

***The information contained in these handouts is provided to increase awareness of how hypnosis may help and does not constitute medical expert opinion, diagnosis, or treatment. It is not intended to replace medical care or professional advice from a qualified healthcare provider. If you have any concerns for yourself or loved ones consult with medical and or health providers.***

## Educational Handout: Stress Management

### Definition: What is stress?

Stress is your body's response to demands, pressure, or threats—whether they're physical (heat, pain), emotional (conflict, grief), or psychological (deadlines, uncertainty). Stress isn't always bad; it's a signal that your system needs to adapt. Problems happen when stress is too frequent, too intense, or lasts too long without recovery.

### Stress management: what it means

Stress management is the set of skills and strategies you use to:

- notice stress early,
- calm your body and mind,
- reduce the impact of stressors, and
- build healthier ways to cope.

Good stress management doesn't always remove stress—it helps you respond to stress more effectively.

### What happens physically and mentally when we are stressed

#### Physical changes (your body's "alarm system")

When you perceive a threat or demand, your brain activates the stress response (often called the "fight, flight, or freeze" response). Typical physical effects include:

- Faster heart rate and breathing
- Muscle tension (jaw, shoulders, neck)
- Altered digestion (nausea, stomach upset, appetite changes)
- Sweating, shakiness, or feeling "wired"

- Energy shifting toward survival needs
- Hormone release (e.g., stress hormones) that keeps you alert

With prolonged stress, your body may stay in a heightened state, contributing to issues like headaches, sleep problems, fatigue, higher blood pressure, and increased vulnerability to illness.

Mental and emotional changes (your mind under pressure) Stress also changes how you think and feel:

- Racing thoughts or difficulty focusing
- Irritability or mood changes
- Anxiety, worry, or feeling overwhelmed
- Overthinking and negative interpretations
- Reduced patience and impulse control
- More “automatic coping” (comfort eating, procrastination, scrolling, substances, etc.)

What causes stress?

Stress can come from many sources, including:

- Work/school demands: deadlines, workload, performance pressure
- Relationships: conflict, caregiving stress, loneliness
- Life changes: moving, job loss, divorce, grief
- Health concerns: pain, illness, worry about symptoms
- Finances and uncertainty: bills, instability, fear of “what next”
- Lifestyle factors: lack of sleep, poor nutrition, low physical activity, too much caffeine
- Trauma or chronic adversity: long-term stress can be especially draining

Often, it’s not a single event—it’s the combination of stressors plus your resources (support, coping skills, rest) and your body’s current capacity.

How the body and mind respond to stress

A helpful way to understand stress response is as a cycle:

1. Trigger: something is perceived as demanding or unsafe
2. Activation: body mobilizes (tension, increased alertness)

3. Coping attempt: you try to manage the feelings/thoughts (often habits)

4. Recovery or reinforcement: either you calm down and recover, or stress remains and patterns strengthen

If you don't recover, the body can "stay on," making it harder to focus, sleep, or regulate emotions the next day.

Practical stress management strategies (simple and effective)

You can include these in your daily toolkit:

- Breathing to downshift: slow exhale breathing (e.g., inhale 4, exhale 6)
- Progressive muscle relaxation: release tension in face/neck/shoulders
- Grounding: name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste
- Movement: short walks, stretching, or light exercise to reduce physical tension
- Sleep protection: consistent sleep/wake times, reduce late caffeine/screens
- Thought support: label stress ("this is stress, not danger"), challenge catastrophizing
- Boundaries and planning: break tasks into smaller steps; reduce overwhelm
- Social connection: talking to someone trusted can lower stress load

How hypnotherapy can help with stress management

Hypnotherapy can support stress management by working with the mind-body connection—helping you shift from a stressed state toward calm, focus, and more helpful coping responses.

Common ways hypnotherapy is used include:

- Relaxation and nervous system calming: guided induction and imagery can reduce tension and promote a sense of safety and ease.
- Stress re-escalating).

patterning: learning new ways to respond to stress triggers (e.g., pausing instead of e

- Reducing anxious self-talk: building calmer internal language and confidence.
- Improving focus and emotional regulation: helping you notice stress signals earlier and regain control faster.
- Rehearsing coping responses: mentally practicing what you'll do when stress rises, so

the skills are easier to use in real life.

- Supporting sleep and recovery: for people whose stress affects rest, sessions may include suggestions aimed at relaxation and better winding down.

Best results typically happen when hypnotherapy is combined with practical daily strategies (breathing, sleep habits, stress routines, and trigger management). When to get additional support

Consider talking to a healthcare professional or therapist if stress is causing:

- persistent insomnia,
- panic symptoms,
- inability to function at work/home,
- worsening depression,
- thoughts of self-harm,
- or if symptoms are long-lasting and intense.

Quick self-check (for your next session or worksheet)

- What usually triggers your stress?

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- What do you feel first (body/sensation)? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you do automatically to cope? \_\_\_\_\_
- What would you like to be able to do instead?

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If you would like support to manage stress levels effectively contact Brendan Online  
Hypnotherapy for a free consultation