Stress Management Training: Facilitator’s Manual

Learning Materials for “Helping Health Workers Cope,” a Project of Concern Worldwide’s Innovations for Maternal, Newborn, & Child Health and the Community Association for Psychosocial Services (CAPS)

December 2012
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Acknowledgements

This Stress Management Training Manual was developed through a highly collaborative process between The Community Association for Psychosocial Services (CAPS) staff in Kono, Sierra Leone, Concern Worldwide Innovations for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health staff and a public health consultant with psychosocial expertise (primary writer). The writer would like to express sincere gratitude to the capable CAPS clinical team and senior management staff, as well as the Innovations team in Sierra Leone, for their invaluable input, insights and guidance that made this manual possible.

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Disclaimer

This manual was developed to train and support health workers in Kono District, Sierra Leone, to help them understand, cope with and manage stress in their professional and personal lives. All material in this manual was created by the author, a qualified public health and social work professional, unless otherwise noted within the document, in addition to other noted contributors. The content of this manual was developed based on input from the participating organizations and data collected in Sierra Leone. The approach, techniques and activities presented in this training manual have been designed specifically for health workers in Kono District. Any names, examples, situations, or role play scenarios presented in the manual are examples only, and do not refer to actual people or events.

Use of Material

Material contained in this manual may be freely used for non-commercial purposes as long as Innovations for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is acknowledged as follows: “Material adapted from Concern Worldwide (U.S.) Inc.'s Innovations for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health initiative.”
Manual Development

Concern Worldwide’s Innovations for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Project (“Innovations”) and their local non-governmental organization partner, Community Association for Psychosocial Support (CAPS) began implementation of the Helping Health Workers Cope (HHWC) project in Kono, Sierra Leone in August 2011. This project provides local health care workers with counseling and training to strengthen coping skills in the context of their high demand and low resource work environment within the Kono peripheral health system. This project focuses on promoting resilience through skill building, while encouraging mutual support and community among health workers. The ultimate goal of this Innovations/CAPS project is to increase health workers’ ability to provide quality care, especially to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five – the most vulnerable populations within the public health context in Sierra Leone.

In order to equip health workers with the skills they need, Innovations/CAPS began providing group and individual counseling for health workers in February 2012. To further support health workers, targeted trainings in stress management, self-care and client care, were designed, and were offered in a group setting following the counseling intervention.

The following manual was created to facilitate health worker training in the area of stress management, in order to enhance coping mechanisms and promote resilience both personally and professionally. This manual was developed through a highly collaborative process that involved participating health workers in Kono district, the CAPS clinical and program teams, the Innovations team based in Sierra Leone, and a psychosocial consultant.

In order to develop this manual, in-depth participatory workshops were carried out by the psychosocial consultant, which resulted in a consensus in regards to the goals and topics to be covered in the training by both the project management and implementation teams. The manual content was also informed by clinical assessments carried out with each participating health worker at the start of the project. These individual assessments assisted CAPS/Innovations in identifying the main sources of stress for health workers in Kono District.

Once the manual reached final draft stage, a Sierra Leonean consultant reviewed the content to localize and contextualize language, examples, stories and activities. Finally, the project’s psychosocial counselors reviewed and further adapted the manual for the target audience. Therefore, the manual went through multiple review processes by Innovations staff at central and field levels, a local Sierra Leonean consultant, CAPS’ management team, and finally the training facilitators themselves prior to finalization.
I. Training Overview

Purpose of this Manual
This manual is designed to guide the Helping Health Workers Cope (HHWC) staff in the facilitation of the project’s Stress Management intervention. The HHWC project is being implemented by the Community Association for Psychosocial Services (CAPS) in Sierra Leone. The target audience for this training is Ministry of Health workers in Kono District serving the maternal, child and newborn population.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this training, participants will be able to:
- Define stress, including its positive and negative aspects
- Identify different sources of stress in their lives
- Identify at least 3 ways to reduce stress within the work environment
- Identify at least 3 techniques to improve stress management and/or self-care

Timeframe
Approximately 8 hours

Training Approaches
- Participatory
- Psycho educational

Methodologies
- Group discussion and brainstorming
- Small group activities
- Self-assessment exercises
- Experimental learning
- Personal goal setting

Preparation and supplies required
- Flip chart, flip chart stand (if needed)
- Flip chart markers
- Extra pens/paper for participants
- Tape (if needed to post flip chart pages on the wall)
- Copies of pre- and post-test assessment forms for each participant
- Copies of Appendices for facilitator reference (all)
- Copies of Appendices as handouts for participants (Appendix 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 – one copy per participant; Appendix 2 – two copies for the small group activity)
- Flip chart pages prepared by facilitator with headings prior to training (noted in manual)
- Refreshments
Stress Management Training Schedule

I. Introduction – 60 minutes
   a. Welcome, introductions, review of objectives and agenda
   b. Administer pre-test, establish ground rules
   c. Expectations from participants

II. What is Stress? – 30 minutes
   a. Definitions of stress
   b. Discussion of positive and negative aspects of stress

   ** Break – 15 minutes **

III. How Do We React to Stress? – 30 minutes
   a. “Fight or flight” response, role of cortisol
   b. Participant activity (pairs) on positive/negative stress

IV. Exploring our Sources of Stress – 90 minutes
   a. Individual self-assessment activity, feedback
   b. Discussion of work-related stress
   c. Discussion of stress (mind, behavior, body, spiritual, workplace)
   d. Introductory discussion on positive responses to workplace stress
   e. Participant activity (health facility role play) on positive/negative responses to stress
   f. Discussion of role play, health worker responses

   ** Lunch Break – 60 minutes **

V. Stress Management Strategies – 60 minutes
   a. Introduction to stress management, learning new skills
   b. Basic stress management techniques
      i. Review of Stress Management Tips (Recognition, Self-Care)
      ii. Discussion/reactions to self-care ideas

VI. Stress Reduction/Relaxation – Practical Exercises – 40 minutes
   i. Deep Breathing
   ii. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
   iii. Visualization/Imagery
   iv. Brief reflection on exercises

   ** Break – 15 minutes **

VII. Personal Goal Setting – 15 minutes
   i. Individual exercise – “Self-Care Prescription”
   ii. Brief discussion regarding personal goal setting

VIII. Wrap up / Closing – 30 minutes
   a. Recap, summary of learning from the day
   b. Brief group evaluation
   c. Revisiting participants’ training expectations
   d. Administer post-test
   e. Word of thanks, encouragement for self-care and stress management efforts
II. Introduction

Opening of Workshop
Welcome, introduction of facilitator, and provision of a brief description of the Helping Health Workers Cope Project to participants. Facilitate the introduction of participant through the following ice breaker.

Ice Breaker – Fact or Fiction

Ask participants to write THREE things about themselves on a piece of paper which may not be known to others in the group. Two are true and one is not. Taking turns, they go around the room and read out the three ‘facts’ about themselves and the rest of the group votes which are true and false. There are always surprises.

This simple activity is fun, and helps the group members and facilitators get to know more about each other.

Overview Statement
Facilitator says – In this workshop, we will discuss stress – what it is, where it comes from and how it affects us. We will also learn about strategies that can help us better cope with stress in our personal and professional lives. Briefly review the agenda for the day with participants (refer to a prepared flip chart).

Administer Pre-test
Facilitator says – Before starting our work together, we would like your help in filling out a brief pre-training survey form (facilitator will pass this out). Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. This information simply helps us to figure out how we are doing in our training efforts with you and to get your feedback.

Establish Ground Rules
Facilitator says – We would like to begin our training by establishing some ground rules so we all have a common understanding of what we can expect from one another.

Facilitator asks – What do you feel are important ground rules to establish during our training? Write the ground rules on the flip chart and review to make sure there is an agreement among participants that they can all follow them during the training today.

Ground rules should include (add if not mentioned):
Maintaining confidentiality (what is said here stays here); listening to and respecting everyone’s input; turn off cell phones; not interrupting one another other (listening); and everyone participates.

Expectations
Facilitator asks – What are your expectations for this stress management training today? What do you hope we will accomplish?
Elicit input from the participants and write expectations on a flip chart page. Put this page on the wall and save it to review at the end of training.

Then, share the learning objectives of the client care training:

**Learning Objectives:**

- To define stress (including positive and negative stress)
- To explore sources and consequences of stress
- To improve knowledge regarding stress management strategies
- To set personal goals for self-care
- To facilitate group learning and peer support

**In the process, we hope to:**

- Facilitate group learning and peer support
- Have fun!

You can observe that some of these above objectives coincide with participant expectations mentioned in their own brainstorming process (on the flip chart), and if appropriate, explain that you will try to integrate some of their other priorities throughout the training today as possible.
III. What Is Stress?

- Brainstorm

Facilitator asks - How do you define Stress?
List input from the group on how they define stress and record their answers on the flip chart (as appropriate).

Definitions of Stress
Facilitator says – It may seem like the definition would be obvious since we all know what stress is like – and we have all experienced it. However, there are several definitions of stress and the exact definition is still being debated. Let’s begin by reviewing some of the main definitions of stress.

The Older – Neutral/Positive Definition (Hans Selye, founder of stress research, 1956):
Stress is not necessarily bad – it depends on how you respond to it. “The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental.” In other words, the effects of stress depend on whether you perceive the situation as being positive or negative.

Since this time, stress thinking and research has transitioned into being seen as more of a “bad thing,” with harmful biochemical and long term effects.

These days, the most commonly accepted definition of stress is:

The Current – Negative Definition (Richard S. Lazarus):
Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” In other words, stress is something we experience when we face a situation and our ability to cope is challenged. We feel we’ve lost control of events.

Is we think of it this way, stress can be seen as a perceived threat to us on any level. It can be emotional, physical, psychological and can affect us in any aspect of our lives – personal life, and very commonly – in our work/professional life.

Facilitator asks – Does this definition (by Richard Lazarus) make sense to you? Do you have any observations or thoughts on this definition of stress?
Although today we will focus most of our time on the negative aspects of stress (as noted in the second definition, above) and ways to mitigate it, it is helpful to first briefly take a broad look at both (positive and negative) sides of stress:

*Note to facilitator:* Have flip chart pages ready, with one page for negative, and another page for positive aspects of stress.

**Discussion of Positive Aspects of Pressure or Stress**

- **Brainstorm**

*Facilitator asks* – Can you think of times when stress has a positive effect? List the participant’s responses about positive stress on a flip chart page.

Mention these examples (if not already mentioned by participants):

- Having a set deadline, which helps you accomplish a project (otherwise you might procrastinate)
- Getting married
- Getting a new/better job
- Anticipation of a sports competition that helps you perform better or faster

**Discussion of Negative Effects of Stress**

- **Brainstorm**

*Facilitator asks* - When does stress have a negative effect on us?
List participant thoughts on another flip chart page headed “negative stress.”

*Facilitator observes* - Stress is caused by various factors, some are external (such as where we live and work), and internal (such as physical ailments, worrying). The truth is, some factors we can control and others we cannot.

Discuss the list of negative effects mentioned by participants and see if they can observe any “groupings” of types of stress they mentioned. Help them to identify any trends/groups based on the
negative effects of stress they mentioned. Add some of the following stressors to their brainstorm list (as appropriate):

**Environmental Stressors**
- Reminders of war
- Poor housing conditions
- Pollution and noise
- Political conflict in the community

**Family-related stressors**
- Family separations (due to work relocations or other reason)
- Marital conflict
- Illness or death of a family member
- Parenting or child care challenges

**Workplace Stressors**
- Conflict among co-workers
- Unexpected/unwanted transfer of work location
- Lack of mobility/transport for high risk patients at the health facility
- Poor communication with co-workers or patients
- Lack of support from supervisor
- No forum to express work concerns and issues
- Lack of resources to support the provision of care

**Physical Stressors**
- Illness such as malaria
- Physical injury such as strained back
- Headaches, fatigue, indigestion

Close discussion by observing that we can face negative stress on many different levels and sometimes we can ignore our stress because we feel overwhelmed by it or not know how to cope with (or improve) our situation.

**Break (15 minutes or as needed)**
IV. How Do We React To Stress?

Facilitator says – Let’s look at some of the effects of this negative or “bad stress.” One of the negative effects of stress is that our bodies respond to it by releasing a hormone called cortisol. Research now indicates that sustained release of this stress hormone cortisol can actually damage our brains (Drs. Sadek and Nemeroff).

Facilitator asks – What ideas do you have about how the “bad stress” hormone of cortisol works in our brains? How does it affect us? Allow a brief discussion among participants on their understanding of cortisol and how it affects our brains and behavior.

Facilitator explains further – Some of us have heard of the “fight or flight” response, which was documented by early research (Walter Cannon, 1932). It basically says we all have an innate biological response (for animals as well as humans) to severe stress, whereby the nervous system is aroused and the body releases the hormone cortisol. This stress hormone helps us run faster or fight harder in life threatening situations. We experience increased heart rate and respiratory rate, perspiration, increased muscle tension and energy. This response is helpful for survival in threatening and traumatic events like being chased by a lion, fleeing violence in a war or escaping a burning car.

However, today the problem with our fight or flight response is that:
- It can be triggered (at work, at home) even if the situation if not life threatening
- It has negative consequences on our health (makes us uneasy by impairing the immune system, causing stress-related illnesses)
- It interferes with our ability to perform and make good decisions
- Makes us ineffective at our work and leaves us accident prone
- It reduces our ability to interact positively with others and enjoy life

The reality is that we only need to activate this fight or flight response in rare circumstances for survival. However, our bodies can go into this type of response with other kinds of (non-life threatening) stress, which is a problem for us and our health.

Facilitator says – An essential concept in stress management is that: We all need to look at ways to keep our fight or flight response under control to avoid negative health consequences and to prevent feelings of “burnout” in our personal and professional lives.
Activity in Pairs
Facilitator introduces activity – We are now going to do an activity that will help us explore our experiences with both negative and positive stressors.

ACTIVITY 1 – Sharing Experiences of Stress

Have participants find a partner and discuss an example of:

a) Positive / good stress and
b) Negative stress in their own experience

Allow for 2 minutes per person, then switch. Walk around between partners and be sure both people have a chance to share his/her experiences.

Be sure to tell participants that what is shared is only for discussion purposes with their partner and they will not be required to share their results with the larger group. Walk around and offer participants support as needed. They might come up with examples such as: making an excellent presentation at work (good stress); grieving the loss of a family member (bad stress).

Facilitator asks – Are there any volunteers that would like to share examples of the good/positive and negative stress they discussed? Emphasize that sharing is totally voluntary.

If desired, write answers on a flip chart for all to see. You can divide the flip chart paper into two sections one with a + sign for positive stress and one with a – sign for negative stress.

Facilitator asks – Does anyone have any new insights or thoughts regarding your experiences with positive or negative stress based on your discussion with your partner? Encourage discussion and point out that having insights into our stress is a key part of learning to cope with it (as we will discuss later in our training).

Wrap-up Statement
Facilitator summarizes - So far, we have talked about stress and how it can have both positive and negative effects on us and our performance (personal and work), depending on how we perceive stress and how we react to it. As we will discuss a little later on, everyone experiences stress and responds to it in a unique way, depending on our personality and individual internal/external resources.

Keep in mind that as a rule, we all experience stress when we feel that things are “out of control” For some of us, this happens more often than others.
V. Exploring our Sources of Stress

**Individual Self-Assessment**

*Facilitator says* - Now that we have discussed the definition of stress, let’s look a little deeper into some of the sources of stress in our lives. (You can note that later today we will start thinking about what we should do about the stress).

**ACTIVITY 2 – Individual Self-Assessment**

*Introduce the activity by stating:*

We all are under stress of some kind, but since each person here has unique experiences, we are going to do an individual exercise to get a sense of what our individual stress level is like right now.

*Pass out Appendix 1. - Personal Life Events Analysis*

*Now explain the process of doing this self-assessment:*

- **Completing form** - I would like to ask each of you to fill out this Personal Life Events Analysis form. You should circle the numbers on the right beside various events that may have occurred in the past 12 months (if something has occurred more than once, you will be circling that number however many times you experienced it. For example, if you moved twice, note that you circle the value twice). This exercise is only for you, will not be shared with the group. You are free to take it home with you after the training.
- **Scoring the results** - When you are finished circling the life event’s associated numbers on the right side of the form, add up the total of all the numbers you circled.
- **Analyzing the results** - When done adding your score, note that the higher your number, the higher your stress. If your results are over 150, your stress is considered on the high end and it will be important for you to figure out ways to manage your stress to prevent physical illness.

Have each participant work quietly/individually on filling out the form (for about 5 minutes). After completing the form, have them add up their score according to the instructions listed in Appendix 1. While they are doing this, walk around the room and provide any clarification needed to participants.

After everyone has completed their Personal Life Events Analysis form,

*Facilitator asks* – What was it like for you to fill out this form?

- Does anyone want to share anything interesting they learned from this exercise?
- Was it helpful to do this self-assessment? If yes, why?
- Any other comments or observations you would like to make about this exercise?
**Work-related Stress**

*Facilitator says* – Some of you probably noted employment-related stressors when you completed the self-assessment exercise.

*Facilitator asks* – How many participants (raise of hands) in the group circled some form of work-related stress on the Personal Life Events Analysis form? Examples might be change in job duties, housing relocation due to work, trouble with boss, etc.

We spend a lot of our time and energy in our work, and some jobs are intrinsically stressful. *Share observation* – Work-related stress is very common, as it is for many health workers here in Kono. Conditions can be difficult when resources are limited (human resources, medications/supplies, transport, etc.) and you may feel stretched to meet the demands of the patients in your health facilities.

- **Brainstorm** (Gallery Walk - Effects of Stress)

*Note to facilitator:* Prepare flip chart pages ahead of time with the following headings to help guide brainstorming. Post the flip chart papers in different parts of the room. Participants can meet at the flip charts and write their contributions, while doing so they will also have an opportunity to discuss.

- In the mind (thinking/feeling)
- In behavior (how we act)
- In the body (physical response)
- Spiritually
- In the workplace setting/culture

*Facilitator asks* – How does this workplace stress impact us? What are some of the consequences you notice in yourself when it comes to workplace stress? Are there certain signs that you observe in yourself when you are stressed at work?

*Provide instructions on gallery walk activity* – Now, I would like you to brainstorm how stress in the workplace affects you in the following areas and list your reactions/thoughts on the flip chart pages posted throughout the room.

How does stress affect you?

- In the mind (thinking/feeling)
- In behavior (how we act)
- In the body (physical response)
- Spiritually
- In the workplace setting/culture?
Allow participants to walk around the room, posting their thoughts on how stress affects them on these various levels. Have participants discuss their input as they do so, but make sure that every participant has a chance to contribute and think through the brainstorm process.

After they have all had an opportunity to write down their contributions, ask participants to observe all the responses by walking around the room (gallery walk). Ask for volunteers to read the cumulative group responses on each flip chart page. Add the following effects of stress to add to their input noted on the flip chart pages (as appropriate):

**In the mind**
- Feeling anxious, overwhelmed, irritable, angry, upset, sad/depressed, “jumpy”/hyper vigilant, fearful
- Having nightmares, obsessive thinking, emotional or angry outbursts
- Noting poor concentration/memory, poor problem solving or decision making, etc.

**In behavior**
- Withdrawing from co-workers, difficulty taking breaks/resting, talking too much
- Angry outbursts (with co-workers or patients), loss or increase of appetite, jumping from one activity to another (unfocused)
- Increased alcohol consumption or smoking, change in normal communications, etc.

**In the body**
- Fatigue, headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, muscle tightness (neck, shoulders, jaw)
- Sweating, shallow breathing, rapid heart rate, teeth grinding, etc.

**Spiritually**
- Feelings of loss or direction and purpose, emptiness
- Feeling punished, apathy, crisis of faith, etc.

**In the workplace**
- Low morale, apathy, silence, impaired communication, isolation, lack of teamwork and team spirit
- Low productivity, aggressive or confrontational behavior, high rates of absenteeism due to stress and illness, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.

*Observe* that this exercise shows us that there are many ways that stress can affect us in the workplace – and on so many levels!
Positive Responses to Workplace Stress

Facilitator says – On the brighter side, we also know that there are some positive or healthier ways we can cope with our work-related stressors.

- Brainstorm

Facilitator asks – What are some of the positive ways you have found to manage stress?
Allow participants to share some of their ideas on positive ways to deal with stress in the workplace. List positive stress management ideas on a flip chart page (as desired).

Positive responses may include (add as appropriate):
- Relaxation techniques
- Religious practices
- Meditation
- Working on self-awareness – “check yourself”

Facilitator introduces the next activity – Now, let’s do a role play activity that will give us a chance to further explore some positive and negative examples of stress management.

ACTIVITY 3 – Health Facility Role Play

Divide participants into 2 groups (ideally around 6 in each group. If there are more than 8 persons in a group, you may need to divide them into additional groups).

Share these instructions:
Each group will develop and act out a brief scenario in their health facility. This scenario should include both positive and negative examples of managing stress.

Pass out Appendix 2 for specific instructions on the role play activity.

Have the 1st group present their role play. After the role play is completed, the facilitator will ask the questions below to encourage a discussion on participant observations and experiences.

Facilitator asks those who observed the role play: What types of stressors did the health workers confront in this role play? How would you evaluate the health workers' response to the stressful situations? What negative ways did you observe the health workers responding to the stress? What positive ways did you observe the health workers responding to the stress?
Facilitator then asks the participants who acted out the role play: What did you notice about your stress and response to stress when you were acting out this role play? What was it like for you to act this role play out?

Next, have the second group present their role play to the larger group, discuss the above questions as you did with the first group. Congratulate participants for their efforts, for their creativity, and for having fun with their co-workers.

** Lunch Break (60 minutes) **
VI. Stress Management Strategies

*Facilitator says* – It is helpful for everyone to find ways to integrate stress management techniques into our daily lives. Let’s face it – life is stressful, we need to be proactive in order to learn ways to better cope with it at work, at home, and in our communities. With practice, we all can learn how to better spot stressors and stay in control when the pressure builds.

Remember when we talked about the fight or flight response and what happens to our bodies when stress hormones are released? With stress management, we strive to relax and find the opposite physical reaction to fight or flight – decreasing our heart rate, blood pressure, respiration and muscle tension.

Like developing any new skill, it takes time, commitment, self-exploration and experimentation. A central part of stress management is finding ways to build new habits for yourself, so that you have practical tools readily available as stressful situations arise.

*Facilitator says* – Before lunch, you shared some ideas of positive ways we can handle stress. Since this is an important topic, let’s talk further about basic stress management techniques that can be helpful in our everyday lives.

**Basic Stress Management Techniques**

*Facilitator says* – Here are some key pointers on how to better cope with stress:

**Tip #1: Recognize warning signs of excessive stress**

**Self-awareness is the foundation of stress management**

Feeling overwhelmed at work or in your personal life is draining and can make you feel irritable, withdrawn and ineffective. Many of us feel stress so often that it begins to feel normal. The first step in better managing your stress is to simply recognize it, so that it does not grow into bigger problems – affecting your physical and emotional health. We can learn simple ways to “check ourselves” for stress.

**Become aware of stress by observing your muscles, insides and your breath**

If you notice muscle tension or other internal signals (such as tightness in your jaw or hands, neck, tightness in your stomach, headache), your body is telling you that you are under excessive stress. Another signal of stress is when you notice that your breathing becomes shallow, or when you “forget” to breathe (versus relaxed deeper belly breathing).

**Tip #2: Reduce Stress through Self-Care**

*Facilitator says* – The better you feel, the better you will be prepared to confront stress without being overwhelmed. This means taking care of your health physically and emotionally. Even small things can help you to have more energy and feel more in control of your situation, both at home and at work. Some self-care ideas include:
Exercise
When we move our bodies our heart rate is elevated, which helps to lift our mood, increase energy, and relax our mind and body. Try to get at least 30 minutes of activity most days. If it is difficult to find that much time in your day, break the activity into two or three shorter segments. Try walking, stretching, or participate in a sport (examples might include football, dancing, etc.)

Socialize and Connect with Others
Talk with your family or friends when you feel stressed. Simply sharing your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust can help. Develop friendships with your co-workers, as this can help protect you from the negative effects of stress. Find a “vent partner” – a trusted friend who you know will listen to you and give objective advice. Listening and supporting one another can relieve stress.

Take Breaks, Time away
When you become aware that stress is mounting, take a quick break to move away from the situation. Go on a quick brisk walk, take a minute to meditate or pray. Sometimes physical movement, engaging in positive self-talk and changing your environment can help you to “reset” and enhance your ability to cope.

Make Healthy Food and Drink Choices
Eat healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Drink plenty of water to keep hydrated. If you get hungry between meals, eat snacks with protein (such as groundnuts, cashew nuts, etc.) to keep your energy up during the day. Avoid foods with lots of salt, sugar (including sweets, juice and soda drinks), and processed foods, as these types of foods can make you tired and more vulnerable to health problems. Use caffeine in moderation, as your mood and energy can “crash” afterwards.

Avoid Drinking, Smoking or Taking Pills or Drugs to Relax
Alcohol can temporarily reduce stress, but it can be hard on the body and lead to abuse and dependence. Similarly, the nicotine found in tobacco can be temporarily calming, and later lead to higher levels of anxiety and health problems. Medications to ease pain, like any drugs, can help us to feel better in the short term but do not address underlying stressors and can become addictive.

Practice Healthy Sleeping Habits
Getting adequate sleep is critical. When you are rested you are better equipped to deal with stress during the day. Aim for eight hours of sleep a night and take naps if you are able. Arrange your sleeping area so it is comfortable for you and avoid watching TV, working on the computer, worrying, arguing, etc. before going to bed.

Enjoy Cultural, Spiritual and Social Activities
Get engaged with your community for song, dance, and cultural activities. It is good to express yourself and socialize with your neighbors. Another critical part of self-care involves nurturing your spiritual side – so try to make time for self-reflection, meditation and prayer.
**Look for humor**
When used appropriately, humor can be a great way to release stress. When you feel things are getting too serious or heavy, look for ways to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or story. It is important to have fun and laugh, even at work.

**Know your limits**
Don’t over commit yourself! Don’t try to fit too much into one day. If you feel you have too much on your plate, prioritize and drop tasks that are not essential. Ask for help. Learn to say “no” and set limits when you are asked to take on more than you can handle. If you feel overwhelmed at work, ask to meet with your manager (CHO) and discuss how best to prioritize the tasks at hand.

**Create a balanced schedule**
Analyze your schedule, responsibilities and daily tasks. Plan at least one fun or enjoyable social activity into your schedule every day. Find a balance between work and family; alone time is also important to avoid burnout.

*Facilitator asks* – What do you think of these suggestions? What other strategies have you tried or what other ideas have you heard of that might help us cope with stress?

Encourage discussion on the suggestions you reviewed and other ideas they can share with the group on positive stress management techniques. Record answers on a flip chart (as desired).

**Stress Reduction Exercises**
*Facilitator says* – At this point in our discussion, we would like to discuss a few specific relaxation techniques, proven to be effective in stress reduction. They include: deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and visualization/imagery. Remember that effective stress management requires practice over time in order to see results. You may find that one of these techniques might work better than others. Once you have tried out these techniques, adopt the one(s) that work(s) best for you and stick with it.

*Facilitator now leads* participants in the following three exercises using **Appendices 3, 4 and 5**. Go through these exercises slowly and take a break in between (as needed) to get the full positive effects. Allow participants to ask questions, seek clarification or share comments after each exercise (but make sure that they are silent when practicing to avoid interruptions).

**Deep Breathing** *(See Appendix 3 for instructions)*
*Facilitator introduces exercise* – Deep breathing is a simple but very effective method of relaxation. It can be used to “take a deep breath” to calm someone down in a crisis, as well as in mediation, prayer or during slow stretching of your muscles. You can use this technique in combination with the other two techniques (progressive muscle relaxation and visualization) to reduce stress.

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation** *(See Appendix 4 for instructions)*
**Facilitator introduces exercise** - Progressive muscular relaxation is useful for relaxing your body when muscles are tense. The idea behind this technique is that you focus slowly on tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. Normally you tense each muscle group for at least five seconds and then relax for 30 (or more) seconds, repeating as needed. This helps you become more aware of physical sensations in your body and is very practical because it can be done anywhere, anytime.

**Visualization** *(See Appendix 5 for instructions)*
Visualization, or imagery is a powerful method of stress reduction, and can be combined with other types of physical relaxation such as deep breathing. The general idea behind positive visualization is to use your imagination to create a situation in your mind that is relaxing and calming – like taking a “mini holiday.”

**Facilitator asks for feedback** – What was it like to experience these relaxation techniques? Did you respond better to one over the others? Which one(s)? Are these techniques something you can practice at work or at home?

Encourage discussion and sharing of feedback among participants about their experiences with these relaxation techniques.

**Wrap up - Practical Exercises**
**Facilitator closes discussion on stress reduction exercises:**
There are many other techniques for preventing stress and improving coping skills in addition to the three types (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation/CALM and visualization) we experienced today. Some others include meditation, prayer, engaging in “talk” counseling, and other forms of exercise. We encourage you to use the handouts we provided you today to experiment further with these stress reduction strategies and see if you might be able to integrate any of them into your regular self-care routine.

**Break (15 minutes)**
VII.  Personal Goal Setting

*Facilitator says* - Today we have talked a lot about stress and different techniques we can use to better cope with and combat stress. We also tried out a few different kinds of stress reduction approaches to expose you to some possible ways to enhance your self-care.

*Facilitator introduces the next activity* – Now let’s do an individual activity (described below) that will help each of you to begin developing a self-care plan.

**ACTIVITY 4 – Self-Care Prescription**

Now we want to incorporate some of our lessons from today into an activity (pass out Appendix 6).

Take a moment to reflect on any new knowledge or approaches you have learned today. Think about how any of these strategies might apply to your own life.

For this Self-Care Prescription (it is just for you – you don’t have to share it with anyone):

**Write down at least two specific, concrete things you would like to start doing right away to support your self-care and stress reduction efforts.** After this training, you can take it home or to work with you in order to remind you of the commitments you have made to yourself!

Make sure that all participants have completed the form in Appendix 6 and help them to be sure they identify specific activities. You may need to help some participants develop activities that are feasible and doable.

*Facilitator then asks*– Does anyone have any comments or thoughts they would like to share about what it was like to fill out this Self-Care Prescription? Would anyone in the group be willing to share an activity they have committed to? (Volunteers only) How will your Self-Care Prescription be helpful to you after you leave today?

Allow participants to discuss their experiences doing this exercise, and their thinking about what they can reasonably commit to. Provide encouragement that they do have the ability to follow through with their Self-Care Prescription. Suggest that they support one another by reminding their co-workers in the training to follow through with doing the activities identified.

Thank participants for thoughtfully filling this out and make sure they bring this handout home with them for future reference.
VIII. Wrap Up / Closing

Recap
In this stress management training today, we:

- Defined stress (both positive and negative).
- Talked about how we respond to stress on various levels (mind, behavior, body, spiritually, in the workplace).
- Reviewed some very real workplace stressors and explored some ways we can better cope with them.
- Explored some basic stress management strategies (recognising that the first step in managing stress is to be aware of it), and ways to reduce stress by improving self-care.
- We also practiced some actual stress reduction/relaxation exercises (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visualization) and
- Completed our own Self-Care Prescription to guide us in practicing self-care and stress reduction after we leave this training today.

Facilitator asks – Does anyone want to add anything else that they learned today or feel is important to mention? Is there anything important that we left out?

Group Evaluation
Facilitate a group evaluation by asking for what participants viewed as positive or helpful aspects of the training and aspects they did not like or think could be improved. Emphasize that this feedback is valuable as we conduct more of these trainings.

Label flip chart pages with “I liked...” and “I wish we had...” (If you prefer, use some other wording or illustration to capture this concept such as a sun for what they like and a cloud for what they wished for) to elicit group participants’ feedback on the training.

Facilitator asks – Did we meet your expectations in the training today?
Post the flip chart page with participant expectations (from beginning of training) and have participants reflect on the day. Discuss whether or not their expectations were met. Emphasize that stress management is a large topic and that they will be able to learn more about related topics in the upcoming self-care training.

Post-Training Questionnaire
Facilitator should now distribute post-training questionnaire and ask each participant to complete it and return to you before departing.

Closing Words, Vote of Thanks
Before closing, encourage participants in their stress management efforts, acknowledging that learning to take care of ourselves is a journey that goes way beyond this training today. Acknowledge that it is important that they support one another as health workers by reminding each other that self-care and stress management are important life priorities. Encourage participants to apply some of the stress
management strategies that they learned today into their schedules this coming week. Emphasize the importance of continuing to support one another as colleagues as they return to their workplaces.

End session with a song if appropriate.
Appendices
Appendix 1 – CAPS Stress Management Training

Personal Life Events Analysis
To learn the level of stress (distress) in your life, circle the value (number) at the right of each of the following events if it has occurred within the past 12 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence at home</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital separation</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict or violence in the community</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of family member</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fired from job</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement from job</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in family member's health</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition to family (for example new baby, relative moves in, etc.)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant change in job duties</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in financial status</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close friend</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in number of marital arguments</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of housing due to lack of finances</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical relocation/housing changes to work requirements</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in work responsibilities</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son or daughter leaving home</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with in-laws</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse begins or ceases working</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting or finishing school</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change (decline) of living conditions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of personal habits</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with boss</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in work hours or conditions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in residence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in schools</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in recreational habits</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in religious activities</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in social activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in sleeping habits</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in number of family gatherings</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in eating habits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebration of major holiday</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to analyze your score:**
Add the circled values. If your total score is more than 150, find ways to reduce stress in your daily life so that your stress level doesn’t increase.

The higher the score, the harder you need to work at staying physically well.

**Suggested uses for this Personal Life Events Analysis:**
1. Become familiar with the different events and the level of stress they create.
2. Recognize that your internal coping mechanisms for dealing with stress directly relates to your health and well-being.
3. Practice recognizing the stress level when one of these events happens.
4. Think about the meaning of the event for you – Identify your feelings.
5. Think about the different ways you can adjust or adapt to the event.
6. Realize that it is helpful to take your time in arriving at decisions – be aware of consequences it might have on you if it is a big decision.
7. Anticipate life changes and plan ahead to prepare for change whenever possible.
8. Pace yourself. There is only so much you can do at one time.
9. Look at an event as part of life’s transition - Congratulate yourself for what you have learned in the process and push ahead.
10. Take the Life Events Analysis next year and see how your score changes.
11. Be conscious of your limitations and take a break (e.g. vacation!) before you feel emotionally depleted or physically ill.

**Source:** This scale has been modified from the Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Scale. Holmes, T. & Rahe, R. (1967) "Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale," Journal of Psychosomatic Research, Vol. II.
Appendix 2 – CAPS Stress Management Training

Health Facility Role Play

Instructions:
Develop and Present your Scenario
As a group, come up with a scenario (or case study) that illustrates a stressful situation you might find in the health facility (PHU or hospital) where you work. Make your situation as realistic as possible. Develop this brief scenario together, assigning a role to each person in your group – for example, some of you might be front line health workers (CHO, MCH Aide, SECHN, etc.), some may be patients and some may be health facility managers/supervisors.

In your role play, you must include/demonstrate the following:

- A POSITIVE response to stress on the part of a health worker
- A NEGATIVE response to stress on the part of a health worker

*** You will have no more than 2 minutes to act out your scenario to the larger group.

Have fun!

Example – (Note: Please use your creativity – your scenario will likely be much better than this one!) There is a group of pregnant women impatiently waiting to be seen at your PHU. One mother begins to complain and yell at a MCH Aide that her wait is too long and she is tired of coming to this place. The MCH Aide yells back at the waiting patient (negative), telling her to be quiet and wait her turn. Another health worker takes a deep breath, goes out to the waiting area and calmly reassures the patient that she will be attended to shortly. She looks forward to taking a short walk at her lunch break to relieve some of the stress from her day.
Appendix 3 – CAPS Stress Management Training

“Relaxing Breath”

Deep Breathing Exercise

This exercise is also called the 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise. This exercise is utterly simple, takes almost no time, requires no equipment, and can be done anywhere. Although you can do the exercise in any position, sit with your back straight while learning this exercise. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind the upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise. You will exhale through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward.

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- This is one breath.

Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

Source: Dr. Andrew Weil, “Breathing: Three Exercises”. www.drweil.com
Appendix 4 – CAPS Stress Management Training

The “CALM” Exercise

This relaxation strategy is designed to help you relax muscles that have become tense due to stress. Because you have immediate and direct control over your muscles, you can learn to relax them on command. However, this is a skill that requires practice.

As the word “CALM” is used here, each letter stands for a particular muscle group to relax. The “C” stands for chest, “A” stands for arms (including hands and shoulders), “L” stands for legs (including feet), and “M” stands for mouth (including jaw).

For this exercise, say the word “CALM” to yourself. If you are able, close your eyes so you can concentrate better. As you repeat the word to yourself, scan each of the four areas for muscle tension (5 seconds), then relax that area (30 seconds). Move from Chest to the Arms to the Legs to the Mouth, scanning for tension and releasing any that exists, as you rehearse the word “CALM”.

Repeat this as long as needed, but at least 30-60 seconds. If you are using a particular muscle group and cannot relax it (for example, you are walking down the street), simply focus on the other muscle groups.

The CALM Exercise

- Chest: Chest/torso sinks back into the chair
- Arms: Shoulders and arms sag, hands rest in lap
- Legs: Loose and flexible, not crossed
- Mouth: Jaw drops slightly

Appendix 5 – CAPS Stress Management Training

Visualization Exercise

**Instructions:**

1. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Focus on your breath and begin to quiet your mind.
4. Now begin to imagine yourself in a scene or in a place (real or imaginary) that is safe, peaceful, restful and happy to you. Bring yourself – body and mind – fully to this place.
5. Bring in all your senses and notice:
   - **Sight:** What do you see? (colors of sky, sand, water?).
   - **Sounds:** What do you hear? (running water, birds, familiar voice of a loving family member?)
   - **Smells:** What do you smell? (salt in the air, fragrance of certain food or flowers?)
   - **Touch:** What can you feel? (breeze on your body, warmth of sun?).
   - **Taste:** What can you taste? (salt on your tongue from the sea water, sweetness from eating a specific fruit?)
6. Allow yourself to completely enjoy the beauty of this place. Feel yourself relaxed, safe, peaceful and happy here. Enjoy the colors, smells, sounds, taste, feelings –note all the detail of your surroundings.
7. Continue this visualization in silence for 3-10 minutes (or more).
8. Before leaving the place you have created in your mind, take a “picture” of it.
9. Slowly open your eyes.
10. Revisit this image by visualizing it any time you are in a stressful situation (even when at your desk, taking a walk, when eating your lunch).

**Remember:** You can access this peaceful place you just created any time you are under stress.
Appendix 6 – CAPS Stress Management Training

Self-Care Prescription

Name: __________________________
Date: __________________________

Instructions: Write down at least two activities you would like to integrate into your day to support self-care and stress management. Be specific.

Example: Deep breathing two times a day at 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM

| Activity 1: ____________________________________________  
| (list specific activity and frequency) |
| Activity 2: ____________________________________________  
| (list specific activity and frequency) |
| Activity 3: ____________________________________________  
| (list specific activity and frequency) |