



Managing the Stress of Training

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ understand how to manage the stress of training

Managing the Stress of Training

Easy De-Stressing Techniques

Stress can be positive and negative, but too much negative stress can take a toll on our mental and physical health. When we channel the energy from stress in positive ways, we can accomplish things that we never imagined. When a lot of negative stress builds up, we can have trouble getting our work done, feel unusually tired, and lose our usual motivation. If stress seems to be wearing you down and you are having trouble bouncing back, you may need to consult your doctor. However, for the usual day to day stressors that we encounter, here are some quick, easy ways you can lower your stress levels quickly.

Deep Breathing

Loosen your clothes, close your eyes, mentally relax your body, and take ten or more deep breaths. Your goal is to breathe into the bottom of your lungs (where the oxygen is readily absorbed), not the usual upper lung breathing we do. Put your hand on your stomach and feel it move as you breathe in, in order to make sure you are getting the air in good and deep. We call this **diaphragmatic breathing** because you are using your diaphragm muscle to breathe. When people are experiencing anxiety they are most often breathing into the upper area of their lungs rather than the bottom.

Each time you exhale, count silently: “one,” after the first breath, “two,” after the second breath, etc., up to at least ten. If you lose count, or find yourself working on thoughts as they pass through your mind, start your count over again. When you are finished, you should feel more calm and relaxed. (Your blood pressure will go down temporarily, too.) If you’re around other people, count in your head.

Visualize

Use positive imagery to boost your mood and enhance your visible performance. In your mind, picture a place that you love. Feel the sunshine on your face, or the breeze on your skin. See the things that you enjoy in great detail. If you are getting ready for a presentation or an interview, visualize yourself performing it perfectly, so that when you get to the event your mind thinks you’ve done it before. (This is a technique used by athletes and peak performance coaches.)

Music

Music has the power to soothe or to give us energy. It actually has healing power, too. Find a type of music that relaxes you, and play it when you need to calm down. When you feel tired and listless, play some rousing music (rather than relying on caffeine or other stimulants) to give you a pick-up.

Acupressure and Massage

Holding a fingertip to the point of most pain or tension and pressing very hard into the offending muscle for up to a minute can avert a headache or relieve tension. Have a friend or spouse learn how to do massage therapy and/or acupressure on tense muscles, since daily treatment is better than once or twice a month.

Laughter

Laughter is the best medicine of all. A good belly laugh can lower blood pressure, slow your adrenaline, and reverse the stomach acid that comes with negative responses. Be on the lookout for jokes and cartoons you can share with family and friends. For a smaller dose, find a cartoon or picture that always makes you smile and post it near your desk. (Just make sure it's appropriate for all audiences!)

Replace Worry with Problem Solving

Focus on what you can do, and then go ahead and do it. Chronic worriers tend to focus on what they cannot do, what should be happening, or how things are going wrong. Replace worry with problem solving so that you identify where you can step in. Then, stop waiting for the perfect time and just get on and do it.

Meditation

The purpose of meditation is to free your mind from its normal busy activities. There are several different techniques that can be used. Some people use a word as a focal point (a mantra), while others suggest you focus on a color, your breathing, an abstract concept, or an object.

Here is a good process for meditation. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and relax all your muscles from head to toe. Become aware of your breathing. Breathe through your nose easily and naturally, in and out... Begin to silently repeat the word you have chosen or focus on the color you have chosen. In and out... Let distracting thoughts pass through your mind. Continue doing this for 15 to 20 minutes.

Building Resilience

Each stressful experience that you have prepares you to deal with one in the future. The more resilient you become, the less of an impact each of these events has on your mind and body. Lots of us go to great lengths to avoid stress, and although avoidance initially feels like you are doing alright, the reality is that stressful things come up in our life all the time. The better we are at handling them, the more resilient we become, and the healthier we can be.

Each stressful experience can lead us into a cycle of confusion and even anguish. If we stay with those feelings, however, things actually get worse. But if we make a decision to deal with those circumstances by problem solving and adapting, we develop resilience. This means that we can enjoy life more and be more successful.

