Activities Manual for Stress Management and Prevention
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Part II (5% of Course Grade)

Due Date: June 26th 2012
Chapter 8- Psychological and Spiritual Relaxation Methods
Activity 8.1: Understanding the Ways to Practice Psychological and Spiritual Relaxation Methods

Directions: Directions: To assess your understanding of key concepts regarding psychological and spiritual relaxation methods, complete the following True/False questions.

1. To receive the full benefits from meditation, you need a quiet place, a comfortable or poised posture, an object to dwell upon, and a passive attitude or poised awareness. (True/False)

2. Autogenic training can be practiced in a reclining posture or a seated posture. (True/False)

3. Meditation is a method of contacting the inner energy responsible for healing and self-actualization.

4. There is of overwhelming anecdotal and empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of prayers in healing. (True/False)

5. Transcendental Meditation is based on the use of a mantra, or a verbal stimulus, consisting of short Sanskrit words or phrases, that can help the user reduce thought processes or patterns.

6. Being religious and being spiritual are considered equivalent. (True/False)

7. The aim of autogenic training is to teach how to reinforce the bodily reactions to stress. (True/False)

8. Guided imagery is the conscious use of the imagination to create positive images in order to bring about healthful changes in both the body and the mind. (True/False)

Activity 8.2: The Child within Guided Imagery Exercise (Adapted from Brandon, 1986)

Find a photograph of yourself taken when you were a 3-6 year-old child. Look at the picture carefully and get a clear image of what you looked like at that age. Choose a quiet spot where you won’t be disturbed for the next 15 to 20 minutes. Slowly close your eyes, take several deep breaths, and say “relax” on each exhalation.
Begin to create the following scenario in your mind. First, visualize the home where you lived as a child between the ages of three and six. What was your favorite spot? Perhaps your home had a front porch, a balcony, a tree in the yard, or a nearby park where you used to go to sit. Now imagine yourself, at your present age, returning to that spot. Waiting for you in the distance is a young child. As you walk closer and closer, you discover that that child is you, at a much younger age. The child looks up and recognizes you as an adult. What are you feeling right now? Whatever you feel, it is safe to continue. Mentally picture yourself sitting down and facing the child. Start a conversation, as slowly as you can, answering these two questions: (1) What does the child say or ask? (2) What do you say or ask? Imagine a full conversation.

Reassure the child that you know he/she did the best he could, that he/she survived, that you still and always will love him/her, and that you will never leave him/her. Actually picture this situation, hear yourself saying the words, let yourself feel what’s going on. Picture yourself holding and hugging yourself as a child. Allow the child to respond or not, as he/she chooses; be gentle and patient. Tell the child that you will always be available for conversation, whenever he/she desires. Ask the child if he/she would be willing to do the same for you. Then, you say goodbye for now.

After this exercise, write down in the following spaces your feelings and thoughts:

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Chapter 9- Physical Methods for Stress Reduction

Activity 9.1: Physical Methods for Relaxation
Directions: Write the name of the appropriate term or theory in the space provided. Use each term only once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biological adaptations hypothesis</th>
<th>Psychosocial hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aerobic exercise</td>
<td>Anaerobic exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive muscle relaxation</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai chi</td>
<td>Qigong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander method</td>
<td>Pilates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Some researchers accounted for the benefits of exercise by proposing this theory that suggests that exercise alters the perceptions of people about themselves and their abilities. ______________

2. This type of exercise has high demands of oxygen in the muscles to the degree that an internal metabolic process for oxygen has to be activated resulting in lactic acid build up. ______________

3. This type of exercise refers to light and repetitive exercise done over a prolonged period of time (running, swimming). ______________

4. This traditional Chinese exercise system combines martial arts movements with circulation, breathing, and stretching exercises. ______________

5. Based on this theoretical explanation for the benefits of physical exercise, increased physical functioning and a more efficient metabolism improve all the systems of the body including those that regulate mood. ______________

6. The meaning of this ancient exercise system comes from a Sanskrit word which means “join” or “creating union.” ______________

Activity 9.2: Understanding the Value of Exercise
1. List all the benefits of exercise that you can think of.

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2. List all possible barriers that might hinder your commitment to physical activity.

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3. List steps that you could take immediately to increase your amount of physical activity.

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Activity 9.3: Making a Public Commitment

Among the various stress management and prevention strategies presented in the previous few chapters (tai chi, yoga, deep breathing, etc.), pick at least one that especially appeals to you. This should be an activity that you would like to practice regularly for the rest of your life.

Making a commitment to yourself is one thing, but doing so in front of witnesses significantly increases the probability that you will follow through. Declare to members of your family, and to your closest friends, that you intend to begin a new regimen designed to reduce the stress in your life.

Write down what you will do, how often you will do it, and the consequences if you fail to follow through. Sign your name in front of a witness.

What I will do
How often I will do it

How I will reward myself when I meet my stated goals

What the consequences will be if I do not follow through

I, ________________________, do solemnly swear that I will commit myself to complete the goals described previously.

Witness:__________________________________________

Activity 9.4: Brainstorm 15 Activities that You Can Do Everyday
Make a list of things you are prepared to do each day, everyday, in order to create a more active, healthy lifestyle.

1. _____________________________________________________________
2. _____________________________________________________________
3. _____________________________________________________________
4. _____________________________________________________________
5. _____________________________________________________________
6. _____________________________________________________________
7. _____________________________________________________________
8. _____________________________________________________________
9. _____________________________________________________________
10. _____________________________________________________________
Chapter 10- Preparing for the Future: College and Occupational Stress

Activity 10.1: Test Your Knowledge about Occupational Stress
Directions: Circle either True or False in the following questions.
1. College life can be made less stressful by managing time and finances more effectively. (True/False)

2. Being a nontraditional student is easy because older students have more experience and are better capable of handling stress. (True/False)

3. Date rapes occur more frequently when two people get to know each other for the first time. (True/False)

4. One of the effective ways to prevent date rape is to set clear limits beforehand. (True/False)

5. Burnout is most likely to occur when your job is incompatible with your skill training and when there is little control. (True/False)

6. Occupational stress is the result of many factors. (True/False)

7. Jobs that allow for little decision-making while placing a high psychological demand on employees is very stressful (True/False).

8. Occupational stress is caused by problems limited only to the workplace. (True/False)

Activity 10.2: Self-Assessment
Directions: Rank-order the factors that would be most important to you in a job.
___Variety of tasks ___Minimum of pressure
___Supportive co-workers ___Excellent supervision
___Subsidies for further education ___Promotional opportunities
___Good salary and benefits ___Lots of responsibility
___Opportunities for creativity ___Attractive office
___Job security ___Freedom of movement

How have these rankings helped you decide what you will focus on when you look for a job after you graduate?
Activity 10.3: Self-Assessment: Work Stress Inventory

Directions: Complete the following survey by using the appropriate rating indicator.
0- Never 1- Occasionally 2- Sometimes 3- Frequently 4- Always

1. ___ I feel little enthusiasm for what I do at work.
2. ___ I find myself dreading the prospect of going to work.
3. ___ I am often in a bad mood when at work.
4. ___ The quality of my work is less than what I am capable of doing.
5. ___ I feel drained when I am through with work, with little energy to do the things I most enjoy.
6. ___ I find myself fantasizing a lot at work, wishing I was somewhere else.
7. ___ My relationships with co-workers are less than satisfying.
8. ___ I engage in unhealthy eating (junk food) and habits (smoking, drinking too much caffeine) at work.
9. ___ I feel bored at work much of the time because I am not challenged.
10. ___ The only reason I have this job is to earn money.

Scoring: Circle all the items that you scored or 3 and 4. These are “red flags” that signal a high degree of stress and dissatisfaction.
A total score greater than 20 indicates that your work setting is a major source of stress in your life and you may want to consider a change in the near future.

Source: Davis, Eshleman, & McKay (2000).
Activity 10.4: Ways to Avoid Stress in Work Place

Directions: Think of the negative ways you often use in handling your stress in the workplace. Then list how you should reduce stress in some positive ways.

| Negative Ways to Cope with Stress in the Work Place | Positive Ways to Cope with Stress in the Work Place |
Chapter 11- Care of the Self: Nutrition and Other Lifestyle Issues

Activity 11.1: Check Your Knowledge in Nutrition and Lifestyle Issues
Directions: Test yourself on how much information from Chapter 11 you have absorbed about the relationship between stress and lifestyle issues.

1. To lower your blood cholesterol level you must stop eating all kinds of oils. (True/False)

2. Reading food labels can help you eat the right kinds of food. (True/False)

3. How and what you eat is not related to the level of stress experienced in your life. (True/False)

4. High-glycemic carbohydrates can be rapidly converted into sugar and lead to an insulin spike and they include. (True/False)

5. To stop smoking, you need a structured plan and draft the support of many people in your life. (True/False)

6. The most common reason people report drinking alcohol is for concentration during work and studies. (True/False)

7. Lack of sleep weakens your immune system, elevates cortisol levels, accelerates ageing, interferes with growth, impairs memory, reduces sex drive, and contributes to a greater susceptibility to diseases like diabetes and Cushing Syndrome. (True/False)

8. You sleep better by watching exciting movies or reading thrillers. (True/False)

9. A high fat diet may improve immune system. (True/False)

10. Excess simple sugars deplete vitamin stores, particularly B-complex. (True/False)

11. Caffeine and other sympathomemetics trigger sympathetic nervous system. (True/False)

12. Chronic stress depletes vitamins B and C. (True/False)
13. High sodium in your diet may lower blood pressure. (True/False)

**Activity 11.2: Making Lifestyle Changes**
Among all the subjects covered in the chapter related to diet, alcohol and drug use, sleeping habits, finances, and other lifestyle issues, what are some specific areas that contribute most to your stress levels?

**Activity 11.3: Track Your Spending Patterns**
Directions: For a period of one month, starting today, keep track of all those purchases you make. This includes not only objects you buy—necessities and luxuries— but also splurges for meals and social activities.

After you have accumulated your list, go through the items one at a time and ask yourself in retrospect, with strict objectivity, which of these purchases you wish you could cancel. Which ones represented an impulsive decision? Circle those items on your list.

Add up the cost of all those unnecessary purchases.

Consider what it would feel like to have saved that amount of money this month that could have been applied to existing debt, or saved for something really important.

**Activity 11.4: Watch Your Dietary Patterns**
Directions: Analyze how your dietary patterns for three days by using the following table provided. Examine it and write a summary about it. Is what you eat conducive to handling much stress and improving health? Look at the frequency and amount of food you eat.

<p>| Breakfast | Midmorning | Lunch | Midafternoon | Dinner |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Snack</th>
<th>Snack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examine it and write a summary about it. Is what you eat conducive to handling much stress and improving health? Look at the frequency and amount of food you eat.

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Activity 11.5: How to Distract Yourself When You Crave Food
Boredom or stress often gives you an excuse to indulge in eating unhealthy foods. You may develop alternative approaches to kill off your boredom or
reduce stress by engaging in more productive activities such as listening to music or taking a bubble bath. Keep adding to the list in the following spaces:
Chapter 12- Stress and Conflict in Relationships

Activity 12.1: A Stressful Relationship
Interpersonal conflicts are an ongoing source of stress in your life. Think of the one relationship that has been most troubling to you during recent times, the one that repeatedly leads to disappointment, frustration, and misunderstanding. As best as you can, describe below what it is about this relationship that is so difficult for you.

Describe specifically all the ways this ongoing conflict increases stress in your life. List as many symptoms and negative consequences as you can.

This next step is challenging but also potentially enlightening: What are the possible “benefits” or secondary gains that you might be enjoying as a result of this ongoing conflict? Think about the ways you might be keeping someone at a distance, protecting yourself, enjoying attention or self-pity, expressing control, or similar side effects. If you get stuck, refer back to the part of the chapter that talks about the “functions” of conflict.
Activity 12.2: Making Excuses
Although initially it may feel good to “externalize” conflicts, or blame others for your troubles, this also leads to a sense of powerlessness and lack of control. After all, if it isn’t your fault in any way then what can you possibly do to prevent such difficulties in the future?

Think of a relationship conflict you are experiencing right now in your life—a disagreement with a classmate or instructor, a feud with a family member, a misunderstanding with a friend. Regardless of what you have been telling yourself (until now) about whose fault it is, who started the trouble, who is to blame, concentrate on the most common excuses you offer to avoid responsibility and blame. List your favorite excuses below. Refer to the section in the chapter on “A List of Excuses” if you run out of ideas.

Activity 12.3 Understanding Different Communicators
Who are the people in your life who exerted the most influence on you in terms of the ways you now relate to other people? For each of the three most important people, describe what it is about their style that you have internalized as part of your own.

1.

2.
Activity 12.4: Improving Relationship Skills
This chapter increased your awareness of your interpersonal skills, relationships, and listening skills. What are some specific areas in which you need to work on in order to enjoy greater intimacy and less stress?
Activity 13.1: Enhance Your Resilient Living

Describe several things that give the greatest meaning and purpose to your life.

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______________________________________________________________________

What are the greatest joys and satisfactions you feel from engaging in the activities described above?

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What are some things (both internal and external) that get in the way of you doing these things more often, and with greater passion?

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Describe one recent example when you persevered in the face of obstacles and difficulties in order to complete an activity described earlier.

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Activity 13.2: Who You Are
List all the words you can think of to describe who you are as a person.
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List all the words you can think of in describing your *ideal self*, that is, the person you would like most to be.
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What are the discrepancies between who you are versus who you want to be in the future?
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Activity 13.3: Letting Go of the Past
Describe three events or incidents from the past that still bother you today.
What would it take for you to let them go?

Activity 13.4: Recovering from Trauma

Think of a time when you faced an extremely difficult situation in your life. This could have been the death of a loved one, losing a job or friendship, failing at something important to you, experiencing trauma earlier in life, dealing with hardships, or overcoming some form of adversity. Describe how you originally felt when this situation first occurred.

What did you do to help yourself recover? Analyze how you were able to demonstrate a degree of resilience in order to go on with your life in such a way that you now feel stronger as a result of what you lived through.
Activity 13.5: Self-Talk During Times of Trouble
List some of the most frequent things you tell yourself when you find yourself in stressful situations. These are ways that you talk to yourself to help promote a sense of self-control and inner calmness.

How and where did you learn to internalize those particular voices?

13.6: Learning from Failure
The chapter encouraged you to reflect on the ways that failures can teach you to become more flexible, resilient, and reflective. What is a time in your life in which as a result of a mistake or failure that you learned far more than you ever could have if things had gone as anticipated?
Chapter 14- Optimal Functioning

Activity 14.1. Reflection on the Positive
Thinking back on the last week, list as many times as you can remember in which you dealt effectively with stressful events, situations, and challenges.
1. 

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3. 

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Activity 14.2: Organize a List of Blessings
Directions: Having an attitude of gratitude often helps people reduce their stress. List below as many blessings as your imagination can generate.
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**Activity 14.3: Identification of Your Happiness Strategies**
Identify as many strategies as you can in order to enhance happiness and well-being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 14.4: Self-Assessment
In the first chapter you were asked to complete this self-assessment exercise. Now that you are on the verge of completing this course and text, go through the activity again to identify the top 10 stressors in your life, describe how you have coped with them, and rank your effectiveness of coping. After you finish the exercise, go back to Chapter 1 to see what changes have occurred since last time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 10 Stressors in Your Life</th>
<th>Your Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Rank the Effectiveness of Your Coping Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Least Effective; 5 = Most Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activity 14.5: Projection into the Future
Imagine that it is now five years in the future. In as much detail as possible, picture what you are doing. Where are you living? Who are you living with? As you proceed throughout a typical day in your life describe the ways that you deal successfully with stressors that arise.

Activity 14.6: Reasons for Changing Your Life
Lasting change occurs when you have potent and consistent motivation. This happens most often when you are clear about why you need to make the changes in your life. Identify as many reason as you can identify for making the changes you want to make and the benefits these changes will bring.