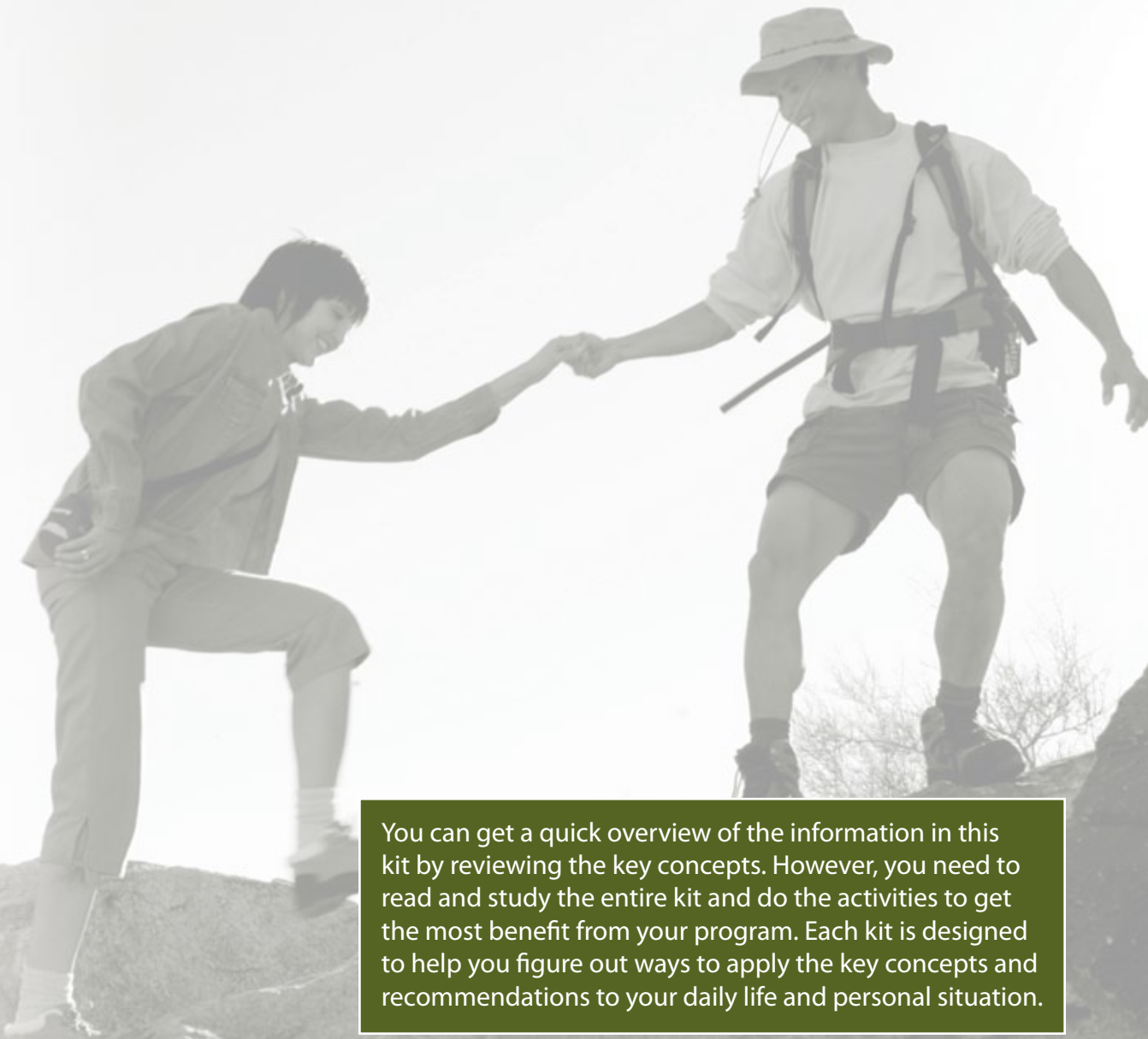


# Getting Started With Stress Management



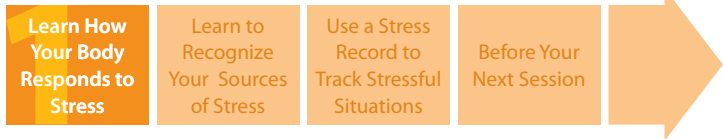
You can get a quick overview of the information in this kit by reviewing the key concepts. However, you need to read and study the entire kit and do the activities to get the most benefit from your program. Each kit is designed to help you figure out ways to apply the key concepts and recommendations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

## Key Concepts

- Stress is a two-part process: cause and effect. The cause, called the “stressor,” can be real or imagined. The source of the stressors may be social (such as relationships), psychological (such as boredom), or physical (such as health problems). The effect the stressor has on you is called the “stress response.”
- The stress response has also been called the “fight or flight” response. When you are faced with a stressor, your body experiences a series of physical changes to help you fight the stress or flee from it. These changes are complex and involve the nervous system and the endocrine (hormone) system. Some common physical responses to stress include faster heartbeat, increased blood pressure, increased blood sugar to use as energy and dilation (widening) of the pupils to enhance vision.
- If stressors build up or become excessive, they can cause problems to your health and well-being. However, not all stress is bad. Some stress is needed for progress, growth and challenge. A promotion at work is an example of a positive stressor.
- One goal of stress management is to shift from always viewing stress as negative and damaging to viewing it, whenever possible, as something that is positive, inevitable and necessary.
- Stress is thought to be a contributing factor in heart disease. The types of stress that increase your risk of heart disease include:
  - Stressful situations that cause you to become angry, hostile, aggressive or to lose your temper
  - Stressful situations where you feel out of control
- Stress is unique for each individual. What is stressful for someone else may not be stressful for you.
- Major life events cause stress. Examples include a death in the family, divorce, marriage, birth of a baby, losing a job, moving to a new city or financial problems. Stopping smoking is also a major life event.

## Getting There





## Learn How Your Body Responds to Stress

Stress has two main components: cause and effect. The cause is called the “stressor” and generally results from social, psychological or physical factors. Stressors may be real or imagined; in fact, most things you worry about in life – your stressors – never happen. The effect a stressor has on you is called the “stress response,” also known as the “fight or flight” response. This response helped early humans survive dangerous situations.

Since most stressful situations today don’t require a fight or flight response, you are more likely to let stressors build up or become excessive before taking action. If left unchecked, stress can affect your health and well-being. It may even lead to heart disease and other potentially dangerous conditions.

When you are faced with a stressor, your body experiences a series of complex physical changes in the endocrine (hormone) and nervous systems. These changes help you fight or flee from the stressor.

“We need some stress for growth and change, and without it we might have no reason to get up in the morning.”



### REFERENCE

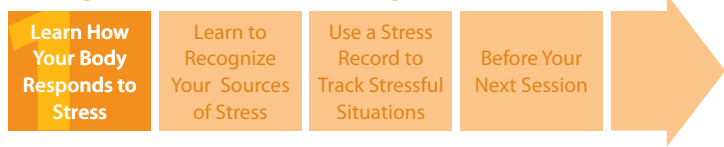
#### Common Physical Responses to Stress

- Fast heartbeat
- Rapid breathing
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased body temperature and perspiration
- Muscle tension causing goose bumps and making hair stand on end
- Increased blood sugar level to use as energy
- Dilation of the pupils to enhance vision
- Blood flow directed to muscles and liver (hands and feet feel cold)
- Increased blood clotting (for protection if you are injured)

### REFERENCE



Examples of Stressors		
Social Stressors	Psychological Stressors	Physical Stressors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships with friends and family</li> <li>• Relationships with boss and co-workers</li> <li>• Time constraints</li> <li>• Demands and expectations of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings</li> <li>• Fears</li> <li>• Decisions</li> <li>• Boredom</li> <li>• Frustrations</li> <li>• Confidence and self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise</li> <li>• Weather (too hot or too cold)</li> <li>• Traffic</li> <li>• Over-crowding</li> <li>• Excess light or darkness</li> <li>• Health problems</li> <li>• Lack of sleep</li> </ul>



**REFERENCE**



**A Continuum of Feelings**

Not all stress is bad. We need some stress for growth and change, and without it we might have no reason to get up in the morning. One goal of stress management should be to stop viewing stress as always negative and damaging. Try viewing it as something positive, inevitable and necessary instead.

Feelings occur on a continuum. Being aware of your feelings can help you understand how you react to stressors.

What You Feel	Explanation
<p><b>Excitement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenged</li> <li>• Motivated</li> <li>• Inspired</li> <li>• Productive</li> <li>• Creative</li> </ul>	<p>Excitement is a mostly positive feeling. It is how you respond to a challenge. When you are confronted with a situation for which you are well prepared, you get excited as you think about a good experience. You may feel a burst of energy, a rapid heartbeat or “butterflies” in your stomach. Your feelings of excitement may even alternate with feelings of nervousness.</p>
<p><b>Stress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hassled</li> <li>• Hurried</li> <li>• Doubtful</li> <li>• Driven</li> <li>• Pressured</li> </ul>	<p>Stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed. When faced with a challenge, you may have the confidence to handle the situation if only you had more time to prepare yourself. You may believe you will fail or disappoint someone, maybe yourself. You may begin to feel pressured to work harder, do better and be perfect. You feel tense and irritable as your head hurts and your stomach ties up in knots.</p>
<p><b>Anxiety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destructive</li> <li>• Hopeless</li> <li>• Strained</li> <li>• Withdrawn</li> </ul>	<p>Anxiety is the point where you perceive something negative or bad might happen, and you don’t believe you can do anything about it. You begin to worry about it over and over until you can’t get the situation out of your mind.</p>
<p><b>Depression</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakdown</li> <li>• Physically ill</li> <li>• Accident prone</li> <li>• Suicidal</li> </ul>	<p>Depression is when you constantly perceive life as threatening and dangerous. You begin to lose all hope about controlling these threats. You may become lethargic and feel you will never be able to change anything. You give up trying to cope and feel worthless.</p>



At the earliest signs of excitement or stress, take steps to prevent negative feelings. If you begin to experience feelings of depression, seek professional help immediately.

**Stress and Heart Disease**

There are two main types of stress that increase your risk of heart disease:

- Stressful situations that cause you to become angry, hostile or aggressive
- Stressful situations where you feel out of control

Learning to manage these types of stressful situations can help reduce your risk of developing heart disease, or of making your condition worse if you already have heart disease.



# 2

## Learn to Recognize Your Sources of Stress

Clearly, stress is unique for each individual. The way you respond to a stressor depends in part on how stressful you perceive the stressor to be. What is highly stressful for one person may not seem stressful at all to another. Remember, not all stressors are bad. They can be both positive and negative. A promotion at work or the birth of a new baby are examples of positive stressors.

### ACTIVITY



#### Stressors in My Life

Think back over the past six months and list examples of positive and negative stressors in your life.

My Positive Stressors

My Negative Stressors

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### ACTIVITY



#### My Major Life Events

Major life events, even positive ones, can cause stress. While you may be prepared to handle one major life event, multiple events within a short period of time may present a serious problem.

Review the list of major life events given below and check any that have occurred in your life during the past 12 months. Note that some of the events are within your control and some are positive.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changed jobs                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Started school or graduated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce or separation             | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Severe personal injury or illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Serious illness in family   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy/birth of a child  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fired or laid off from work       | <input type="checkbox"/> High mortgage payments      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a family member          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual problems             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreclosure                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a close friend     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major financial change            | <input type="checkbox"/> Trouble at work             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major business change             | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult child still at home   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trouble with in-laws              | <input type="checkbox"/> Major change in residence   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stopped smoking or drinking       | <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse changed jobs         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Received important recognition    |  |

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Number of Major Life Events in Past 12 Months

*If you have experienced one or more major life events in the past year, you may benefit from learning stress management skills.*

#### Symptoms of Stress

Chronic stress – stress that doesn’t go away – can cause health problems that may be associated with both physical and emotional symptoms of stress. It is important to remember that a variety of other possible causes can also lead to these same health issues. Be sure to discuss any persistent problems with your personal doctor.



**ACTIVITY**



**Stress Assessment**

Take a few minutes to complete the stress assessment activity below to explore the symptoms of stress in your life. Please circle the number that best represents how frequently you experience the following symptoms. Be sure to consult with your health coach to go over the results, or if you have any questions.

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely (no more than once in six months)
- 3 = Occasionally (no more than once a month)
- 4 = Very Often (more than once a week)
- 5 = Constantly (nearly every day or daily)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Very Often	Constantly
Tension headaches	1	2	3	4	5
Migraine headaches	1	2	3	4	5
Stomachaches	1	2	3	4	5
Increase in blood pressure	1	2	3	4	5
Cold hands and feet	1	2	3	4	5
Stomach acidity	1	2	3	4	5
Shallow rapid breathing	1	2	3	4	5
Diarrhea	1	2	3	4	5
Heart palpitations	1	2	3	4	5
Shaky hands	1	2	3	4	5
Burping	1	2	3	4	5
Gassiness	1	2	3	4	5
Increased urge to urinate	1	2	3	4	5
Sweaty feet or hands	1	2	3	4	5
Oily skin	1	2	3	4	5
Fatigue or exhausted feeling	1	2	3	4	5
Panting	1	2	3	4	5
Sighing	1	2	3	4	5
Dry mouth	1	2	3	4	5
Backache	1	2	3	4	5
Neck stiffness	1	2	3	4	5
Grinding teeth or clenched jaw	1	2	3	4	5
Jaw pain	1	2	3	4	5
Constipation	1	2	3	4	5
Tightness in chest	1	2	3	4	5
Dizziness	1	2	3	4	5
Sexual dysfunction	1	2	3	4	5
Sleep disturbance	1	2	3	4	5
Social withdrawal	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulty coping with job	1	2	3	4	5
Problems concentrating	1	2	3	4	5

Learn How  
Your Body  
Responds to  
StressLearn to  
Recognize  
Your Sources  
of StressUse a Stress  
Record to  
Track Stressful  
SituationsBefore Your  
Next Session

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Very Often	Constantly
Biting nails	1	2	3	4	5
Twirling strands of hair	1	2	3	4	5
Daydreaming	1	2	3	4	5
Depression	1	2	3	4	5
Irritability	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous laughter	1	2	3	4	5
Crying easily	1	2	3	4	5
Bad dreams	1	2	3	4	5
Suspicion	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile behavior	1	2	3	4	5
Alcohol or drug abuse	1	2	3	4	5
Excessive or compulsive smoking	1	2	3	4	5
Unexplained pain	1	2	3	4	5
Overeating	1	2	3	4	5
Agitation	1	2	3	4	5
Indecision	1	2	3	4	5
Forgetfulness	1	2	3	4	5
Disorganization	1	2	3	4	5
Nausea or Vomiting	1	2	3	4	5
Menstrual distress	1	2	3	4	5
Skin blemishes	1	2	3	4	5
Colitis	1	2	3	4	5
Asthma	1	2	3	4	5
Indigestion	1	2	3	4	5
Hyperventilation	1	2	3	4	5
Arthritis	1	2	3	4	5
Skin rash	1	2	3	4	5
Allergy	1	2	3	4	5

Add your circled responses to calculate your overall score.

Overall Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Interpretation:

75 or below      Low symptoms  
 76 to 100        Moderate symptoms  
 101 to 150      High symptoms  
 Over 150         Excessive symptoms

Learn How  
Your Body  
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Learn to  
Recognize  
Your Sources  
of Stress

Use a Stress  
Record to  
Track Stressful  
Situations

Before Your  
Next Session

# 3

## Use a Stress Record to Track Stressful Situations

Before you can learn to manage your stress better, you need to know what causes your stress (your “stressors”) and how you feel under stress. Identifying the situations in your life that make you feel tense and anxious, and paying attention to how your body reacts (your “stress response”) when you’re under stress, can help you start to recognize important patterns.

- Where and when is stress most likely to occur?
- Do you feel more stress on a certain day of the week or at a certain time of day?
- Are certain people associated with your stressful situations?
- How do you react to stress?

You can then evaluate your current approach to stress management and learn how to deal with situations better in the future. Using a Stress Record can help you accurately track and analyze your stressors and stress response. Use the Stress Record on the next page for at least a week, and then share the results with your health coach.



### TIPS

#### Using the Stress Record

- Use the Stress Record to keep a record of your stressful situations for one week.
- Make a separate entry for each stressful situation.
- Make an entry every time you feel stressed or every hour or two while you are awake so your records are more accurate.
- Make additional copies before writing on this copy so that you’ll have blank copies for future use.

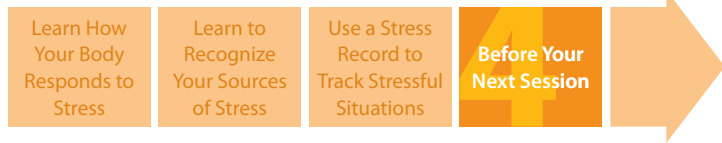
## ACTIVITY

**Keep a Stress Record**

Directions:

- Day / Date – When did you feel stressed? For each day, record the date.
- Time – Make an entry for each time of day you feel stressed.
- Trigger – What specific event seemed to make you to feel stressed? Triggering events can be the actions of another person, a personal thought, a new situation or anything that immediately precedes your increased feelings of stress.
- Response – What were your specific feelings of stress? Describe as best as you can your physical (changes in your body), emotional (thoughts and feelings) and behavioral (actions) responses to stress.
- Intensity – How much stress did you feel? Rate your intensity on a scale of 1 (very little stress) to 10 (a lot of stress).
- Duration – How long did the stress last before you felt calm again? Record the time (seconds, minutes, hours) until the stress goes away and you feel calm again.

Day / Date	Time	Trigger	Response	Intensity	Duration
<b>Example:</b> Monday 1/19/06	Time: 7:45 a.m. Time: 9:30 a.m. Time: 5 p.m.	Heavy traffic Project deadline Sick child	Lost my temper Had heart palpitations Felt despair	7 8 8	30 min 45 min 60 min
Monday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thursday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saturday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sunday __/__/__	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



# 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. \_\_\_\_\_ is stressful.
2. The cause of stress is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The effect a stressor has on you is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. When exposed to stress, physical changes occur in the body that involve the \_\_\_\_\_ system and the endocrine (hormone) system.
5. For early man, the “\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_” response was his means of survival.
6. Stress is thought to be a contributing factor in \_\_\_\_\_ disease.
7. Not all stress is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the point where you perceive something negative or bad might happen.
9. Professional help is needed when feelings of \_\_\_\_\_ are experienced.
10. Stressful situations that cause you to become \_\_\_\_\_ or hostile increase your risk of heart disease.
11. Stress is \_\_\_\_\_ for each individual.
12. If you have experienced one or more of the major \_\_\_\_\_ in the past year, you may benefit from learning stress management skills.

Answers: 1) Life; 2) stressor; 3) stress response; 4) nervous; 5) fight, flight; 6) heart; 7) bad; 8) Anxiety; 9) depression; 10) angry; 11) unique; 12) life events

**Write any questions for your health coach here.**