



Lesson 7

Coping with Stress and Self Care

Materials Needed:

Facilitator-

Participant- Self-care handout, The 4 Questions handout/DEAR handout

GREETING

SAY: Last week we talked about exercise. Does anyone have any questions or comments about last week's session?

ASK: each question one at a time (Slide 2)

- Did anyone try out their goal from last week?
- How did it go?
- Did you try anything else new to help manage your diabetes?

SAY: Today we are going to talk about (slide 3):

- What is stress?
- Coping with a stress
- Problem solving
- Making a self-care plan

SAY: For class today you will need the following items from your LYBL tool box.

DO: Hold up items needed by participants.

STRESS LESSON

SAY: Today we are going to talk a little about stress and coping and why self-care is more than what we eat and whether or not we exercise regularly.

SAY: We will start by talking about stress and coping (slide 3)

ASK: What is stress?

ANSWER: Stress is a body's response to conditions or a situation that disrupts the way our body works. Our bodies are always trying to be in balance. Stress can throw off this balance.

SAY: Some stress is normal and also healthy. Our bodies have stress to protect us. If you were walking home from a friend's house in the dark and you heard a car coming very fast around a corner, your body would respond in a way that would help you to very quickly get out of the way and avoiding getting hit. Your brain would say "danger" and your body would respond in a way that could save you. Once the stressor is gone, your body returns to its pre-stressed state and is in balance again. This is good stress. However, if stress is intense and frequent, it can cause wear and tear on the body.

ASK: What are stressors? (Slide 5)

ANSWER: Anything that causes stress

ASK: What are some examples of stressors?

ANSWER: Wait for people to answer, add other ideas if necessary: job change, family having problems, work, fighting with friends, family, etc..., birth of child, marriage, etc....

SAY: What are some of the stressors for a person with diabetes?

ANSWER: Just like everyone a person with diabetes has the typical stressors of life. But in addition they also have to deal with the stressors of managing a chronic disease. This may include things like trying to change habits or checking blood sugar. Or for some attending parties or family events can feel stressful. Or a person may be concerned about disease complications- either dealing with complications or worrying about getting them.

ASK: Does stress always have to be something negative?

ANSWER: No. Change causes stress. Even really positive things like getting a new job or buying a house causes stress.

ASK: Does stress always have to be real?

ANSWER: No.

ASK: has anyone ever stressed out about something that never ended up happening? It is very common for people to have stress and anxiety over what "might" happen...

ASK: Can we avoid stressors?

ANSWER: No! And we don't want to avoid all stress. Like we talked about earlier, stress can keep you safe. But more than that, we need some challenges in life so that we can solve problems and overcome difficulties, and grow as people. A person with no stress, would likely be a very uninteresting person without many life skills! We are not saying a person should not have stress, but that we want to be able to cope with life stress, and reduce feelings of excess stress with healthy coping and self-care.

ASK: How does our body respond to stress? (slide 6)

ANSWER: Physical- Heart rate goes up, blood pressure rises, blood sugar rises, blood cholesterol rises, muscle tension, weakness in immunity, insomnia, diarrhea, constipation,

Psychological- anxiety, aggression, irritable, frustrated, nervous, lack of concentration, depression, arguing, moody, conflicts

Some of these symptoms are effects of short term stress, and some of these are symptoms of chronic stress. When a person deals with chronic stress, health effects can turn into health conditions.

DO: Invite people to chat their answers. Read peoples answers as they chat them and say any missing answers.

SAY: During a stress reaction, certain hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are released. These stress hormones activate changes in our body to help us fight or flee danger. These changes are things like an increase in blood pressure, an increase in blood sugar, an increase in cholesterol, an increase in heart and breathing rate. For a person with diabetes, we can see that stress if regular and constant can cause problems for some of the very things people with diabetes are trying hard to manage- like the ABCs of diabetes.

DO: Go to slide 7 to describe the "Wheel of Stress"

SAY: When you are dealing with excessive stress you start to have stressed thoughts- like anxiousness, or obsessive thinking or negative self talk. Excessive stressed thoughts effect our body negatively and leads to a stressed body. A stressed body has the health effects of too much stress we just talked about.

SAY: When our stress goes unchecked, eventually we will find some way to cope. There are healthy ways to cope with stress and unhealthy ways to cope with stress. Examples of some unhealthy way of coping with stress are ignoring the problem, withdrawing from people, losing your temper and using alcohol.

Stressed coping will lead to more stress, which leads to stressed thoughts and a stressed body.... and the stress wheel keeps turning around.

HEALTHY COPING

DO: go to slide 8

SAY: We are going to talk about Healthy coping. Healthy coping STOPS the Wheel of Stress, and instead teaches our body how to turn on its Relaxation Response.

SAY: During the body's relaxation response- relaxation hormones, block the production of stress hormones, and our body returns to pre stressed conditions. Blood pressure, blood sugar, blood cholesterol, heart rate, breathing, etc... all returns to normal. The relaxation response is a normal reaction that follows the stress response. The problem with chronic stress, is our body doesn't turn on the relaxation response, because the stress response keeps going. But, good news, we can force our body to turn on the relaxation response, even when its stressed. We do that with healthy coping tools. Think of the stress response as your car's gas and the relaxation response as your car's brakes. You want a car with gas, but you also need your car to have brakes.

SAY: We are going to talk about and try out a few healthy coping tools.

DEEP BREATHING- ACTIVITY (slide 9)

SAY: Research tells us that breathing exercises can have immediate effects on the body. Deep breathing is one way you can activate your body's relaxation response and slow or stop the body's making of stress hormones.

SAY: Let's try some deep breathing together. Sit comfortably and breath in slowly from your diaphragm (right under your rib cage.) to the count of 4. Hold your breath for the count of 7 and then exhale slowly for 8 seconds. You breathe, I'll count. We will repeat this 3 times.

DO: Lead participants through 3 sets of deep breathing.

ASK: In your chat box, tell me how do you feel?

ASK: Do you notice a difference in the way you feel now and how you felt before you did the deep breathing?

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION- ACTIVITY (slide 10)

SAY: The Second healthy coping tool is called progressive muscle relaxation. We hold tension in our body, and this tool helps force our body to relax, and release the tension. When our body relaxes, it helps our minds relax.

Let's try it together. Sit in your chair comfortably. Put your arms by your side and uncross your legs, if you are a leg crosser. Start by squeezing your eyes tight. Hold this for the count of 8. Relax. Then scrunch up your nose and face as tight as you can. Hold for the count of 8. Relax. Now smile the biggest, widest smile you can. Not a typical smile, a giant smile, like a cartoon character. Hold for the count of 8. Relax. Then clench your jaws. Hold this for the count of 8. Then slowly relax. Next move to your neck and shoulders. Tuck your neck into your shoulders like a giant shoulder shrug. Hold for the count of 8. Then relax. Move to your hands and arms. Make tight fists and cross your arms and hug yourself as tight as you can, without letting go of your tight fists. Hold this for 8 seconds. Next, put your arms in front of you as tense as you can. Hold for 8 seconds, then relax. Suck your stomach in as far as you can. Hold it for 8 seconds, then relax. Clench your butt cheeks as tight as you can. Hold and relax. Next put your legs out in front of you. Tense your legs and your feet as tight as you can. Hold for 8 seconds, and relax. Finally, take a deep breathe in, and exhale all the tension.

ASK: How do you feel?

SAY: At home you may choose to hold each move for a longer time, such as 12-15 seconds. You also may find you want to do this entire routine more than once in order to relax.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS (slide 11)

PHYSICAL CONTACT

SAY: Another healthy coping tool you can try, is to ask a person in your life for a hug. Physical touch releases the hormone oxytocin. It's also called the "cuddle hormone". Oxytocin reduces the production of stress hormones and helps a person to feel more relaxed.

TAKE A WALK

ASK: Does anyone have any experience with a time they felt very stressed or angry and then went on a walk? Did it change the way you felt?

SAY: Activity produces endorphins. Natural feel good hormones that reduce stress.

PROBLEM SOLVING- ACTIVITY (slide 12)

SAY: Problem solving is a stress reduction tool. Problem solving doesn't sound like a tool. But think of how many issues that have caused you stress over the years, because you ignored a problem. Problem solving is a LEARNED behavior that you can get better at with practice!

SAY: The "four Questions" is a problem solving tool that has been around for a very long time. It helps a person break a problem down, examine the problem, thinking about how the problem is making you feel, think about why it is happening, and finally what can be done to resolve the problem. Often times when faced with a problem we get stuck in the first three steps. We may think (obsess) over the problem and how its making us feel and the unfairness of it, or unjustness of it, but stop short of taking that final step to resolve the problem.

SAY: Let's try this problem solving tool together.

SAY: I will read a problem, and we will use our chat box, to answer each of the four questions, one at a time.

(Use a scenario that you have heard people discuss in class. Below are a couple examples, but they may not apply to your particular group. Use a problem that is relevant to your class participants.)

Scenario 1

Joe never checks his blood sugar. What is the point, it's always high? It doesn't seem to matter what he does, the answer is the same- too high! What is the point of checking his blood sugar to find out what he already knows?! The very thought of checking his blood sugar made him instantly feel stressed!

OR

Scenario 2

Problem: Judy plans community functions for her church. She likes to help, BUT it's too much work for one person. People tell her they are going to help, they tell her they will show up, but they often bail. Judy finds she often is up until very late baking for events or making decorations. She often doesn't have time to cook dinner for herself, and she ends up not doing things she likes that make her feel good- like walking with her friend and going to her relatives for dinner. In fact, more and more, she feels stressed out more days than not

DO: If there is another problem better suited for your group, feel free to write your own problem scenario.

ACTIVITY:

DO: Review each one of the questions on slide 12:

1. What is happening?
2. How is it effecting me?
3. Why is this happening?
4. What can I do to resolve this situation?

DO: Remind participants they will need to try to put themselves in the shoes of the person having the problem. Next, walk group through answering these questions one at a time. Ask them to chat answers to each questions. Read their responses allowed.

NOTE: Steps 1-3 help people take a better look at what the problem is, how it is effecting them, and why it's happening. Step 4 is the group problem solving step. It's the final step.

SAY: This is a tool you can use in your own life to examine problems. Each step is important, bringing you closer to the last step- the problem solving step.

BE ASSERTIVE (slide 13)

SAY: Assertiveness is another stress busting tool. It often follows problem solving. Sometimes the answer to a problem, may be that we need to set boundaries, or explain how we feel. This is where assertiveness comes in. Assertive can be confused with aggressive, but they are not the same. Assertive means sharing what you need, but still thinking of what others need. Being aggressive means forcing your interests on others, regardless of how it might affect them. Others people's feelings and needs matter, but not more than yours. Being assertive and letting other know what you need is taking care of yourself and your diabetes.

SAY: Much of the stress we have, comes from dealing with other people. When we learn to become more assertive, our wants and needs can be heard, and as a result, we can reduce our stress.

SAY: DEAR is one tool for helping a person be assertive. First, describe the problem. Then Express how the problem makes you feel. Next, ask for a possible solution. Finally, reinforce how your idea for a solution can make the situation better for both of you.

SAY: Let's try it: (Slide 13)

Judy might say to someone who promised to help her:

People tell me they are going to help me with the church event, but then no one shows up, and I'm up late trying to get everything ready by myself **(D)**, and it's been very stressful **(E)**. I'd like to use a signup sheet from now on for different tasks that need to be done for the event **(A)**. I think it will let everyone know who is doing what for the event, and there will be less confusion **(R)**.

ASK: Does anyone have a situation in their life they need to be more assertive with?

DO: Invite participants to share situation if they wish. Then Try using DEAR.

SAY: Pages 38-41 in your book address diabetes and stress as well.

SELF CARE LESSON (slide 14)

SAY: We've been talking about stress and healthy coping. Remember healthy coping is what we do to try to help bring about a relaxation response from a stressful situation. It is what we do to keep from becoming chronically stressed.

SAY: Self-care is what we do to help prevent stressful events from overwhelming us when they do happen. When we are well, we are in a better position to handle a stressful situation and to be more resilient.

SAY: There are many pieces to self-care, (slide 15) No one piece is more important than another.

SAY: Physical self-care involves things like getting enough sleep, exercise and healthy food. All important pieces to help us to be more resilient to stress.

ASK: What things do you do to take care of your physical health?

SAY: Social self-care means to have supportive people in your life that you regularly engage with. If you lack emotional support, friendship and meaningful trusting relationships, it is important to focus your energy on finding and making friends.

SAY: Maybe reconnect with a family member or distant friend. Or find ways to get to know new people by joining an organization, or start volunteering.

ASK: Are you getting enough face to face time with friends?
What are you doing to nurture your relationships?

SAY: Spirituality is another important piece of our well-being. People who think about how they fit into the bigger picture, are generally less stressed, happier people. Spirituality can be prayer and church, but it can also be meditation or walks in nature or anything that helps give you meaning in life.

SAY: Mental self-care includes doing things that keep your mind sharp, like learning about a subject that fascinates you or learning a new skill. It also has to do with gratitude.

ASK: Are you thankful for anyone in your life? Could you tell this person or even better, send them a thank you card or note telling them why you are thankful for them?

SAY: Emotional self-care has to do with your thoughts, your feelings, how you communicate with others. Your thoughts influence your emotions and your behaviors

SELF CARE PLAN- ACTIVITY (slide 16)

SAY: Self-care isn't one-size-fits-all. What you need to take care of yourself, might be very different from someone else.

SAY: Look at this list of ways to practice self care.

ASK: Which areas of your life need some more attention and self-care?

SAY: Circle 3 things.

SAY: Of those 3, now choose one item you could work on. Can you turn that item into a goal?

SAY: Try to make your goal as SMART as you can.

DO: Review SMART goal means: specific, measurable, achievable, Relevant and time sensitive.

DO: Give an example of a self care goal you set for yourself. Make sure it is SMART.

DO: Invite participants to share their goals they wrote.

SUMMARY (Slide 17)

DO: Review what was talked about in class today.

SAY: Thank you so much for attending these 7 Living Your Best Life with diabetes class.

DO: Review what you have enjoyed about the class and invite others to comment as well.

DO: Invite and encourage participants to please fill out end of class evaluation polls. ALSO, remind participants they will be receiving a post class survey in and email from Survey Monkey (or other), and please fill it out. Let participants know how much you appreciate their efforts to share their experiences.

SAY: You will each be mailed a certificate of completion for attending these classes, along with a contact list of health professionals that can help you continue with your diabetes education.