



Stepping Stones
to Managing Stress

Finding the Balance! Self-Care Plan



STEPPING STONES TO MANAGING STRESS

Stress affects each of us every day. Some stress is actually helpful because it motivates you to complete tasks and activities. However, too much stress can cause problems. It can affect your mental and physical health and damage your relationships with friends, family, and coworkers. Stress can also lead to serious mental health problems. Poor physical or mental health can create more stress, making your problems seem even worse. No matter how stressful the situation, you can take positive steps towards your personal well-being. Take time for yourself, to enjoy just you. Look for ways to make each day more meaningful, and make the moments count!

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the pressure or tension a person experiences when faced with a problem or situation.

What are some examples of situations that can cause stress?

- ◆ **Financial Situations:** paying taxes, debt, paying child support, loss of income, job lay-offs, and budgeting for daily living expenses
- ◆ **Daily Hassles:** car trouble, no transportation, home repairs, finding child care, unexpected bills, waiting in lines, and keeping up with the laundry

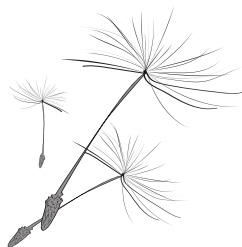
- ◆ **Environment:** noise, weather, traffic, temperature, living in a high crime area, living in an isolated area, poor lighting in your work area, not enough sunshine, and being in crowds or stuck in an overcrowded area
- ◆ **Health-Related:** headaches, illnesses or injuries, sleep disorders, chronic pain, troubles with medications, loss of mobility, and loss of eye sight or hearing.
- ◆ **Family-Related:** arguments, death of a family member or friend, caring for a family member, family members with a negative outlook on life, living with a relative, parenting and grandparenting challenges, poor communication, alcohol or other drug problems, moving, divorce or separation, and serious illness or injury
- ◆ **Work-Related:** workloads, threats of lay-offs or being laid-off, lack of training or direction, working with people who have chronic problems that don't get better, trouble with a supervisor or coworker, noisy work conditions, and retirement

HEALTHY STEPS TO DEALING WITH STRESS

What may be stressful for one person may not be for others. Take a look at what is causing you to feel stressed (identify your stressors), and look for solutions that can help you feel better about yourself. No matter how stressful the situation may be, you can take positive steps towards promoting your own wellness. Consider trying some of the following ideas as part of your plan:

Connect with family, friends, and others.

- ◆ **Maintain regular contact with friends and family members:** Make a list of people you want to stay in contact with. Commit to connecting with them by scheduling get-togethers, calling them on the phone, or sending them emails or letters.





- ◆ **Enroll in Community Education classes that interest you:** South Country will cover up to \$15 of the registration fee for most Community Education classes (up to five classes per calendar year).
- ◆ **Volunteer to help others:** Help a neighbor with yard work, call friends and ask how they are doing, get involved in fundraisers, or do volunteer work for church or community organizations.
- ◆ **Join a support group:** You can also get involved at your local community center or mental health center.
- ◆ **Get professional help when you need it:** Call South Country's Member Services at 1-866-567-7242 (TTY users call 1-800-627-3529 or 711) for a list of mental health providers or information on behavioral health benefits.

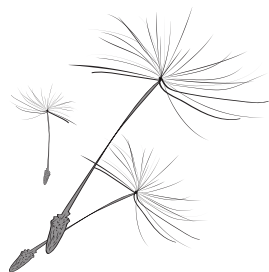
Build your inner and outer core resilience.

- ◆ **Get plenty of sleep:** Most adults should get between 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Set a regular bedtime, and cut back on coffee or soft drinks with caffeine.
- ◆ **Stay positive:** Practice positive self-talk, collect sayings and photos that make you smile, or keep a daily journal of your accomplishments and situations that made you happy or thankful.

- ◆ **Eat healthy food:** Don't skip meals, and stick to a regular meal schedule. Choose a variety of fruits, vegetables, fish, lean meats, low-fat dairy, and whole grains. Eat healthy snacks such as fresh fruit or nuts.
- ◆ **Practice relaxing:** Relax with a book or hot bath before bed. Take a yoga class, do deep breathing exercises, sit in the sunshine, enjoy a peaceful garden, or watch a sunset.
- ◆ **Stay physically active:** Exercise can make you feel better physically and mentally. Going for a walk, home exercises and yoga are a few examples. Just be sure to get your doctor's OK before starting a new exercise program.
- ◆ **Take your medication exactly as directed:** Follow your doctor's recommendations for daily doses. Tell your doctor about any side effects you are experiencing. Create a routine that works for you to stay on track with your medication.

Lighten your day in small ways: reward yourself and take time for self-refreshment.

- ◆ **Be present in the moment:** Look for ways to make each day more interesting and enjoyable for you.
- ◆ **Make a list of your favorite "leisure" or "free time" activities:** Make sure you include activities that have little or no cost. They are often more enjoyable!
- ◆ **Schedule "me" time:** Do something fun from your list of favorite activities each day. Figure out which activities give you the most pleasure and commit to enjoying them more often.
- ◆ **Be thankful:** Every night, make a list of at least three situations or activities that were fun or made you smile, laugh, or feel good about yourself.





Set a simple ***Finding the Balance! Self-Care*** goal each week, and break it down into small steps to complete.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed or stressed when you are dealing with health conditions that affect your sense of well-being. Change often is not very easy. Start with one situation, activity, or task you want to accomplish on your path to *Finding the Balance! Self-Care*. Break down the goal in small pieces you can work on each day. Give yourself the credit you deserve for each of the steps you accomplish. Then move on to another situation, activity, or task and set a new goal with steps for achieving it. Keep track of the steps and goals you accomplish in a journal. Celebrate your success for taking charge of your personal well-being!

Share this booklet and your ideas with your doctor and care coordinator. They will be able to provide you with additional support and resources to help you stay on track.

References and Resources

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Finding the Balance! Self-Care Plan

The situation or task I want to tackle is: _____

My goal is: _____

The steps I need to take to accomplish this goal are:

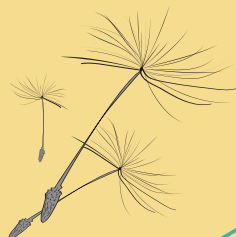
Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Step 4: _____

Step 5: _____



South Country Health Alliance Member Services

1-866-567-7242, TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711

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South Country Health Alliance Member Services

Call: 1-866-567-7242 ♦ TTY: 1-800-627-3529 or 711

Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. *(April through September)*

7 days a week: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. *(October through March)*

