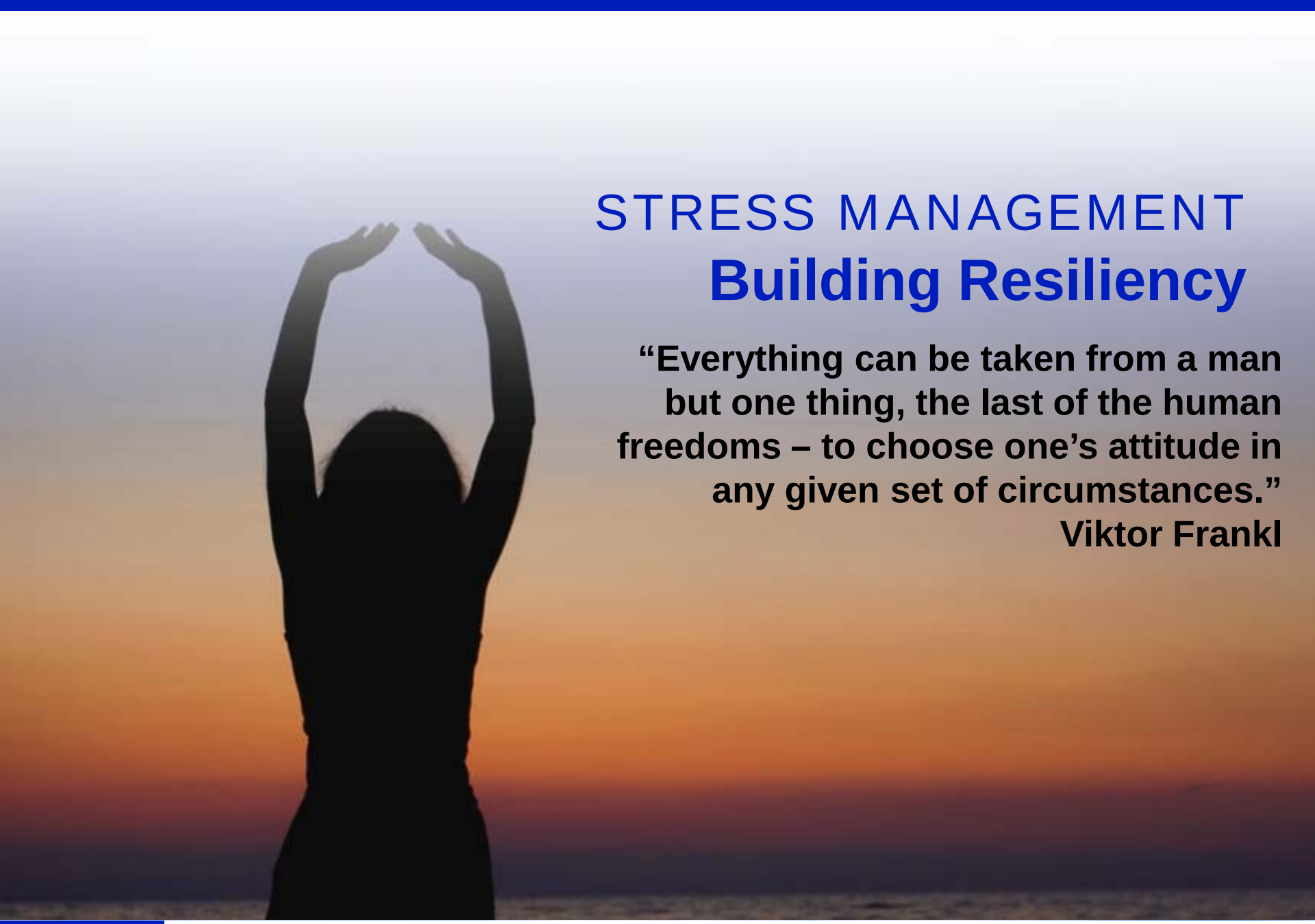
Employee Assistance Program

HEALTH AND WELLNESS PRESENTATIONS



STRESS MANAGEMENT
Building Resiliency

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.”
Viktor Frankl

Primary Learning Objectives

- Recognize signs of stress in yourself
- Identify typical sources of stress
- Develop new skills to manage stress
- Define resilience and develop skills to increase resilience

What is Stress?

Stress is the body's physical and mental response to any demand or pressure.

The American Psychological Association's (APA) 2008 "Stress in America" poll found that one-third of people in the U.S. report experiencing extreme levels of stress. In addition, nearly one in five report they are experiencing high levels of stress 15 or more days per month.

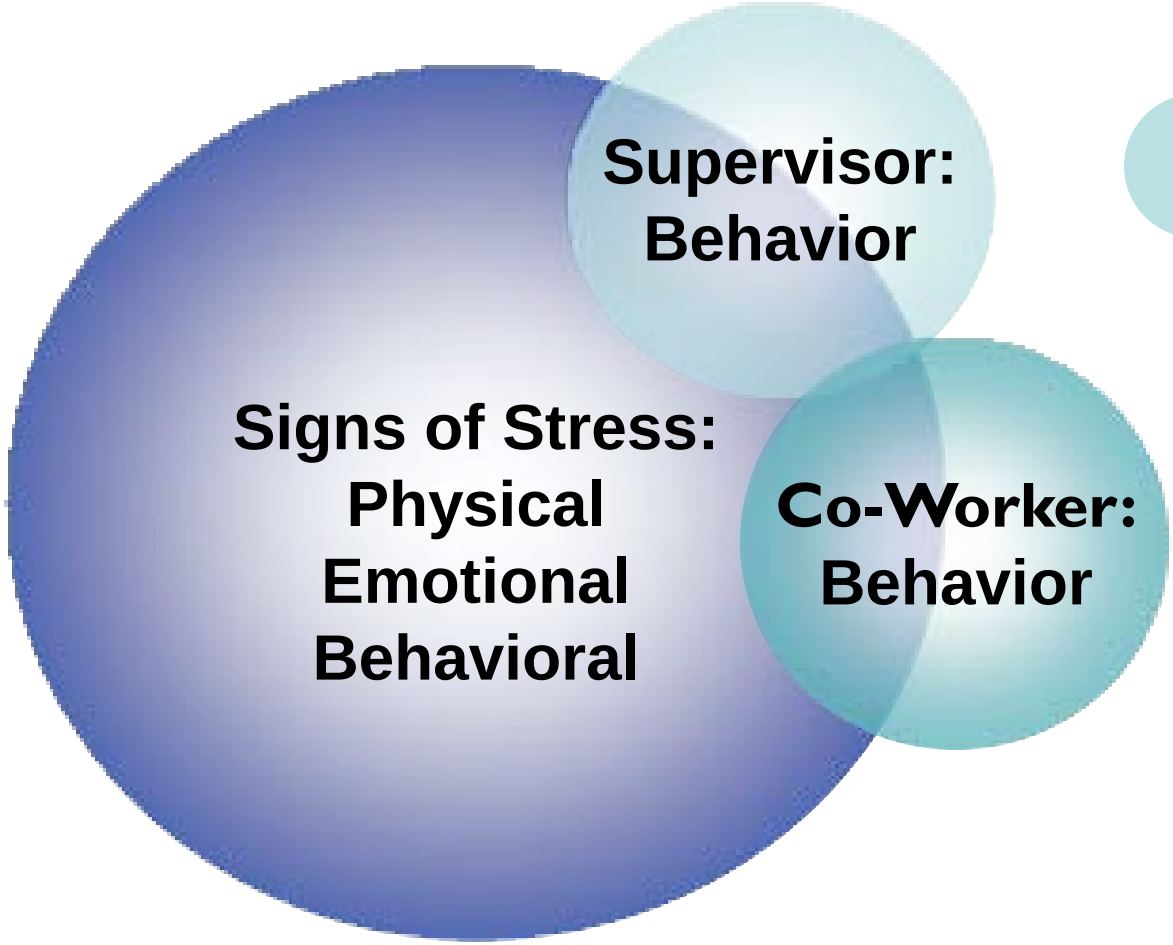
http://apahelpcenter.mediaroom.com

Circle of Control

Signs of Stress:
Physical
Emotional
Behavioral

Circle of Control

Circle of Control



Physical Signs of Stress

- Faster heart beat
- Increased sweating
- Cool skin (cold hands and feet)
- Feelings of nausea or "butterflies in your stomach"
- Rapid breathing
- Tense muscles; aches/pains
- Dry mouth
- Urge to go the bathroom
- Changes in appetite
- Frequent colds
- Lowered energy, feelings of intense and long-term tiredness
- Worsening of asthma, back pain, digestive problems, headaches, skin eruptions
- Sexual side effects
- Difficulty sleeping

Emotional Signs of Stress

- Feelings of sadness
- Anxious or nervous
- Fearfulness
- Feelings of dissatisfaction
- Frustration
- Defensiveness
- Short-tempered, irritable, angry
- Pessimism, unusually negative

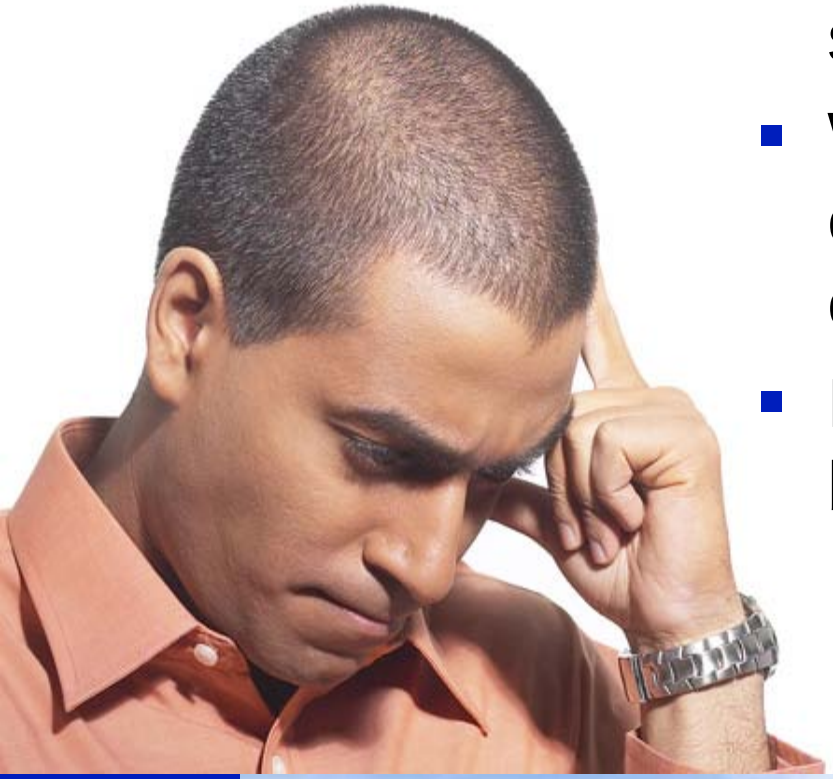
Behavioral Signs of Stress

- Reduced personal effectiveness, changes in work habits, making more errors at work
- Poor decision-making or difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty concentrating
- Unusually forgetful or accident prone
- Social isolation
- Increased absenteeism/sick leave
- Neglect of personal appearance
- Increase in smoking, alcohol use, medication, and other drugs
- Unusually abrupt or impatient with others
- Fiddling, twitching, nail biting, grinding teeth, drumming fingers, pacing

Long Term Effects of Stress

- Chronic conditions including diabetes, high blood pressure, and coronary heart and gastric diseases
- All forms of pain such as headaches, backaches, stomach, joint, and muscle
- Insomnia, inability to get to and stay asleep
- Persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- Lowered resistance to contagious illnesses
- Overuse of drugs or alcohol

Signs of Stress



- What are your signs of stress?
- How do you know if you are stressed?
- What are your physical, emotional, and behavioral signs of stress?
- Do you recognize when stress is building to an unhealthy level?

When Stress Strikes

Resiliency Defined

The APA defines resiliency as the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity, trauma, or tragedy.

Resilience can be thought of as our ability to bounce back, or even grow, in the face of pressures and threats.

www.managingpressure.com

Resilience is:

- Being realistic
- Turning challenges into opportunities
- Learning from adversity
- Preparing for challenging situations

Resilience: It's All About Perspective

2 parts of the stress equation:

1. The environment – what is going on around you
2. How you respond to what is going on around you

Successful stress management is about controlling or "managing" how you respond to difficult events/situations, not about "controlling" your environment.

Time to Change Your Perspective

"I haven't failed—I've found 10,000 ways that don't work."

-Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Edison

(quote attributed to both)

Learning Your ABCs: *Identifying Beliefs*

A - ACTUAL event (source of stress) Any problem situation (big or small)

B - BELIEFS
What the situations means to you. May include “shoulds, oughts, musts…”

C - CONSEQUENCES
How the situation affected you emotionally behaviorally, and physically (anger, stress, etc.)

D – DISPUTING and changing ABSOLUTE thinking and beliefs

E – EFFECTIVE Outlook

Identify Your Beliefs

Step 1: (A) Identify the **A**ctual event (source of stress)

Step 2: (B) Identify your **B**eliefs about the Actual event (source of stress)

Step 3: (C) Identify the **C**onsequences of your beliefs (emotional, physical, behavioral)

Step 4: Make the **B**eliefs – **C**onsequences connection – are you *should-ing* on yourself?

Step 5: (D) **D**ispute and challenge the **B**elief

Step 6: (E) Establish an **E**ffective outlook

When Preferences Become "Needs"

- **Competence and success:**
  "I must be outstandingly competent, or it means I'm a failure; I'm worthless."

- **Love, approval, and fair treatment:**
  "Others must treat me considerately, or it's awful, I can't take it; I can't succeed;"

- **Safety and comfort:**
  "The world should always give me what I want, or I'll be miserable."

Identify Your Thinking Traps

- **Jumping to Conclusions:** Settling on a belief when there is little or no evidence to support it
- **Tunnel Vision:** Concentrating too much on the less significant details of a situation, while screening out the more important aspects
- **Overgeneralization:** Maintaining global beliefs about a person's general lack of worth or ability, based on a single situation
- **Magnifying and Minimizing:** Errors in evaluating events in which the negative potential or the negative aspects of a situation are magnified and the positive aspects of a situation are minimized or ignored
- **Personalization:** The tendency to automatically blame yourself
- **Externalization:** The tendency to automatically blame others
- **Mind Reading:** Assuming that you know what another person is thinking, or expecting another person to know what you are thinking
- **Catastrophizing:** Worst case scenario thinking

Avoid Thinking Traps and Generate Alternatives

- **Jumping to Conclusions**

  Slow down and ask yourself, “What evidence do I have for my conclusion?”

- **Tunnel Vision**

  Ask yourself, “What more important or relevant information did I miss?”

- **Overgeneralization**

  Be open-minded. Ask yourself, “Is there a reason that might explain the behavior?”

- **Magnifying & Minimizing**

  Be evenhanded. Ask yourself, “Am I looking at the worst possible outcome? What are the alternatives?” Am I looking at only the negative? “What positive events occurred?”

Avoid Thinking Traps and Generate Alternatives

- **Personalizing**

  Look outward. Ask yourself, “How did others or circumstances contribute to the problem or issue?”
- **Externalizing**

  Look inward. Ask yourself, “How did I contribute to the problem or issue?”
- **Mind Reading**

  Ask clarifying information. Check to see what the other party was really thinking. Ask, “Did you mean….?” or “ Can I clarify what you meant?”

  Speak up. Ask yourself, “Did I express myself well? Did I ask for enough information?”
- **Catastrophizing:**

  Put it in perspective. What is the best case/most likely/worst outcome?

Put It In Perspective

- **Step 1**: Identify the actual event (source of stress)
- **Step 2**: List worst case scenarios
- **Step 3**: List best case scenarios
- **Step 4**: List most likely scenarios
- **Step 5**: Determine plan for dealing with most likely scenarios

Managing Your Use of Time

- **Establish responsibilities, priorities, objectives**
- **Eliminate unnecessary, inappropriate activities; eliminate distractions**
- **Plan and schedule use of your time – daily/weekly**
  - Make optimum use of your energy
  - Delegate as much as possible
  - Include room for the unexpected

Common Time Wasters

Self-Generated

- Lack of prioritizing
- Disorganization
- Inability to say no
- Gossip
- Perfectionism
- Lack of delegation
- Procrastination

Environmental

- Drop-in visitors
- Telephone calls
- Voicemail and e-mail
- Unproductive meetings
- Lack of training
- Paperwork and administrative tasks
- Crises

Effective Delegating

- Find the right person
- Package your request for help in positive terms
- Be appreciative
- Don’t micromanage
- Reward the effort

Focusing & Calming

- Stop the thoughts
- Schedule time and write down thoughts
- Controlled breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Positive imagery

Thought Stopping

- Say to yourself “STOP”
- Now inhale, and when you exhale, say the word “calm” to yourself. Let your muscles relax and imagine a pleasant scene
- Repeat these steps 3 or 4 times to break the troublesome chain of thought

Schedule and Write

- Schedule 15 to 30 minutes later that day to revisit worrisome recurring thoughts about an issue.
- Tell yourself, “Stop – I’ll think about it later.”

Controlled Breathing

- Sit straight in a chair, feet flat on the floor, hands in your lap.
- Relax your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face.
- Inhale through your nose, feel your stomach expand, count slowly to four.
- Exhale slowly through your nose, count slowly from one to four.
- Continue for at least three minutes, while focusing your thoughts on your breathing.
- Your thoughts will wander, just gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Close your eyes
- Conduct a check of your body position and note how tense or relaxed you feel in each major muscle group and part of your body
- Tense and release your hands, arms, etc.
- Shrug your shoulders
- Let go and notice the tension that you have released

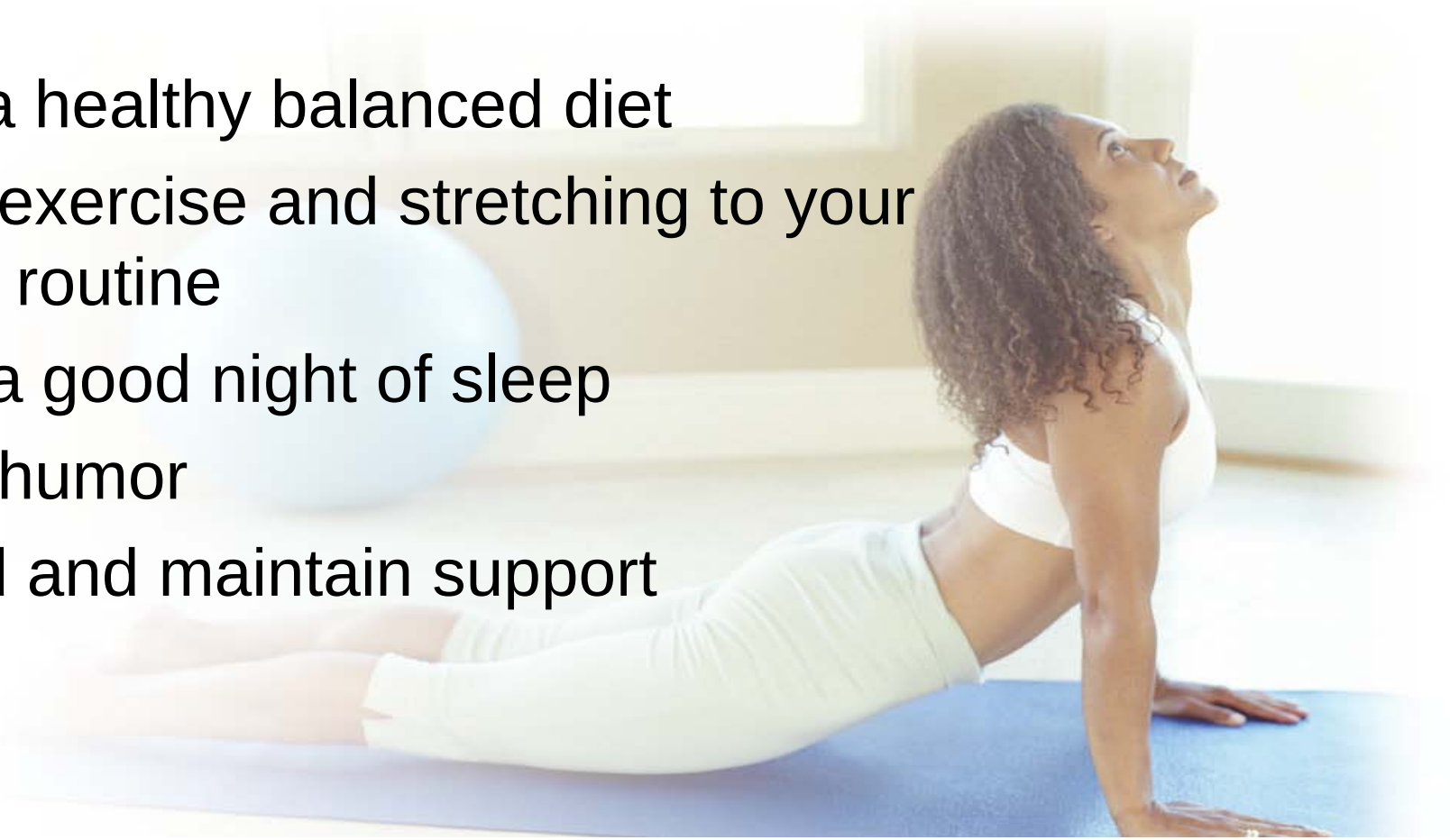
Positive Imagery

Vividly recall a pleasant experience

- Recall where you were...
- What time of day it was…
- What you were wearing...
- What you could see…
- What you could smell...
- What you could hear...
- Who you were with...

Balanced Living Practices

- Eat a healthy balanced diet
- Add exercise and stretching to your daily routine
- Get a good night of sleep
- Add humor
- Build and maintain support



Eat A Healthy Balanced Diet

- Improves your emotional and physical well-being
- Increases energy
- Strengthens your immune system
- Helps to manage weight

Exercise

- Reduces your body's automatic reactions to stress
- Improves your ability to concentrate
- Elevates your mood
- Enhances self-esteem and self-confidence
- Helps you control your weight
- Improves the quality of your sleep
- Strengthens your heart and lungs

Stretching

- Put your fingers on your shoulders, with elbows out to the side
- Raise your elbows until they are in line with your shoulders
- Bring your elbows forward until they touch or almost touch each other – hold for 5 to 10 seconds
- Repeat 2 to 3 times

Get A Good Night of Sleep

Signs you may need more sleep:

- Difficulty waking up in the morning
- Falling asleep during work
- Feelings of moodiness, irritability, depression, or anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating

Use Humor: Look at things differently

Social Involvement

- Find people, groups, connections, and activities that offer assistance, pleasure, or fulfillment
- Use support networks and activities to:
  - Provide a sense of community
  - Build relationships
  - Help relieve stressors

- Recognize signs of stress in yourself
- Identify typical sources of stress
- Develop new skills and balanced living practices to build resilience and manage stress

Putting It All Together: Personal Action Plan

1. Identify my signs of stress
2. Identify sources of my stress
3. Identify which stress relief strategies I will use
4. Identify obstacles to implementing these strategies
5. Identify how I will reward myself for successfully implementing my stress strategies

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