



## Healthy Minds

### Lesson Plan

#### Objectives:

1. Participants will develop skills to help them cope with stress and other issues that influence mental health.
2. Participants will talk about how they manage stress and deal with other mental health issues.
3. Participants will discuss how using positive coping skills will affect their child(ren).
4. Participants will access community resources to help them reduce their stress and address concerns about mental health.
5. Participants will develop a vision and create a plan for handling stress and monitoring signs of depression and other mental health problems.
6. Participants will commit to utilizing their support network to help them carry out their coping and mental health plan.

#### Materials:

- Scenario sheets – Cut apart to distribute to participants for the activity
- Participant binder pockets with handouts:
  - Stress Relief Techniques handout
  - Setting Goals for Managing Stress worksheet
  - Resource list for your area (see Preparation note #1)
- MU Extension guidesheet (have available for participants, if interested)
  - *The Challenge of Balance*, GH 6651
  - *Journaling with Teens*, GH 6150 (use for the journaling activity)
- SPEAK/HEAR skill cards
  - Flip chart, dry erase board, etc.
- Pens
- Blank paper
- Colored markers
- Stress management props – music CD of nature sounds or relaxing music, stress balls, pipe cleaners, Play-doh, etc.
  - Materials for participant tables:
    - Play dough
    - Pipe cleaners
    - Paper and markers, etc.
- Attendance sheet
- Name tags
- Participant incentives

## Session Overview:

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<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	(10-15 minutes)
<b>Discussion: Identifying stress</b>	(10 minutes)
<b>Discussion: Parenthood stressors</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>Discussion: Taking care of mental health</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>Discussion:</b>	(25 minutes)
<b>For expecting and new parents, go to the Healthy Minds: Discussion for Expecting and New Parents.</b>	
• <b>Postpartum Depression</b>	(15 minutes)
• <b>Helping yourself and helping your family</b>	(5 minutes)
• <b>Fathers and depression</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>For Parents of toddlers and older children, go to the Healthy Minds: Discussion for Parents of Toddlers and Older Children.</b>	
• <b>What is depression?</b>	(7-8 minutes)
• <b>Signs of depression</b>	(5-7 minutes)
• <b>Mothers and depression</b>	(5 minutes)
• <b>Fathers and depression</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>Discussion: Helping your partner with depression</b>	(7-8 minutes)
<b>Activity: Coping strategies</b>	(10 minutes)
<b>Optional activity – Practice Saying “No”</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>Activity: Stress relief techniques</b>	(8 minutes)
<b>Activity: Journaling</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>Talking about it: Setting Goals</b>	(7-8 minutes)
<b>Resources in the community</b>	(5 minutes)
<b>Introduce take home activity</b>	(1 minute)
<b>Wrap-Up</b>	(10 minutes)

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*Session total* (2 hours)

### Preparation:

1. Create a list of resources to include in participant packets.
2. You may want to write discussion questions on flip chart paper or a dry erase board prior to the session.
3. Distribute stress management props around the room.
4. Optional – Turn on a CD of nature sounds or relaxing music before participants arrive. If possible, adjust lighting and use scented beads (some fragrances often used in aromatherapy include lavender, vanilla, and mint) to help make the room more relaxing.
5. To print or order copies of the MU Extension Guidesheets (*The Challenge of Balance*, GH 6651 and *Journaling with Teens*, GH 6150), visit the MU Extension website at <http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/hesguide/humanrel/>

## Procedure:

### 1. Welcome participants to the session and reconnect (10-15 minutes).

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- Introduce yourself to the group and the title of today's lesson, "Healthy Minds."
- Welcome participants and, especially if you have new participants, go around the room and have everyone briefly introduce themselves.
- Ask about take home activity from the previous session (if applicable).

### 2. Discussion: Identifying stress (10 minutes).

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**Ask:** *"How many of you feel stressed?"*

- Ask for a show of hands.

**Ask:** *"What is stress?"*

**Say:** *"It includes anything that affects one's mental, physical, and emotional well-being."*

**Ask:** *"What are some things that cause stress for parents?"*

- Write their responses on flip chart or dry erase board.

Sample responses:

- Losing control of time
- Lack of sleep

**Ask:** *"How do you know when you are stressed?"*

- Write participants' responses on overhead or flip chart.

Sample responses:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling overly tired
- Lack of appetite or overeating
- Stomach illnesses
- Back or neck pain
- Headaches
- Physical weakness
- High blood pressure
- Indigestion
- Ulcers

- Decreased sexual interest
- Inability to concentrate
- Irritability
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression

**Say:** *“Without stress, life would be dull. We need some stress to motivate us. But, when we let common everyday stressors build up, they can eventually overwhelm us and throw us out of balance. It is important to manage stress because it can have a negative effect on our mental, physical, and emotional health and can add even more stress.”*

### 3. Activity: Parenthood stressors (5 minutes).

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**Ask:** *“Is stress always bad?”*

**Answer:** *“No, some stress is called eustress, it is a healthy type of stress. Becoming a parent is one example.”*

- Have participants talk in groups of 2 or 3, using SPEAK/HEAR skills.
- Briefly go through each of the SPEAK and HEAR skills listed on the card.
- Note that a separate session will include further discussion of these communication skills.

**Ask:** *“What are some things that stress you out about being a parent or about caring for your baby/child?” “How is parenthood different than you expected?” “What are some things that make you feel overwhelmed?”*

### 4. Discussion: Taking care of mental health (5 minutes).

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**Ask:** *“What do you think of when you hear the term ‘mental health’?”*

**Say:** *“It’s the way your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors influence your day to day experiences. When you have good mental health, it has a positive influence on the way you see yourself and also on your relationships. Good mental health also helps you cope with challenges at home, school, or work.”*

**Ask:** “What do you do if you break your leg?” “What do you do if you come down with a really bad flu?” “What do you do if you think you might have a mental health problem?”

**Say:** “The answer to all of these questions should be the same – we **sometimes need to seek help when we are not feeling well**. Unfortunately some people think that depression and other mental health problems are a sign of weakness rather than a signal that something is out of balance inside of us.

**Having a mental health problem isn’t anything to be fearful, ashamed, or embarrassed about. We might tell ourselves to snap out of it, but we’d do better if we found help to deal with our symptoms. You can live a happier life if you are treated. It’s important for your child, your relationships, and for yourself.”**

## 5. Discussion (25 minutes).

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For expecting and new parents, go to the Healthy Minds: Discussion for Expecting and New Parents.

For parents of toddlers and older children, go to the Healthy Minds: Discussion for Parents of Toddlers and Older children.

## 6. Discussion: Helping your partner with depression (7-8 minutes).

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**Ask:** “If you ever suspect your partner is depressed, what are some things you can do or say to your partner?”

- List participants’ responses on a flip chart or a dry erase board.

Sample responses:

- Talk to them.
- Reach out to them.
- Show that you understand they are not feeling well.
- Listen – Do not worry if you don’t have the answers, just listen.
- Even if the situation does not seem to be a problem to you, take your partner’s feeling seriously.
- Offer to participate in an activity they usually enjoy.
- Encourage them to rest.
- Let them know you care and want to help.
- If needed, let them know you want to seek professional help.

**Ask:** “What are some things that a depressed person would NOT want to hear from his or her partner?”

Sample responses:

- “Snap out of it.”
- “Things will be better tomorrow.”
- “You need to get over this.”

## 7. Activity: Coping strategies (10 minutes).

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**Say:** “Now that we have talked about stress and some of its causes and effects, let’s talk about solutions. Sometimes when we feel stressed, we reach for **sleeping pills, alcohol, cigarettes, food, and other things that help us feel better.** Unfortunately these are only **short-term solutions.** **The problem is still there.** Let’s think about **healthy ways to deal with stress.**”

- **If you used stress management props, such as a music CD of nature sounds or relaxing music:**

**Ask:** “How was the room different today/tonight when you entered it compared to our other sessions?” “How did it make you feel?”

- Give each participant a blank sheet of paper and put colored markers around the room. (Participants may also do this activity in their journals they have them with them).
- Have participants write “My Stress Busters” in the middle of the sheet and have them write or draw at least 5 things that help them deal with stress.
- After all are finished ask some participants to share their responses.
- List participants’ responses on overhead or flip chart.

Sample responses:

- Finding personal time
- Seek help from others
- Exercise
- Relax
- Breathe deeply
- Get a massage
- Say “no” – know your limits
- Reconsider priorities – housework, etc.
- Listen to uplifting music
- Read

- Laugh
- Take a mental vacation – imagine being on a beach or in the mountains
- Focus on the positive
- Forgive
- Journaling

## 8. Optional Activity: Practice Saying “No” (5 minutes).

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- Distribute scenario sheets and have participants act out each scenario.
- Coach them to help them practice their SPEAK/HEAR skills.

### Scenario 1

**Role A:** You have always helped take care of your friend’s child, but you now have a 1 month old baby of your own to take care of. Tell your friend you cannot take care of her child.

**Role B:** Your good friend has always helped take care of your child when you need some free time. Call your friend and ask her to take care of your child.

### Scenario 2

**Role A:** Your partner wants to go out on a date, but you are not feeling up to it.

**Role B:** Ask your partner out on a date.

## 9. Activity: Stress relief techniques (8 minutes).

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- Note that there is a handout in participant packets that gives stress relief techniques, along with directions for these exercises.
- Introduce each of the following techniques and give participants time to try each one.
  - **Deep breathing** – Inhale through your nose while counting to 5, feeling your abdomen expand. Exhale slowly through your mouth while counting to 5, visualizing your tension leaving your body. Repeat.
  - **Progressive muscle relaxation** – Slowly tense muscles in your feet for at least 5 seconds, then relax. Slowly tense muscles in your legs for at least 5 seconds, then relax. Continue progressing upwards as you relax each muscle group. Relax for 30 seconds, then repeat.

## 10. Activity: Journaling (5 minutes).

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- Give participants a few minutes to write in their journals (if they have them) or on a sheet of paper, how they relieve stress in their lives. Here are some questions you may use to prompt their writing.
  - 1) What makes me stressed? Why?
  - 2) What techniques do I use to deal with stress?

3) What new techniques would I like to try to help me deal with stress?

- You may wish to use the MU Extension guidesheet, *Journaling with Teens*, GH 6150 as a resource for journaling.

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**11. Talking about it: Setting goals for managing stress (7-8 minutes).**

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- Have participants find a place in the room where they can start working on their goals for managing stress in their lives. Have them consider how these techniques will affect their child.
- Tell participants that there is a “Setting Goals” worksheet in their packet that they can use to fill in their goals.
- Encourage them to use their SPEAK/HEAR skills as they talk with their partner about their goals.

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**12. Resources in the community (5 minutes).**

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- Additional information about stress management and coping with depression may be available from the following:
  - Local hospital or health care provider
  - Public library
  - Department of Social Services
  - Support groups
  - Health department
  - Local Extension office
  - ParentLink WarmLine
  - Phone listings for local and state mental health departments are usually in the Government section of the phonebook

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**13. Introduce take home activity (1 minute).**

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- Have them complete their action plan for managing stress in their lives.

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**14. Wrap up the session and give out incentives (10 minutes).**

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- Ask if anyone has any general questions.
- Tell participants that they can call ParentLink’s WarmLine (1-800-552-8522) for questions about tonight’s lesson, problem-solving support, and for community resources.
- Thank participants for coming and participating in the lesson.
- Make sure everyone knows the day and location of the next session.

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