a quick overview of the information in this kit by reviewing the key concepts. However, you need to read and study the entire kit and do the activities to get the most benefit from your program. Each kit is designed to help you figure out ways to apply the key concepts and recommendations to your daily life and personal situation.

Key Concepts

- Too often people rely upon unhealthy ways, such as smoking or drinking alcohol, to deal with stress. Actually, these practices increase both mental and physical stress.
- There are healthy ways to relax. Here are some of the most useful techniques:
 - *Deep breathing* (often the first step in other stress management techniques) – Breathe in and out slowly and deeply through your nose.
 - *Visualization* – Create a picture in your mind of a scene in which you are perfectly relaxed. Involve your senses (sounds, feelings, smells) as you continue to visualize this special place. Focus on this scene until you feel as if you were really there.
 - *Meditation* (the objective is to clear the mind) – Try to clear your mind of all thoughts, sounds or body sensations. If thoughts enter your mind, dismiss the thoughts and start again.
 - *Progressive muscle relaxation* (a good way to relieve stress-related headaches and sleeplessness) – Begin with the muscles in your feet and work upward on the body – calves, thighs, buttocks, abdomen, hands, arms and shoulders. End with the face, mouth, jaw, eyes and scalp. With each muscle group, contract the muscles as you inhale. Hold the contraction briefly, then relax and exhale. Let the tension flow out with each breath. Combine with visualization or meditation.
 - *Stretching* (focus on the stress triangle – your forehead and the mid-points of your shoulders) – Neck rolls, shoulder shrugs and overhead stretches are easy to do, any time and any place.
 - *Self-Massage* – Target the shoulders and back of neck, head and face and feet for self-massage.
- Choose a stress management technique you think you will enjoy and practice it for 10 to 20 minutes every day for at least one week.
- Use the stress management audio that accompanies this educational kit to help you manage your stress.
- Use the stress management log (located in the back of this kit) to record a rating of your stress level at different times during the day. Keep the log for one week. Use it to record the stress management techniques you practice. You should begin to notice lower stress ratings in the times following your stress management training.

Getting There





Learn New Ways to Relax

There are many ways to relax. Some of the most useful stress management techniques are described below. Choose a technique you think you will enjoy and practice it for at least one week. In the next section you'll be able to evaluate your experience, assessing how you think the relaxation technique worked for you.

REFERENCE



Relaxation Techniques	Description	Steps
Deep breathing exercises	Shallow and rapid breathing is a natural response to stress. With shallow breathing, less oxygen is taken in with each breath. Deep breathing can reverse this effect and help relieve stress-related headaches, backaches, stomach aches and sleeplessness. In fact, deep breathing is so effective it is often the first step in other stress management techniques such as visualization, meditation and progressive muscle relaxation.	<p>You can do deep breathing anytime, anywhere. You can be sitting, standing or lying down, as long as you are comfortable. Wear loose clothing or loosen your tie, belt or buttons. We recommend finding a quiet place, though it's not necessary.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin by breathing in slowly and deeply through your nose. While breathing in, count to five and silently say the word "in" to yourself. Notice that your abdomen relaxes as your lungs fill with air. 2. After the count of five, purse your lips and let the air escape slowly as you count to five and say the word "out" to yourself. <p>Repeat the exercise (up to five minutes, if time permits). With practice, you may be able to count to 10 during each phase of the exercise. You may increase your relaxation if you imagine breathing in ocean air, the scent of flowers or forest air and visualize a restful place.</p>
Visualization	<p>Visualization involves imagining yourself in a peaceful and restful place. Some people are uncomfortable trying to use visualization to relax because they feel they are just daydreaming and wasting time. It's important, however, to give your mind a rest, especially when you're feeling stressed. You may be surprised to find some of your most creative ideas and solutions come after visualizations.</p> <p>This technique is very effective when used with deep breathing exercises. With practice, visualization can be one of the easiest stress management techniques for you to do.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After a few minutes of deep breathing, create a picture in your mind of a scene in which you are perfectly relaxed. Continue deep breathing. 2. Involve your senses as you continue to visualize this special place. What sounds do you hear? How does your skin feel? What smells are in the air? Continue deep breathing. 3. Focus on this scene until you feel as relaxed as if you were really there. <p><i>Check visualizations that would be relaxing for you.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lying on a secluded beach <input type="checkbox"/> Walking in a rain forest <input type="checkbox"/> Standing at the top of a beautiful mountain range <input type="checkbox"/> Lying in a field of grass and flowers <input type="checkbox"/> Sailing on a boat in the ocean <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting in front of a glowing fire <p>Others (list here):</p> <hr/> <hr/>



REFERENCE



Relaxation Techniques	Description	Steps
Meditation	Meditation, which has its roots in many Eastern traditions and cultures, aims to clear the mind. There are many ways to meditate, and you can do it anywhere, anytime, though some advance planning makes it more beneficial. The best times for meditation are before breakfast or before dinner. Begin with a 10-minute session and gradually work up to 20 minutes. It takes regular practice, day after day, to benefit from meditation.	<p>Make sure you're wearing loose, comfortable clothing. Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted and dim the lights.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sit in a straight chair with your feet on the floor and your hands in your lap with your palms up. Check your posture to be sure you are balanced and centered, as if a string were attached to the top of your head pulling you upright. Keep your body as still as possible. Focus your eyes on a spot on the floor a few feet in front of you. Let your eyelids droop nearly closed. 2. Start with deep breathing exercises. Breathe from your abdomen rather than your chest. As you exhale, count "one." Continue counting up to five or higher if you can. 3. Try to clear your mind of all thoughts, sounds or body sensations. If thoughts enter your mind and you forget to count, dismiss the thoughts and start again at one. Many thoughts will enter your mind as you meditate, but let them pass through. 4. You may wish to time your meditation, as in the Eastern culture, by burning a stick of incense. When finished, rock gently back and forth before slowing rising.
Progressive muscle relaxation	Progressive muscle relaxation helps you become more aware of what muscles are tense and can also help calm other reactions to stress, such as rapid breathing and a fast pulse. Many people use progressive muscle relaxation to relieve stress-related headaches and sleeplessness.	<p>In the beginning, you should do this exercise lying down. Choose a quiet place where you'll be undisturbed for at least 20 minutes.</p> <p>For best results, you should perform progressive muscle relaxation daily. You can combine it with visualization or meditation, and over time you can even learn to do this technique while sitting upright at work.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relax your entire body as much as possible. Begin with deep breathing exercises. 2. Begin with the muscles of your feet and work upward on the body – calves, thighs, buttocks, abdomen, hands, arms and shoulders. End with the face, mouth, jaw, eyes and scalp. 3. With each muscle group, contract the muscles as you inhale. Hold the contraction briefly, then relax and exhale. Let the tension flow out with each breath. Notice the feel of the muscles as they contract and relax. 4. Allow more time for the relaxation phase of the exercise. If a muscle seems very tense, repeat the contraction with that muscle group. 5. Lie very still for five minutes as you continue deep breathing and experience the relaxed feeling after progressing through all the muscle groups. 6. When you are ready to get up, count backward from 10 to one. Get up slowly and carefully.

Learning to Relax

Assess How
You Manage
Stress

Learn New
Ways to Relax

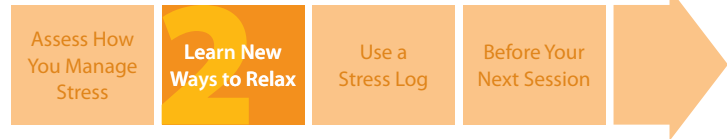
Use a
Stress Log

Before Your
Next Session

REFERENCE



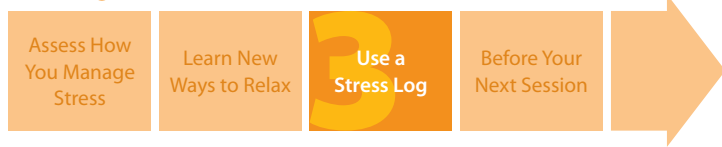
Relaxation Techniques	Description	Steps
Stretching	Your muscles tighten in response to stressors, and when you hold the tension and don't use the muscles, waste products remain to cause pain and discomfort. Most people hold tension in their head, neck and shoulder – the "stress triangle." The top of the triangle is on your forehead between your eyes and the base is the mid-points between your shoulders and your neck. Learning how to relax the muscles in this area can help you relieve stress and tension headaches.	<p>Performing six to 12 repetitions of these simple stretches and rolls can help you relieve tightness in your stress triangle. You can do these stretches anywhere – at home or work. If you are performing a tedious task, stop frequently to do these stretches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Neck roll</i> – Keep your left shoulder level and stretch your right ear to your right shoulder. Roll your head down so your chin is on your chest. Repeat the stretch on your left side. Do rolls only from side to side. Do not let your head drop back. • <i>Shoulder shrug</i> – Lift your shoulders up and make large circles going forward and back. You can rotate both shoulders or stretch only one at a time. • <i>Overhead stretch</i> – With one hand, reach up as if you were picking an apple from a tree slightly ahead and far above you. Repeat with the other hand. • <i>Standing body roll</i> – Roll your head forward until your chin is on your chest. Bend your knees slightly and continue rolling down until your hands are hanging near your knees. Rest there a moment, then slowly roll back up.



REFERENCE



Relaxation Techniques	Description	Steps
Self-Massage	<p>You can learn to give yourself a massage. It can relax muscles, relieve muscle spasms and pain, increase blood flow in the skin and muscles, ease mental stress and help you feel more relaxed. Use massage lotion or oil, if desired, for a smoother massage. Avoid exerting heavy pressure on the spinal column or other bony areas.</p> <p>Massage is even more relaxing if someone else does it for you. Many health professionals practice massage or you can go to a licensed massage therapist. If you are interested, ask your doctor or health coach to recommend a qualified massage therapist for you.</p> <p>Massage is not a substitute for medical treatment of an injury. See your doctor for treatment if you have an acute injury, such as a sprain, tendonitis or a swollen joint.</p>	<p>Shoulders and back of neck</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While sitting upright, massage your stress triangle. Use your right hand to work on your left shoulder and left hand on your right shoulder. Work your fingers gently but firmly, beginning with your shoulder blade, moving up toward the back of the neck and including the scalp. Repeat each stroke four times. 2. Use a circular motion to massage the thick, muscular part of your shoulder at the base of your neck. Gradually increase the pressure. Use the right hand for the left shoulder and the left hand for the right shoulder. (Note: Do not massage the sides or front of the neck. This can be dangerous.) <p>Head and face</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use your fingers to apply pressure on your forehead, between your eyes (top point of your stress triangle). 2. Place your thumbs on the area below your brow bone close to your nose. Apply gentle pressure. 3. Use your fingers to gently rub the areas of the temples and behind your ears with circular motions. 4. Rub your scalp with a gentle and rapid motion as though shampooing your hair. <p>Feet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While sitting on a chair or on the floor, rest one foot on the opposite thigh. Use your thumbs to rub the full length of your foot, from the heel to the toes and back. Repeat several times. 2. Wrap your fingers around the top of your foot and your thumbs around the bottom. Squeeze with your thumbs, starting at the arch and moving up to the toes. Repeat several times. 3. Take each toe between your fingers and gently roll it back and forth. Rub the area between the toes. 4. Holding your ankle in one hand and your toes in the other, rotate your foot first in one direction, then in the other.



3

Use a Stress Management Log

Many people find a stress log helps them manage their stress. Choose at least one of these stress management techniques:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Meditation
- Visualization
- Self-massage
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Stretches

Build up to a minimum of 20 minutes of stress management training every day. You should begin to notice lower stress ratings in the time periods following your stress management training.

ACTIVITY



My Stress Management Plan

Develop your stress management plan and follow it for one week.

My stress management plan for the week of _____

I will practice _____ for _____ minutes as follows:

Time:

Place:

Use the stress management log on the following pages for one week to rate your stress level at different times during the day.

Use the following scale to rate your level of stress:

- 0 = No stress at all; very calm
- 1 = Minimal stress; relaxed
- 2 = Slight stress; slightly anxious
- 3 = Moderate stress; anxious
- 4 = High stress; very anxious with some stress symptoms
- 5 = Severe stress; extremely anxious with numerous stress symptoms

Lower is better. Your goal is to keep your stress level at three or below at all times. Remember – prolonged periods of high stress can be harmful to your health.



ACTIVITY



Stress Management Log

For the week of: _____

Time of Day	Stress Rating (0–5)	Stress Management Techniques		Notes
		What I Did	Minutes	
Monday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				
Tuesday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				
Wednesday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				
Thursday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				

Learning to Relax

Assess How
You Manage
Stress

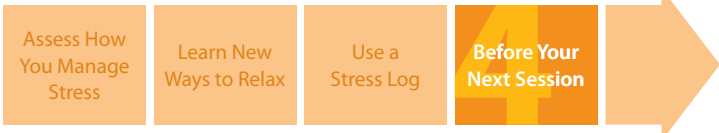
Learn New
Ways to Relax

Use a
Stress Log

Before Your
Next Session



Time of Day	Stress Rating (0–5)	Stress Management Techniques		Notes
		What I Did	Minutes	
Friday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				
Saturday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				
Sunday				
When you wake up: <i>Did you have a restful sleep?</i>				
Before lunch: <i>How stressful was the morning?</i>				
After work / Before dinner: <i>How stressful was the afternoon?</i>				
Before bedtime: <i>How stressful was the evening?</i>				



4

Before Your Next Session

In the time between your sessions with your health coach, do the following:

- Be sure to read and complete this educational kit.
- Use this kit to record your work.
- Have this kit with you for your next session.

REVIEW



Check Yourself

Complete the following statements to be sure you understand the key concepts in this kit.

1. Too often people use _____ ways to deal with stress.
2. _____ is often the first step in other stress management techniques.
3. Breathe in and out _____ and _____ through your nose.
4. Visualization allows you to create a picture in your _____ of a scene in which you are perfectly _____.
5. Involve your _____ as you visualize your special place.
6. The objective of _____ is to clear the mind.
7. Try to clear your mind of all _____, sounds or body sensations.
8. Progression muscle relaxation is a good way to relieve stress-relaxed headaches and _____ . Begin with the muscles in your feet and work _____ on the body.
9. The _____ is formed by three points – the middle of your forehead and the mid-points of your shoulders.
10. Choose a stress management technique you think you will enjoy and practice it for __ minutes every day.
11. You should begin to notice _____ stress in the times following your stress management training.

Answers: 1) unhealthy; 2) Deep breathing; 3) slowly, deeply; 4) mind, relaxed; 5) senses; 6) meditation; 7) thoughts; 8) sleeplessness, upward; 9) stress triangle; 10) 10 to 20; 11) lower

Write any questions for your health coach here.