

2nd North Dakota Conference on Prevention and Control

Preventing and Responding to
Injuries

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This presentation provides participants with practical information related to the connection between mental health and your personal well being.

Note: The information contained in this presentation and being presented is provided for general knowledge and education. It is not intended as a replacement for advice from a medical professional.



Stress

A necessary Evil? Maybe....

- **Stress is a part of life , it's all around us.**
- **Dealing with it successfully is necessary for adaption and growth.**

Signs of Stress

- Feeling constantly overwhelmed
- Strained Relationships
- "Little things" set us off frequently
- Headache
- Sleep disturbances/changes
- High Blood pressure
- Withdrawal
- Memory Loss



Signs of Stress

- Lack of Concentration
- Poor job Performance
- Changes in appetite
- Low self esteem
- Nervousness
- Upset stomach
- Cold hands and feet – Caused by poor circulation



Stress and your Physical Health

- **Stress is a contributing factor in 80% of major illness.**

Immune system is weakened, making us more susceptible to ailments
Cancer/ulcers
Heart disease/diabetes
Skin disorders
Workplace injury
And also, suicide.

- **The newest research shows the chronic stress can actually double our risk of heart attack.**

Stress does not travel alone.
It has companions
such as...



Anxiety

Anxiety: When it's a Problem

- When it becomes an excessive, irrational dread of everyday situations
- Interferes with daily activities
- When excessive fear or worry are out of proportion to the situation
- Difficult to control
- These feelings are more intense and last longer than normal feelings of anxiety



Another traveling
companion
of stress...

Depression

What is Depression?

- A medical disorder with a biological and chemical basis
- It affects thoughts, moods, feelings, behavior, and even physical health
- Depression is the second leading cause of disability in the U.S. (heart disease is #1)

Factors that Contribute to Depression

- Stressful life events (death, loss of job)
- Environmental factors (continuous exposure to violence, neglect, abuse, disasters, or poverty)
- Personality (low self-esteem) and personality traits (positive or negative)
- Trauma/biochemistry/genetics/medications/or no trigger at all

Signs of Depression

- Persistent feelings of sadness or anxiety
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities and withdrawal
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Trouble concentrating/making decisions
- Persistent negative view of yourself
- Loss of energy or increased fatigue
- Thoughts of death, dying, or suicide



You Can Live Your Life Well

10 Tools to Live Your Life Well. Based on extensive scientific evidence, these tools can help you relax, grow and flourish. They can help you **Live Your Life Well.**



Ways to Live Your Life Well

Let's face it: If you're on this planet, you probably have stress. Unfortunately, too much stress can really drain your ability to rest, feel good, be productive, think, have relationships, have fun—pretty much everything humans need to do to survive and thrive.

But the 10 Tools offer proven, healthy ways to deal with stress and boost your well-being. We'll show you effective steps to start up—and stick with—the tools. Of course, not all the tools are right for everyone, but odds are that at least a few will work for you.

And even if some tools sound too silly, too simple or too hard, consider testing them anyway. Wouldn't it be a shame not to try?

Connect with Others



Mental Health America found that 71 percent of people surveyed turned to friends or family in times of stress.

Humans are social animals: We crave feeling supported, valued and connected.

Making Friends

- Enroll in a class that intrigues you
- Join a book group, hiking club or other group
- Volunteer
- Reach out—a lot

Do You Have Enough Support?

Ask yourself if you have at least a few friends or family members who:

- feel comfortable to be with
- give you a sense you could tell them anything
- can help you solve problems
- make you feel valued
- take your concerns seriously

Strengthening Your Relationships

- Listen really well.
- Ask for specific kinds of help
- Show how much you respect, support and appreciate your friends and family
- Move out of relationships that make you feel unsafe, lower your self-esteem or draw you into unhealthy habits, like abusing drugs.

Getting Support from a Group

- concrete suggestions and information about the issue
- people who can empathize with how you are feeling
- a reminder that you're not alone
- inspiration from seeing others coping well

Stay Positive

Foster Optimism

- Write about a positive future
- Search for the silver lining
- Practice Gratitude
- Avoid Negative Thinking
- Change unhealthy self-talk

How Staying Positive Helps It's likely our species survived because of our knack for detecting danger. But our thoughts can present dangers of their own: Thinking negatively can drag down our moods, our actions and even our health. Experts say it's worthwhile—and possible—to learn how to think more positively.

What researchers found about the benefits of staying positive:

People who were pessimistic had a nearly 20 percent higher risk of dying over a 30-year period than those who were optimistic. People who kept track of their gratitude once a week were more upbeat and had fewer physical complaints than others. People who obsessively repeated negative thoughts and behaviors were able to change their unhealthy patterns—and their brain activity actually changed too.

Making a change is not easy. In fact, 60 percent of people who achieve their New Year's resolutions flop once-or more-before succeeding. But you can pump up your healthy habits. And the more you stick with a new behavior, the easier it gets. That's because repetition actually can build pathways in your brain.



Get Physically Active

How Exercise Help

The dusty tennis shoes. The gym membership that mostly exercises your wallet. The jump rope coiled at the back of the closet. Lots of us have proof that it can be tough to stick with exercising. Pump up your resolve by considering that exercise can:

- prevent heart disease and **high blood pressure**
- lower your risk for stroke, osteoporosis, colon cancer and diabetes
- improve your sleep
- increase your energy
- decrease some kinds of pain
- boost your immune system
- help with **weight management**

Exercise matters for your mood too. Millions of people have found it: decreases stress, anger and tension reduces anxiety and depression offers a greater sense of well-being. It's not clear exactly how exercise boosts mood, but experts say it: relieves pent-up muscle tension stimulates feel-good hormones burns off stress hormones increases blood flow to the brain.

How Much Exercise Do You Need? At least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity (think walking bike ride) five days a week. Or at least 20 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity (like jogging) three days a week.



Help Others

How Helping Others Helps You

Research indicates that those who consistently help other people experience less depression, greater calm, fewer pains and better health. They may even live longer.

Recent Research:

- Students who performed five acts of kindness a day increased their happiness
- Providing emotional support to others significantly decreased the harmful **health effects** of certain kinds of stress among older people
- People who donated money to charity got a boost in a feel-good part of the brain, as revealed in brain imaging research

Ways to Volunteer

- read... consider volunteering at a school or **tutoring program**
- work outdoors... try volunteering to clean up a local park
- speak another language... perhaps work with immigrants
- work at home... make fundraising calls
- play sports... volunteer as a coach
- promote health... try a local hospital or clinic

Doing good can make you feel good. It may

- remind you that you're relatively lucky
- make you feel **connected to others**
- help you feel needed and effective
- take your mind off your own worries for a while
- make you feel generous
- add a sense of purpose and meaning to your life

To find **volunteer opportunities**, call your city or county information line for the contact information for a volunteer coordinator service. You also can check your Yellow Pages under "Volunteer Clearinghouse" or "Volunteer Center" or find options online at <http://www.volunteermatch.org/> or www.1800-volunteer.org. Your local Mental Health America affiliate office also may be looking for volunteers



Get Enough Sleep

Are You Getting Enough Rest?

Experts suggest that adults get seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Everyone is different, though, and you may need more after a few days of burning the midnight (or 2 a.m.) oil.

To assess your sleep deficit, ask yourself:

- Am I often tired?
- Am I using caffeine to get through the day?
- Do I sleep well?
- Do I wake up feeling refreshed?
- Do I get drowsy while driving or watching TV?

Tips for Upping Your Sleep

- Set a regular bedtime: Your body craves consistency.
- De-caffeinate yourself: Try resisting the coffee and colas starting six to eight hours before bed.
- De-stress yourself: Relax by taking a hot bath, meditating or envisioning a soothing scene while lying in bed.
- Exercise: Don't work out right before bed
- Make your bed a sleep haven: No paying bills or writing reports in bed.

How Sleep Helps

- Sleep may seem like a waste of time. You could instead be answering e-mail, doing the dishes, repairing the deck or decking the halls. But research shows that you're more likely to succeed at your tasks—and enjoy greater well-being—if you get some serious shut-eye.

Of course, it's not easy to sleep when you're feeling overwhelmed. In fact, nearly two-thirds of Americans say they lose sleep because of stress. That's especially unfortunate because sleep combats some of the fallout of stress, and poor sleep has been linked to significant problems, including:

- greater risk of **depression and anxiety**
- increased risk of heart disease and cancer
- impaired memory
- reduced immune system functioning
- weight gain
- greater likelihood of accidents



Create Joy and Satisfaction

Do you have tons of items on your to-do list? Well, add one more. It's time to pencil in a little pleasure. Chances are, you simply deserve some joy and satisfaction. But if you prefer, you can think about the serious side of fun. Experts say good feelings can boost your ability to bounce back from stress, solve problems, think flexibly and even fight disease.

Strengthen Your Funny Bone It's hard to be irritated, worried or glum when you're rolling in laughter. And gentle humor often helps defuse a tense situation.

Find Some Fun Leisure activities can boost our effectiveness, broaden our perspective, increase creativity and restock our energy supply.

Let's have some fun Do something you loved to do as a kid, run through the sprinklers, hang from the monkey bars, make a mess with finger paints.

What's Your "Flow"? They are activities that totally absorb us, challenge without oversteering us and make us feel fulfilled. They are what create the feeling of "flow."

Go Ahead, Indulge Get More Out of What You've Got Sometimes, we don't need to add new activities to get more pleasure. We just need to soak up the joy in the ones we've already got.

Studies show that:

- Laughter decreases pain, may help your heart and lungs, promotes muscle relaxation and can reduce anxiety.
- Positive emotions can decrease stress hormones and build emotional strength.
- Leisure activities offer a distraction from problems, a sense of competence and many other benefits. For example, twins who participated in leisure activities were less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease or dementia than their fellow twins in one study.




Eat Well

How Healthy Eating Helps

Mom was right: You've got to eat well to function well. Just in case you didn't gobble up Mom's wisdom, here are some useful tidbits. In an unhappy twist, **good nutrition** can help at times of stress, but that's exactly when lots of us tend to eat less well. According to a recent survey, nearly half of Americans overeat or eat unhealthy food to cope with stress. In fact, it's not just that we're seeking creamy comfort—our stress hormones actually give us the munchies. Still, if you follow some reasonable guidelines you may be able to reduce your stress and promote your overall health and well-being.

The Basic Ingredients

No one knows exactly which foods promote maximum mental health. But following some basic suggestions can boost your energy, mood and overall wellness.

Consider Uncle Sam's recipe. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which builds the food pyramid, says a healthy diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat dairy products. Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugars.

Don't skip meals. Eating consistently throughout the day provides your brain and body with a steady supply of fuel.

Snack well. Sustain your energy—and your ability to resist the vending machine—by packing **healthy snacks**.

Work on your balance. Maybe you know that your body needs a varied diet. But have you thought about your brain? Your brain needs a healthy supply of carbohydrates, fats and proteins, or it can't perform functions that affect your mood and thinking.

Don't over-diet. Eat to be healthy and fit—not fit to into a certain pair of jeans. Strict food rules usually backfire, and excessive dieting can be dangerous.

Food Warnings

- Be carb smart
- Reduce saturated fat and cholesterol
- Limit alcohol
- Cut back on caffeine

Among other benefits, good food can:

- boost your energy
- lower the risk of developing certain diseases
- provide fuel to your brain counteract the impact of stress on your body
- affect mood-related body chemicals



Take Care of Your Spirit

How Spirituality Helps

Eat your veggies. Get enough rest. Exercise. Those are clear suggestions. But you may be thinking, what in Heaven's name does it mean to "take care of your spirit"?

For lots of people, being spiritual means observing rituals, studying texts and attending religious services, well, religiously. For others, it's not at all about traditional structures or notions of God.

You can think of spirituality as connecting to whatever you consider meaningful and holy. You can find it in God, in yourself, in other people, in nature, art or kindness. Whatever you focus on, spirituality offers many possible benefits, including better mood, less anxiety and depression and even fewer aches and illnesses.

Spirituality can provide a:

- reassuring belief in a greater force or being
- sense of purpose and meaning
- focus on your own or universal wisdom
- way to understand suffering
- connection with others
- reminder of the good in the world

Consider some of the science on religion and spirituality:

- People who meditate have increased activity in a "feel-good" area of the brain
- People with strong religious beliefs recovered faster from heart surgery than people with weaker faith
- People who didn't attend religious services died significantly younger than those who attended more than once a week

Why the connection between spirituality and health? It seems spirituality cuts the stress that so often triggers disease. People who attend a house of worship regularly are happier and healthier, research shows. That's likely because of the **social connection** involved. It may also be because religious groups support healthy lifestyle choices, like reduced smoking and drinking.

If more traditional prayers and practices are not for you, you might try meditation. Research shows that meditation offers not only calm but help with anxiety and depression, cancer, **chronic pain**, asthma, heart disease and **high blood pressure**.

Connecting with Your Deepest Self

With all the time we spend plugged in, tuned in or online, it's easy to get disconnected from our inner selves. Try to find some time each day to think about who you are and want to be in the world. Figuring out what's really important to you can make daily irritants and stresses feel like less of a burden.



Deal Better with Hard Times

At some point in our lives, most of us will face times that are extra stressful or that even shake us to our core. At those times, having strong coping strategies can make a huge difference.

Of course, **exercising**, focusing on your **spiritual life** and **getting enough rest**—and all the other Live Your Life Well tools—can be great supports in difficult situations. Other techniques can be particularly useful in dealing with tough times.

The research shows that:

- People who spent time writing about a difficult event had better health and less **depression**. Writers' grades even improved, and they found **jobs** more quickly.
- People facing stress felt less depressed after problem-solving.
- People who often focus on the positives in their lives are less upset by difficult memories.

Ways to Deal Better

Write it Out

Did you ever write a nasty e-mail when you felt angry but then deleted it? Chances are you still felt better though you didn't send it. If you've suffered an upsetting event, writing about it can actually make you feel better. That's in part because writing organizes your thoughts, which makes the experience feel less chaotic. Writing also can offer you an emotional release, insight into yourself and the feeling that you can file the problem away.

- Some thoughts to get started writing: Set aside 15 minutes a day for a few days to write about the event and how it made you feel.
- Don't worry about grammar or artistry. This is just for you.
- Stick with it. At first writing about an upsetting experience may be painful, but over time it can help you get past the upset. Keep in mind, though, that if yours is an especially disturbing event, like rape or domestic violence, you might want to do this **work with a therapist**.

Tackle Your Problems

- If you're dealing with a stressful situation, don't stew in self-pity or waste energy pointing blame at someone else. That just makes you feel less powerful.
- Write down the problems involved.
- List as many solutions as possible.
- Assess your list.
- Accept reasonably good solutions.

Share Your Thinking

- Ask yourself how realistic your worry is.
- Set aside "worry" time each day.
- Focus on the good aspects of your life. Look at tough times as an **opportunity to learn, grow or improve your situation**. Maybe you've seen how supportive your friends are or learned how strong you can be in a tough time.

Get Support

- Sometimes some basic help can make a big difference.



Get Professional Help if You Need It

If the problems in your life are stopping you from functioning well or feeling good, professional help can make a big difference. And if you're having trouble, know that you are not alone: One in four adults in this country have a mental health problem in any given year.

Most people who seek help feel better. For example, more than 80 percent of people treated for depression improve. Treatment for panic disorders has up to a 90 percent success rate. Treatment for a mental health issue can include medication and psychotherapy. In some cases, the two work well together.

What, exactly, is psychotherapy? It's a general term that means talking about your problems with a mental health professional. It can take lots of forms, including individual, group, couples and family sessions. Often, people see their therapists once a week for 50 minutes. Depending on your situation, treatment can be fairly short or longer-term.

Some people worry that getting help is a sign of weakness. If you do, consider that it can be a sign of great strength to take steps toward getting your life back on track.

Getting Started

If you've never been to a mental health care provider, it can feel a little daunting. Knowing what to expect and following a few suggestions can make it easier.

Before you call, prepare a list of questions, like:

- What experience do you have treating my issues?
- Do you have a particular approach, expertise or training?
- What does treatment cost?
- Do you work with my insurance plan?

When you call, you may get an answering machine or service. Leave times the provider can reach you and whether or not it's OK to leave a message on your answering machine or with the person who answers your phone.

Think about what traits you'd like in your provider. If you're going to be talking to someone about your most personal problems, you want to feel comfortable.

Consider if you'd prefer to see a man or woman, if you care whether the person is older or younger, or if there are any other traits that matter to you. During the first visit, you should expect that the therapist will ask questions about your background and why you're seeking help. You can ask questions, too, like what treatment would involve and how long it might last. If you're concerned, you can also ask about confidentiality. Usually, though, it's understood that the provider respects your privacy—and that group members do, too, if you're meeting in a group.

Make sure you ask questions about your therapy, tell the provider what your goals are and if medication is prescribed. Ask questions about it how it makes you feel what, are there side effects, how do I take it, etc.

Additional Resources

You'll find more a lot more information through Mental Health America's **Frequently Asked Questions**. You also can call the Mental Health America Resource Center at 1-800-969-6642 or contact your local **Mental Health America affiliate**.

For descriptions of treatment options, visit the National Institute of Mental Health's page on **types of therapy**.



Getting Beyond Depression

- Seek medical help for an accurate diagnosis
- Medications and/or Psychotherapy ("talk therapy")
- Re-establish harmony or balance within the body and in the lifestyle: aromatherapy; vitamins; and proper diet, exercise, and sleep

Note: Visit www.mhand.org to take a free online depression screening.

Talk About It

- Break down the barriers that prevent you from seeking treatment
- Asking for help is not a sign of weakness
- Taking care of ourselves is a sign of strength

"We're all in this together."

- Dealing with someone who's angry:
 - Make a friendly gesture (sit down, glass of water, visit in private)
 - Validate their feelings ("I can see why you might think that..." show you care)
 - Listen (Wait for them to finish, say "So, what I hear you saying is...")
 - State your position in a manner that neither takes blame nor throws it: "I understand that is how you feel. I am sorry you are upset..."
 - Practice the "I" statement: "I would feel so much better if you..."

Dial 2-1-1

- Calls are **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL**
- It's for everyday needs and in times of crisis
- Serves as a "one-stop-shop" connecting people to health and human services information
- Is staffed 24/7 by call center specialists
- Serves all North Dakotans statewide



How can I get information on the following subjects without leaving my home?

- Dealing with farm stress
- Compulsive gambling
- Men and depression
- Domestic violence
- Stress & Anxiety
- Older Adult issues
- Coping with loss
- Bullying
- Alcohol & Drug addiction
- Suicide Prevention



• **THE RESOURCE LIBRARY CAN BE ACCESSED ONLINE AT WWW.MHAND.ORG**



Questions...

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