

# Manage Stress and Handle Hunger

## Session Overview

This session focuses on mindful eating, emotions, hunger and fullness, and strategies for dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression.

## Objectives for Session

1. Explain what mindful eating is
2. Identify how emotions can impact eating
3. Understand hunger and fullness
4. Learn strategies for managing stress

## Session Preparation

- If at all possible, invite a behavioral expert, such as the Health Behavior Coordinator, to assist with discussion and answer questions or address issues that arise.
- Coordinate with the HPDP-PM to obtain a copy of the community scan to identify local resources.
- Prepare the following materials:
  - B11 Mindful Eating
  - B12 Emotions and Your Weight
  - B26 Slow Down, You Eat Too Fast
  - B15 Hungry All the Time
  - B28 Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Depression
  - P30 Sample Stretches
  - Manage stress workbook
  - “Manage Stress” Healthy Living Message
  - NCP video – Manage Stress
  - Share link to Internet site for Manage Stress Workbook ([www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook\\_Dec2013.pdf](http://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook_Dec2013.pdf))
  - Small pieces of chocolate or potato chips – if doing the mindful eating exercise
- Prepare yourself to encourage interaction and participation from the group, so the balance of talking rests with participants instead of the leader.
- As coach, your role is to facilitate discussion without lecturing.

## **Session Outline (60-minute class)**

- Check-in (5 minutes)
- Discussion Topics (40 minutes)
- 5-Minute MOVE!<sup>®</sup> (5 minutes)
- Putting It All Together (10 minutes)

## **Check-in (5 minutes)**

- Facilitate weigh-ins; enter weight into the CPRS Vital Signs package.
- Collect Daily Food and Physical Activity Diaries.

## **Discussion Topics (40 minutes)**

### **Introduction**

- Welcome everyone to the session.
- Review Ground Rules.
- Describe the purpose of today's class. State today's objectives and discussion topics. Encourage participants to attend all 16 sessions, since folks who do more sessions lose more weight.
- Invite participants to discuss their homework, Daily Food and Physical Activity Diaries, progress, and goals since the last class.
- Facilitate problem-solving for any barriers.

### **Discussion #1: What is mindful eating?**

- Use B11 Mindful Eating to generate discussion about what this means.
- Mindfulness means being fully aware of what is going on within and around you at each moment.
- Have the participants discuss how to be aware of if they are eating mindfully or not. You may want to ask the following questions to facilitate problem-solving: What is in their environment that affects eating? What are they doing when they eat? How could they increase their mindfulness when eating?
- If you feel comfortable doing so, have participants eat a small piece of chocolate while the facilitator reads instructions for how to eat it very slowly and mindfully.

### **Discussion #2: How do my emotions affect what I eat and drink?**

- Distribute handout B12 Emotions and Your Weight. Show the video Manage Stress and ask participants to look for any of the strategies listed on the handout during the video.

## 5-Minute MOVE!® (5 minutes)

Incorporating physical activity into the session reinforces the healthy lifestyle message and provides an opportunity to demonstrate some simple but effective exercises.

**Ask participants if they would like to join you in doing the following warm-up and flexibility exercise:**

Explain the benefits of stretching and refer to handout P30 Sample Stretches for examples of some simple stretches.

Select one stretch and invite participants to do it with you. Remind participants to:

- Stretch only as far as is comfortable.
- Hold onto a chair or wall for balance.
- Hold stretches for at least a count of 10.
- Practice these stretches at home.

**Then, after 2-3 minutes, invite them to do the following:**

### **THIGH STRETCH:**

Start with your feet a little more than shoulder-width apart. Bend your right knee slightly and move your left hip downward toward the right knee. This stretches your left inner thigh. Hold for 15-60 seconds. Repeat at least 4 times. Now, stretch the other thigh.



## **Discussion #3: When do I know that I am hungry and when I have had enough?**

Ask the group to share how to identify when they are hungry and when they are full. Use handout B26 Slow Down, You Eat Too Fast, to generate group discussion and feedback. Refer to B15 Hungry All the Time to provide tips for managing hunger.

## **Discussion #4: Are there strategies I can learn to help me deal with stress?**

Ask the group what kinds of things they do to manage stress. Get some ideas. Lead them in taking a few slow, deep breaths, keeping your voice calm and soothing.

- If available, distribute copies of the Manage Stress workbook and discuss a few of the concepts addressed in the workbook and/or the Manage Stress Healthy Living Message patient handout.
- Refer back to handout B12 Emotions and Your Weight and discuss strategies to manage emotional eating.
- Use handout B28 Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Depression to facilitate discussion about self-management coping tips.

With Veterans, this topic can easily develop into a discussion on mental health issues and not weight loss/management. Facilitators need to work hard to keep the group on topic, while being sensitive to emotional issues, and be prepared to link to resources (see community scan) for assistance as needed, such as Primary Care – Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) or a Health Behavior Coordinator (HBC) or Mental Health (MH) clinic.

## **Putting It All Together (10 minutes)**

### **Session recap:**

- Review role of emotions and stress in eating, and benefits of preventing “emotional eating” through stress management and mindfulness.
- Ask, “What was most helpful today? What could have been better?”

### **Goals and action planning for the next week:**

- Ask Veterans to participate in a brief activity before each meal in the upcoming week: Take a deep breath and ask, “Am I truly hungry?” before reaching for food.
- When eating a meal, remind them to focus on eating and avoid doing other activities while they eat (working, talking on the phone, watching TV, driving, reading, etc.).
- And last, ask Veterans to set a timer for 20 minutes and take the whole time to eat the meal.

### **Homework for next week:**

- Remind participants to continue logging in their Daily Food and Physical Activity Diary and to bring the diary and their pedometer to every session.
- Provide information necessary for attending the next session (date/time/location, etc.).

### **Topic for next week:**

Dine Out Successfully