

# MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY

## FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE: Use Time Wisely

“We easily can be overcome by the routine and mundane matters of mortality. Sleeping, eating, dressing, working, playing, exercising, and many other customary activities are necessary and important. But ultimately, what we become is the result of our knowledge of and willingness to learn from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; it is not merely the sum total of our daily pursuits over the course of a lifetime” - David A. Bednar,

### ACTIVITY

With a partner, read the five steps you can take each day to use your time well.

**1**

#### LIST TASKS

Each morning, make a list of tasks to do.  
Add names of people to serve.

**2**

#### PRAY

Pray for guidance.  
Review your list of tasks. Listen. Commit to do your best.

**3**

#### SET PRIORITIES

On your list of tasks, put a 1 by the most important, a 2 by the next most important, and so on.

**4**

#### ACT

Listen to the Spirit. Work hard. Start with the most important task, and work your way down the list.

**5**

#### REPORT

Each night, report to Heavenly Father in prayer. Ask questions. Listen. Repent. Feel His love.

**COMMIT:** I will **practice** these steps every day to **use my time more wisely**, and I will **report** each night to Heavenly Father in my prayers.

## LEARN

### 1. What are Stress and Anxiety? **DISCUSS**

**READ:**

- Stress and anxiety are normal parts of life. These words describe ways the brain and body respond to any demand, such as a problem at work, a test at school, or an important decision. Normal amounts of stress and anxiety can help you focus, reach your goals, and protect your body. For example, if you have some stress about school, you will likely come to school prepared and focused on your tasks.
- If you are dealing with too much stress and anxiety, you might get sick often, have headaches, feel angry, have drastic changes in your appetite, or experience a lack of focus.
- You may start to feel overwhelmed by school, or you may not want to go to school because you feel you will not be good enough.
- Stress and anxiety can impact your ability to feel the Spirit or distort your understanding of spiritual promptings.

## **DISCUSS:**

**How have stress and worry helped or hurt you?**



## **2. Understanding Levels of Stress:**



### ***READ:***

Like gauges on a car's dashboard that remind you to slow down, get gas, or check the engine, symptoms of stress are signals to remind you to slow down, fill up your spiritual "tank," and look for new solutions. As you work to manage your stress effectively, it may help to categorize stress into four different levels.

### **ACTIVITY:**

**Step 1:** On your own, read through the four levels of stress. You will likely experience different levels of stress at different times. Becoming more emotionally resilient will help you experience a green level of stress more often.

	IF YOU FEEL...	WHAT TO DO
<b>GREEN</b> 	Confident - Content, - Ready to meet challenges - Able to get along with others - Able to feel the Spirit easily	This is the level people desire to be in BUT it is normal to fluctuate! Keep going, you are handling everyday stresses of family, learning, and progressing in a healthy way
<b>YELLOW</b> 	Tense – Concerned – Worried – Insecure – Difficulty connecting with others – Distracted from feeling the Spirit	It is normal to spend some time at the yellow level. Be kind to yourself as you cope with the challenges of life. Participate in relaxing activities to help increase your ability to manage your stress
<b>ORANGE</b>	Exhausted – physically and emotionally – Overwhelmed –	No one enjoys being at the orange level BUT this doesn't have to be permanent!! Engage in

	III – Deeply discouraged – Difficulty feeling the Spirit	relaxing activities, and remember good experiences. If you stay at this level for more than a few days or feel overwhelmed <b>ASK FOR HELP</b>
<b>RED</b> 	Constantly overwhelmed – Isolated from others – Hopeless – Difficulty eating or sleeping normally – Unable to continue – Like you have been abandoned by God	If you are at this level, <b>ASK FOR HELP</b>  If you are able to, consider taking a break or doing something that helps you emotionally until you can meet with a health care professional

**Step 2** Think of the times when your stress level was at the green level. What helped you to feel that way?

### 3. USE MINDFULNESS TO REDUCE STRESS

**READ:** Stress and inaccurate thinking patterns can dominate and distort your thoughts. Your attention can wander, or you may check out and focus on anything other than what's happening around you. Mindfulness is a skill that will help you be more emotionally resilient. It is paying attention to what your body is telling you in the here and now. It can help reduce stress and anxiety and increase your sense of well-being and confidence. Mindfulness also helps you avoid being overly reactive or overwhelmed.

**DISCUSS:** What helps you focus, even when you are stressed?

**PONDER:** On a scale of 1 – 10, how stressed am I feeling right now?

**MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY:** facilitator leads group through activity

**Step 1:** Sit in a comfortable place where you can be still for a few minutes. (When doing this at home, you can either sit or lie down.) Close your eyes.

**Step 2:** Begin by taking several long, slow breaths, breathing in fully through your nose and exhaling fully through your mouth. Allow your breath to find its own natural rhythm. Notice the physical sensations of your lungs expanding and contracting as you breathe in and out. If your mind wanders to other things, don't worry; that happens. If you get distracted, just notice the types of thoughts, feelings, and sensations that distract you. Observe them without trying to control them or judge them, and simply bring your attention back to your breathing. Your breathing provides an anchor to which you can return over and over again.

**Step 3:** Practice being present with your breathing. Again, if your mind wanders, notice the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that distract you and allow them to flow

past you like clouds in the sky. Breathe with this perspective for one minute.

**Step 4:** As this exercise comes to an end, slowly allow your attention to expand, and notice your body and the room around you. When you're ready, open your eyes and come back to being fully aware of your surroundings. Remember that breathing is a tool that can help you relax and be present at any time.

**TIP:** You can do the mindfulness exercise on your own at any time. Other relaxation techniques resources are provided at the end of this packet.

## 4. ACCESSING GODLY POWER

**READ:** President Dallin H. Oaks taught of Christ's ability to strengthen us in any situation we face: "He therefore knows our struggles, our heartaches, our temptations, and our suffering, for He willingly experienced them all as an essential part of His Atonement. And because of this, His Atonement empowers Him to succor us—to give us the strength to bear it all. . . .

**DISCUSS:** How can always remembering the Savior help you better manage stress and anxiety?

### ACTIVITY:

**Step 1:** On your own, read the following ways to manage stress and anxiety. Circle the ideas you may want to try.

1. Talk with God. Know that He understands. Imagine Him sitting close to you, listening and offering support.
2. Ponder. Reflect on times you've felt blessed by the Lord and seen His hand and mercy in your life. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).
3. Look at your expectations. Sometimes our greatest worries and stress come when life doesn't turn out the way we hoped or planned. We can learn from our stressful experiences. "All these things shall give thee experience and shall be for thy good. . . . Therefore, hold on thy way" (Doctrine and Covenants 122:7, 9).
4. Take a short break. Take several slow, deep breaths, stretch, and relax physically. When your body and mind are calm again, you will be able to think more clearly. Take a walk, get some food or a drink, or just sit and think for a few minutes.
5. Be aware of when you're stressed. Sometimes you may not realize you're stressed. You may experience difficulty sleeping, get angry easily, feel depressed, low energy.

**Check in with yourself at least once a day to see how you are doing.**

6. Focus on gratitude. Notice what is around you. Focus for a few minutes on what is right, good, and positive about yourself and the world. Start a gratitude journal, and write at least five specific things you are grateful for each day.

7. Be active. We have been given a body and a world to enjoy. Make a plan to use your body to get out and enjoy these gifts. Even a few minutes of walking can help boost your mood and reduce stress.
8. Limit technology use. Using social media, computers, and TVs, especially at the start and end of the day, can increase feelings of anxiety or stress. Try starting and ending your day without phones or computers. Go a day or week without social media or TV and see how you feel.
9. Be kind to yourself. Talk to yourself with the same kind, comforting words you would use with a loved one. Thoughts of helplessness, hopelessness, or harsh condemnation are not from God and cause more stress and anxiety.
10. Help someone else. Refocus your energy by serving someone else. Our ultimate goal is to love others like Christ did, even when we are struggling. Christ gave us an example of this love when He forgave His persecutors and made sure His mother would be cared for even as He suffered on the cross. As hard as it can be, we can get better perspective on life when we stop and think of others & look for ways to help.
11. Try a relaxing activity. Everyone relaxes in different ways. Maybe you enjoy painting, listening to music, reading a book, or being outside. When you are stressed or anxious, take time to remember what brings you joy and calms you. Make time to do those things, even if you think you are too busy.
12. Stay connected with friends and family. Being with those who love and support you can help reduce stress. You were made for connection. There is no shame in sharing what you're going through. Help your friends and family understand what you are experiencing.
13. Take it one step at a time. You can ask yourself, "What is the most important thing I can be doing right now?" Your answer might be something like "All I need to do right now is wait for my bus" or "All I have to do right now is clean the dishes." Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to not feel guilty for saying "no" to something that can wait.
14. Practice mindfulness.

**Step 2:** In the table below, individually write a few of the ideas to reduce stress and anxiety that you want to try. Make a plan for when and how you will use the technique.

WAY TO REDUCE STRESS & ANXIETY	WHEN AND HOW
EXAMPLE: Take a short break	I will set a reminder on my phone to take five- minute breaks at lunchtime and before returning home from school.

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## 5. PERFECTIONISM

### **READ:**

Perfectionism is the belief that if we are not perfect in everything, we are a failure and not good enough for God or anyone else. However, we know the Lord has given us weakness to help us stay humble and teachable. Regarding perfection, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught: “Our only hope for true perfection is in receiving it as a gift from heaven—we can’t ‘earn’ it. Thus, the grace of Christ offers us not only salvation from sorrow and sin and death but also salvation from our own persistent self-criticism. . . . “Brothers and sisters, every one of us aspires to a more Christlike life than we often succeed in living. If we admit that honestly and are trying to improve, we are not hypocrites; we are human. . . . If we persevere, then somewhere in eternity our refinement will be finished and complete—which is the New Testament meaning of perfection” (“Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually”)

**READ:** Here are four principles for increasing self-compassion and decreasing perfectionism:

1. Become aware of perfectionism in our thoughts, feelings, and actions.
2. Challenge those thoughts, feelings, and actions.
3. Accept our mistakes as part of life, and don’t fear making mistakes.
4. Develop self-compassion; accept and love yourself, including your imperfections.

**WATCH:** “Perfectionism: Will I Ever Be Good Enough?”

**DISCUSS:** What is something important I can learn from Olivia’s true life experience with perfectionism?

**DISCUSS:** How can our Foundational Principle “Using Time Wisely” help us manage Stress and Anxiety?

### **PONDER AND COMMIT**

Individually think about what you have learned today, and consider what God would have you do. Read the quote and write your responses to the questions below.

It isn’t as bad as you sometimes think it is. It all works out. Don’t worry. I say that to myself every morning. It will all work out. If you do your best, it will all work out. **Put your trust in God, and move forward with faith and confidence in the future.** The

Lord will not forsake us. He will not forsake us” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Excerpts from Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” Ensign, Oct. 2000, 73).

What are the most meaningful things I learned today that will help me become more emotionally resilient?

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What is one thing I will do as a result of what I learned today? (This could be your personal commitment for the month. If you can’t think of a commitment, some potential ideas are listed below.)

### Commitment Ideas:

- Practice my plan to reduce stress and anxiety (from item 4 in the “Learn” section).
- Try one of the relaxation exercises in the “Resources” section at end of packet
- Practice mindfulness or living in the present.

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### MY COMMITMENTS

A I will choose one thing I will do to improve my time management and will report each night to Heavenly Father in my prayers.

B I will write down one thing I am grateful for each day and thank God for it.

C I will work on my personal commitment from the “Ponder” section.

D I will share what I’ve learned with my family or friends.

\_\_\_\_\_  
My signature

**TIME**

**THANKS**

**COMMITMENTS**

**SHARE**

## Ideas for relaxation:

**Music** There is evidence that music can help reduce anxiety and stress. When you are feeling stressed or discouraged, sing to yourself or listen to a favorite piece of music. “Hymns [and other uplifting music] can lift our spirits, give us courage, and move us to righteous action. They can fill our souls with heavenly thoughts and bring us a spirit of peace”

## Progressive Relaxation Exercise

Deep relaxation helps your body recover from stress. Practice this exercise at night before you sleep to train your body to relax. Do a shorter version of this exercise during the day anytime you feel stressed. Lie or sit comfortably and close your eyes. Look for any tension you may be carrying, concentrating on one part of your body at a time: your head and face, eyes, jaw, neck, shoulders and back, arms, hands and fingers, chest and abdomen, legs, and feet and toes. Consciously relax each part of your body. Feel all the tension draining away, like sand running through your fingers. If you still feel tension, tighten the tense part of your body for 10 seconds and then release for 10 seconds. Take your time. Mentally scan your body for any remaining tension, then completely relax. Focus on a memory or imagined setting that brings you peace and joy. Try to imagine the scene as vividly as possible until you feel ready to open your eyes again.

## Mindfulness Using the Five Senses

Focusing on your senses can help you practice mindfulness. For several minutes silently observe your surroundings. As you do, try to do the following:

Notice five things that you can see. Look around you and bring your attention to five things that you can see. Pick something that you don't normally notice, like a shadow or a small crack.

Notice four things that you can feel. Pay attention to four things you are currently feeling, like the texture of your clothes, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on. Notice three things you can hear. Take a moment to listen, and note three things that you hear in the background. This can be the chirp of a bird, the hum of a refrigerator, or the faint sounds of traffic from a nearby road. Notice two things you can smell. Be aware of two smells that you usually filter out, whether they're pleasant or unpleasant. You might notice a whiff of pine trees if you're outside or the clothes you are wearing. Notice one thing you can taste. Focus on one thing that you can taste right now, at this moment. You can take a sip of a drink, chew a piece of gum, eat something, or notice the current taste in your mouth.

## Visualization

In this relaxation technique, you will form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. Start by imagining a place that makes you happy. This can be a real place or an imagined place. During visualization, try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound, and touch. If you are visualizing relaxing at the ocean, you might think about the smell of saltwater, the sound of crashing waves, and the warmth of the sun on your body. You may want to close your eyes, sit in a quiet spot, and make sure your clothing is comfortable.