

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

Module 6: Tips for Setting Healthy and Safe Boundaries to Reduce Stress



PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Practical Tips for Homecare Workers

STAY SAFE AT WORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



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Module 6: Tips for Setting Healthy and Safe Boundaries to Reduce Stress

Participant Handouts

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this training, participants will be able to do the following:

- Describe what causes stress in their work lives.
- Define the many impacts of stress.
- Outline strategies for handling and reducing stress.
- Explain the safe and healthy boundaries needed between homecare workers and their clients.

Workshop at a Glance

Activity	Time
1. Welcome and Introductions—How Stressed Do You Get When ...	30 minutes
2. Understanding the Effects of Stress	30 minutes
3. Tips and Strategies for Managing Stress	40 minutes
4. Setting Healthy and Safe Boundaries	20 minutes
Total Time	2 hours

How Stressed Do You Get When ...



Rank each scenario from 1–5 to reflect how stressed you tend to get in these scenarios:

- ____1. Your assignment includes more tasks than you can get done in the amount of time you have.
- ____2. You are concerned about your client’s health, level of pain, or imminent death.
- ____3. The house is cluttered, or filthy, or in some other way difficult to work in.
- ____4. You are working despite aches and pains.
- ____5. Your client is very picky, demanding, critical, or unpleasant to work with.
- ____6. You are working too many hours.
- ____7. You are experiencing tensions or trouble at home.
- ____8. You work additional unpaid time to take care of all of your client’s needs.
- ____9. The house is too hot or too cold.
- ____10. The neighborhood feels unsafe to you.
- ____11. Some aspect of your life has fallen through—your car breaks down, your kids or loved ones get sick—and you can’t get to work on time or at all.
- ____12. There is tension among people living in the client’s home.
- ____13. You are worried about how things are going with your supervisor.
- ____14. You are short the money you need to pay bills.
- ____15. You’ve shared your personal problems with your client, and now he or she is worried about you or is trying to get you to accept gifts.
- ____16. You don’t like how people in the home talk to and treat one another.

How Does Stress Affect YOU?

<p>How does stress affect your body?</p>	<p>... Your thoughts and emotions?</p>	<p>... Your behavior and interactions with others?</p>
<p>When you feel stress, you might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get headaches more often. • Have low energy and feel fatigued. • Become sick more often. • Have back or chest pain. • Have higher risks for heart disease or hypertension. • Have lower immunity against diseases. • Have stomach upset. 	<p>When you feel stress, you might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obsessively think about worries and concerns. • Feel sad and depressed. • Feel anger. • Feel anxious and tense. • Feel burned out. • Feel insecure and uncomfortable around others. • Feel irritable. • Have difficulty concentrating. • Feel restless. 	<p>When you feel stress, you might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not want to do things you used to enjoy. • Have difficulty sleeping. • Eat too much—or too little. • Increase use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. • Feel angry or tense with others. • Have fewer positive interactions, leading to relationship problems. • Complain about personal problems too often, putting stress on others.

Setting Healthy and Safe Boundaries at Work

Rank your assigned scenarios from 1 to 3.

1 = This is healthy and safe boundary setting.

2 = This is less safe and healthy boundary setting.

3 = This is unsafe and unhealthy.

*The homecare worker is identified by an asterisk in each scenario.

- __1a. Beverly* brought her 7-year-old, Darren, with her to her shift at Mrs. Carmody's. She had forgotten that he had the day off for a teacher in-service day, and she didn't realize it until he didn't leave as she expected.
- __1b. When Darren told her he wasn't going to school, Beverly* put him in the car with her and called her friend, Audrey, asking if he she would pick him up from Mrs. Carmody's so she wouldn't be late.
- __1c. When she realized her son Darren wasn't going to school, Beverly* called her friend, Audrey, who agreed to take him during Beverly's shift. She called Mrs. Carmody to let her know that she was going to be 15 minutes later.
- __2a. Mrs. Griggs needs so much, and it's impossible to do everything she needs in the time that Anita* is scheduled to work. Anita feels that working extra hours to help her out is the right thing to do.
- __2b. Anita* works with Mrs. Griggs to prioritize what she needs done while she's working, and she keeps reporting to her supervisor all the unmet needs she believes that Mrs. Griggs has. She urges her supervisor to advocate with the insurance provider.
- __2c. Anita* stretches her time with Mrs. Griggs whenever she can—coming a bit early and staying a bit late. But she knows that it's never as much as Mrs. Griggs needs.
- __3a. Mr. Christos can't afford a Hoyer lift to help move him, so Byron* asks Mr. Christos' son to help him with transfers. It's still challenging and straining, but it's workable.
- __3b. Since Mr. Christos can't afford lifts, Byron* helps him with transfers despite his weight. Byron feels the strain in his back, but he thinks it's necessary.
- __3c. Byron* has explained about using a gait belt, and Mr. Christos' son has bought one. Byron uses it for transfers, and it seems to be working well.

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- __4a. Ms. Collins loves hearing about Debra's* children and Debra enjoys telling her stories. She makes a point of only sharing the highlights.
- __4b. Sally, Debra's* 8-year-old, is a gymnast. Sally was disappointed when Debra had to tell her that she couldn't afford an expensive outfit that Sally would need to participate in a regional event. When Debra tells Ms. Collins this story, Ms. Collins insists on giving Debra \$100 to buy the outfit. She won't take no for an answer.
- __4c. Debra* is so glad that Ms. Collins loves hearing about her kids. She loves having someone to talk to about them, and she values the good advice Ms. Collins gives her when she discusses the things that worry her about them.
- __5a. Tim* was recruited to work with Mrs. Herrick because of his reputation for being incredibly patient and even-tempered. She is frequently angry and frustrated with the pain and increasing disability associated with her condition. She lashes out at Tim daily, calling him names and finding ways to criticize and belittle him. He tries to stay calm, but he lost his cool yesterday. He told her that she wouldn't be able to get anyone to work for her because she was such a witch.
- __5b. Tim* is intent on living up to his reputation, so he stays calm and kind with Mrs. Herrick. When he gets home, he finds he has a headache and sore neck, and he stewes about the horrible things she said about him.
- __5c. Tim* has been patient with Mrs. Herrick. But when she swears at him, he explains that he doesn't like that language and would appreciate it if she didn't use it around him. When she began saying mean personal things about him, he told her that it wasn't OK to speak about him or to him in that way. He said that if she continued to do it, he would not continue working with her. He asked her what they could do to help her feel less angry and unhappy.

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- __6a. Felicia* had never had a client who needed open wound care before, and she was feeling queasy about it. Mrs. Dolan's daughter acted like she ought to know what she was doing, so she just went ahead and removed the old dressing, carefully observing how the layers were done so she could replace them in the same way.
- __6b. Because Felicia* had never handled wound care before, she explained this to Mrs. Dolan's daughter and asked her to give her step-by-step instructions. Mrs. Dolan's daughter grumbled about untrained staff, but she showed Felicia what to do.
- __6c. Felicia* didn't want to let on that she hadn't changed wound dressings before, so she explained to Mrs. Dolan's daughter that she wanted to be sure to do it exactly the way the daughter had been doing it, and asked to observe her doing it once.
- __7a. Maria* is a life-saver to Peter and Jo Delaney, who are living with Jo's mother, Agnes. Agnes has advanced dementia. As well as providing respite to them herself, she has encouraged them to contact their local Alzheimer's Society and become involved with support groups.
- __7b. Maria* knows how challenging Agnes can be, so she has given Peter and Jo her cell phone number so they can call her whenever they need advice or help.
- __7c. Maria's* heart goes out to Peter and Jo as she watches them struggle to keep Agnes in their home. She often takes time to listen to them and offer comfort for a while after her shift.

Strategies and Tips for Managing Stress

Strategy	Examples and Ideas to Help Us Do It!
Exercise.	
Eat well and nutritiously.	
Talk with a friend or counselor.	
Get enough sleep.	
Keep up-to-date on vaccinations, such as flu shots.	
Avoid alcohol, drugs, and caffeine.	
Make time each day to relax, laugh, and reflect.	