

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 stress management resources.
- Have the following materials available to share with participants:
 - B11 Mindful Eating
 - B12 Emotions and Your Weight
 - B15 Hungry All the Time
 - Small pieces of chocolate or potato chips – if doing the mindful eating exercise
- The following materials may also be helpful for facilitator review when planning the session or for participants to review independently, after session:
 - B26 Slow Down, You Eat Too Fast
 - B28 Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Depression
 - P30 Sample Stretches
 - 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) or distribute copies of the workbook /CD.
- Prepare yourself to encourage interaction and participation from the group, so the balance of talking rests with participants instead of the leader.
- Your role is to facilitate discussion without lecturing.

Session Outline *(60 minutes)*

- Check-in (5 minutes)
- Discussion Topics (40 minutes)
- Stretch Activity (2 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, affirm completion.

DISCUSSION TOPICS *(40 minutes)*

Introduction

- Welcome everyone to the session. Congratulate them on continued participation for success.
- Reference Guidelines for Respect if needed or if new members are present.
- Describe the purpose of today's class. Briefly state today's objectives and discussion topics.
- 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 any given 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, a raisin, or a potato chip 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.

Stretch Activity (2 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 to join you, if they wish, in doing the following activity:

Invite participants to stand up if they are able. If not, they may remain seated.

Simple Stretch:

Extend your arms overhead with elbows straight. Lower arms to sides and reach away from your body. Reach arms behind you and extend away from your body within your comfort zone.

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

Ask the group to share how they identify when they are hungry and when they are full. Refer to [B15 Hungry All the Time](#) to provide tips for managing hunger. If needed, use the information provided in handout [B26 Slow Down, You Eat Too Fast](#), to generate group discussion and elicit feedback.

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, have copies of the [Manage Stress workbook/CD](#) and the [Manage Stress Healthy Living Message](#) patient handout available for those who wish to take one at the end of the session.
- Refer back to handout [B12 Emotions and Your Weight](#) and discuss strategies to manage emotional eating.
- Ask participants to share some ways they have or think they might cope with stress or anxiety related to weight management.

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 HPDP Resource Inventory) 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.

Goals and action planning for the next week:

- Ask participants if they are willing 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 participants if they are willing to try out setting a timer for 20 minutes and taking the whole time to eat the meal.
- Ask, “What was most helpful today? What could have been better?”

Homework for next week:

- Remind participants to keep up the good work of 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](#)