



Amygdala- or the “survival center” controls how we react to a perceived threat or danger- the stress trigger.

A stress trigger activates the “fight, flight or freeze” response. *AUTOMATIC* shift from rational control to survival control.

Prefrontal Cortex- the “planning center”, where thoughtful decision making happens.

The Stress Response follows anger and fear.

Resources:

- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQeDYBS63IY>



Take the Stress Test: How Stressed are YOU?

Directions: As you enter the room please take a moment to read the questions and reflect on the questions below. This is for your own reflection and will not be shared.

Do YOU????	YES or NO
Do you feel tired all the time or have trouble sleeping more than one night a week?	
Do you have a hard time relaxing or feel unable to relax often?	
Do you forget things often?	
Are you frequently angry and tired at the end of the day?	
Do you often feel under pressure?	
Do you often argue, even about minor things?	
Do you feel that you never have time for yourself?	
Do you find yourself not wanting to socialize with others?	
Do you find you lack the patience with others and feel others are often wrong about things?	
Do others tell you that you seem tense or upset?	
How many questions did you answer <u>YES</u> to?	Total:

Everyone has bad days and feels some of the above occasionally, but if you have answered 'yes' to two or more of these questions and/or feel this way regularly, chances are that you are stressed! Moreover, you may not be handling the stress in your life as well as you could be.

This workshop is designed to give you tools to effectively manage the stress in your life.



Common Responses to a Stressful Event

We live and work within an ever-changing and challenging world. Stress symptoms (responses) often sneak up on us without our knowledge and can accumulate if unaddressed.

The chart below shows how responses can occur on different levels (physiological, cognitive, emotions, behavioral and spiritual). Looking more closely and consciously at our own individual experiences, may give us the opportunity to notice things that we might not have been aware of. You may have some to add.

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue • Nausea • Muscles tremors • Twitches • Thirst • Headaches • Visual difficulties • Vomiting • Grinding teeth • Weakness • Dizziness • Profuse sweating • Chills • Fainting • Chest pain* • Difficulty breathing* • Elevated blood pressure* • Rapid heartbeat* • Shock symptoms* • Diarrhea • Need to urinate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion • Poor attention • Guilt • Poor decisions • Heightened or lowered awareness • Poor concentration • Memory problems • Hyper vigilance • Blaming someone • Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people • Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings • Poor problem solving • Poor abstract thinking • Loss of time, place, or person orientation • Disturbed thinking • Nightmares; intrusive images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Sadness • Grief • Denial • Severe panic • Emotional shock • Fear • Uncertainty • Loss of emotional control • Depression • Unpredictable emotional responses • Apprehension • Feeling overwhelmed • Intense anger • Irritability • Agitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in activity • Change in speech patterns • Withdrawal • Emotional outbursts • Sleep disturbances • Increased alcohol consumption or other drug use • Suspiciousness • Change in usual communication • Loss or increase in appetite • Inability to rest • Anti-social acts • Hyper alert to environment • Intensified startle reflex • Pacing • Change in sexual functioning • Speeding while driving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger at God or a higher power • Disconnection • Beliefs about self, God and humanity shaken or destroyed

*Seek immediate medical assistance.



What you can do when you are STRESSED.....

These stress relievers release endorphins from the body that clean out built-up adrenaline. It is important to remember that no one is ever completely in control of a situation, but by bringing your mind and body into the here and now, it allows you to better cope with whatever is thrown your way.

- ◆ **Stay connected with others.** Having good social support is perhaps the most beneficial stress reducer. So, do whatever you can to reduce isolation. Reach out. Build connections. Surrounding yourself with supportive family, friends, co-workers, clergy or other spiritual leaders has a positive effect on your well-being and ability to cope with stress.
- ◆ **Increase your physical activity.** Exercise is very beneficial because it helps to rebalance the system. Being active boosts your “feel good” endorphins and helps you feel more optimistic. Walking during your breaks at work can make the rest of your day more productive. And enjoyable.
- ◆ **Control your diet.** A healthy diet counters the impact of stress by shoring up the immune system and lowering blood pressure. Taking into account your specific health needs, work with your doctor or a nutritionist for a stress-reducing diet. Control alcohol, drugs and smoking.
- ◆ **Get a good night’s sleep.** This easier said than done if you’re worried, but so beneficial. Lack of sleep affects your immune system and judgment, making you more likely to snap over minor irritations or to have preventable accidents. Most people need 7-8 hours of sleep per day. If you are sleep-deprived, it is crucial to develop a personal plan to correct the problem. EAP can help.
- ◆ **Focus on what you can control.** The stress response is triggered when you feel out of control and in danger, but it’s important to remember that you have a myriad of choices daily that allow you to have control in the moment. See the list of *50 things you can control*.
- ◆ **Practice focused breathing.** Breathing strongly influences physiology and thought processes, including moods. Focusing your attention on your breathing, and without doing anything to change it, will have a tranquilizing effect on your system.

Two Recommended Meditation Apps

1. **Jon Kabat-Zinn Series 2:** <http://mindfulnessapps.com/the-apps/jkz-series-2>
2. **Insight Timer:** <https://insighttimer.com>

- ◆ **Laugh and the world laughs with you.** Laughter is a great form of stress relief, and that’s no joke. Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away. Even if it feels forced at first, practice laughing. It does your body good.
- ◆ **Love a pet.** Pets are powerful forms of stress relief, lowering not only blood pressure but also harmful stress hormones like cortisol, which is associated with depression and anxiety, and elevating beneficial ones like oxytocin, which is linked to happiness and relaxation. Even 5 minutes with an animal lowers blood pressure.

- ◆ **Scale back.** Cut back on your obligations when possible. Take a close look at your daily, weekly and monthly schedule and find meetings, activities, or chores that you can cut back on or delegate to someone else.
- ◆ **Prepare.** Stay ahead of stress by preparing for meetings or trips, scheduling your time better, and setting realistic goals for tasks both big and small. Stress mounts when you run out of time because somethings come up that you didn't account for – build in time for traffic jams, for example.
- ◆ **Take up a hobby.** It may seem cliché, but when you engage in something enjoyable, it can soothe and calm your restless mind. Try something you love, be it reading, gardening, crafts, tinkering with electronics, fishing, carpentry, music – things that you don't get competitive or more stress out about.
- ◆ **Focus on the here and now.** If your mind is racing in 1,000 different directions, it's in a constant state of anticipation. Help your mind move to the here and now by paying attention to your breathing. Since you always breathe in the present moment, focusing on breathing makes you break your pattern of thought and brings you back to the present.
- ◆ **Change the scenery.** Instead of eating lunch at your desk, eat it outside or sit in the break room and enjoy lunch and a healthy conversation with your colleagues.
- ◆ **Take breaks during the day.** While we all have deadlines, it doesn't mean that all the work has to be completed at once. Take a few minutes to stretch your legs or go for a walk on your lunch hour. Take a second to look out the window and drink in the scenery.
- ◆ **Be real.** Set realistic deadlines to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Prioritize your workload and focus on the most important items first. In some situations, it is okay to say “no” or delegate a task to someone else.
- ◆ **Create a balance.** It is important to have a work-life balance to avoid undue stress and burnout. Set aside some time to go to the gym, engage in a hobby or socialize with friends.

Fernando DeTorrijos is the director of mindfulness programs in psychiatry and senior teacher at the Center for Mindfulness at UMass Memorial Center in Worcester.



50 Things You Can Control Right Now

1. How many times you smile today
2. How much effort you exert at work
3. Our level of honesty
4. How well you prepare
5. How you act on your feelings
6. How often you say "Thank you"
7. When you pull out your wallet for luxuries
8. Whether or not you give someone the benefit of the doubt
9. How you interpret situations
10. Whether or not you compete with people around you
11. How often you notice and appreciate small acts of kindness – they're everywhere
12. Whether you listen or wait to talk
13. When you walk away from a conversation
14. How nice you are to yourself in your head
15. Whether you think positive or negative thoughts
16. Whether or not you form expectations of people
17. The type of food you eat
18. When you answer someone's questions – or email or call
19. How much time you spend worrying
20. How many new things you try
21. How much exercise you get
22. How many times you swear in traffic
23. Whether or not you plan for the weather
24. How much time you spend trying to convince people you're right
25. How often you think about your past
26. How many negative articles you read
27. The attention you give to your loved one's when you see them
28. How much you enjoy the things you have right now
29. Whether or not you communicate something that's on your mind
30. How clean or cluttered you keep your space
31. What books you read
32. How well you network at social events
33. How deeply you breathe when you experience stress
34. How many times you admit you don't know something – and then learn something new
35. How often you use your influence to help people instead of focusing on building your influence
36. When you ask for help
37. Which commitments you keep and cancel
38. How many risks you take
39. How creative/innovative you are in your thinking
40. How clear you are when you explain your thoughts
41. Whether you formulate a new plan or act on your existing one
42. How much information you get before you make a decision
43. How much information you share with people
44. Whether you smoke or drink or use drugs
45. Whether or not you judge other people
46. Whether you smell good or bad (unless you have some strange resistance to soap and deodorant)
47. How much of what people say you believe
48. How quickly you try again after you fall
49. How many times you say "I love you"
50. How much rest you get at night

Employee and Family Assistance Program



What is Invest EAP?

Short-term confidential counseling, information, and resources

Am I covered?

Yes! Services are free for all employees and their family members.

If it's on your mind, it's worth a call!



Family/
Relationships



Childcare and
Eldercare



Workplace
Conflict



Depression/
Anxiety



Financial/Legal
Problems



Grief and Loss



Alcohol and
Drug Use



Stress/Work-Life
Balance



- Short-term counseling
- Resource and referrals
- Confidential & free
- Employees and all household members

Call Toll-Free: **1-866-660-9533**

www.investeap.org

Password:

MEMBER CARD



*Add us to your phone's contact list
so our number is always handy!*



What happens when you call EAP?

A call to Invest EAP puts you in immediate touch with Master's or Doctoral level counselors, 24 hours a day. Our counselor will listen to you and explore your questions and concerns, which will allow us to provide specific and tailored information and referrals to meet your needs.

We're local! You will be referred to your choice of two local counselors convenient to your home or work.

We welcome you or any household member to call us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year at:

1-866-660-9533

Customer service:

Should you encounter any difficulty, please call 1-866-660-9533 to speak with an Account Manager.

1-866-660-9533

Our online resource center is full of helpful information! Visit us at **www.investeap.org** to access self-assessments, videos, articles... and much more!

