

## Learning Activities

Detailed instructions for each learning activity may be found below. Here is an overview of learning activities for the instructor to choose from:

Number	Name	Methods	Time
3.10.1	Job-related Stress	Group work, discussion	10 minutes
3.10.2	Personal Stress Profile	Individual exercise	15 minutes
3.10.3	Can You Relax?	Exercise, guided visualization	15 minutes

## Learning Activity

3.10.1

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### Job-Related Stress

#### METHOD

Group work, discussion

#### PURPOSE

To consider the importance of work/life balance for peacekeeping personnel

#### TIME

10 minutes

- Group work: 5-7 minutes
- Discussion: 3 minutes

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Consider your work as peacekeeping personnel
- Why are you at risk of stress due to your job?
- List other high-risk jobs and draw comparisons
- Discuss the importance of self-care

#### RESOURCES

- Learning Activity instructions

### Preparation

- Decide on the small groups. The activity is short, so table groups are good because they are formed and in place.
- Prepare flip chart sheets for the brainstorming.
- Prepare key points using the content from Lesson 3.10.

### Instructions

1. Introduce the activity and divide participants into groups.
2. Ask participants to work through the following discussion questions in their groups:
  - a) Why are you at risk of stress due to your job?
  - b) What other high-risk jobs are similar to peacekeeping work?
  - c) Why is self-care important?
3. Invite participants to a group discussion. Ask groups to share their responses to the discussion questions. Transfer the responses to the flip-chart.
4. Share key points from Lesson 3.10. Highlight the following:
  - a) As peacekeeping personnel, you work in high-risk areas and crisis operations.
  - b) You need to prepare to do your work without negative effects.
  - c) It is important to have a work-life balance.
  - d) Other high-risk occupations include:
    - Fire-fighters
    - Emergency health-care workers
    - Police officers
    - Search and rescue personnel
    - Disaster relief and humanitarian aid workers
    - UN peacekeeping personnel
5. Close the exercise.

## Learning Activity

3.10.2

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### Personal Stress Profile

#### METHOD

Individual exercise

#### PURPOSE

For each participant to create an individual stress response profile, deepening understanding of stress management and its relevance

#### TIME

15 minutes

- Introduction: 2 minutes
- Individual work: 12 minutes
- Close: 1 minute

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- What are the sources of stress in your life?
- What symptoms of negative stress do you experience?
- List negative ways you deal with stress
- List positive ways to manage stress

#### RESOURCES

- Learning Activity instructions
- Activity material

### Preparation

- Prepare a flip-chart sheet or a slide by dividing into four parts with headings. See the Learning Activity Material below.
- Identify sources of support for participants who want to change their patterns of stress response. Information, exercises, counselling, and a buddy system are possibilities.

### Instructions

1. Introduce the activity. Stress can become so familiar, we get used to it. Preparing an individual profile of stress response helps us see patterns of behaviour more clearly and cope with stress more effectively.
2. Show the slide or flip-chart sheet and go over the four parts:
  - a) **Sources of stress:** things that cause you stress or increase it
  - b) **Warning signs:** symptoms, indications that your stress level is too high, too long
  - c) **Negative practices:** ways you deal with stress that have harmful consequences
  - d) **Positive practices:** ways you manage stress that help your overall health
3. Encourage all participants to use their stress response profiles to strengthen positive practices. Invite people who are worried about their personal stress profile to speak with you privately. Direct them to the sources of support identified in preparation.

### Variation

- Prepare a handout of a single sheet with the same four parts and headings. See example in Support. Copy for all.
- Get pairs of people to share information from their stress response profile. Consider this variation when groups have a strong, positive dynamic and people trust each other.

**3.10.2 Learning Activity Material: Personal Stress Profile**

<p>(1) Sources of your stress</p>	<p>(2) Warning signs/symptoms for your stress</p>
<p>(3) Negative practices for managing your stress</p>	<p>(4) Positive practices for managing your stress</p>

## Learning Activity

3.10.3

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### Can You Relax?

#### METHOD

Exercise, guided visualization

#### PURPOSE

To explore the healing value of relaxation and meditation, starting with breathing basics

#### TIME

15 minutes

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Consider your work as peacekeeping personnel.
- Why are you at risk of stress due to your job?
- List other high-risk jobs and draw comparisons.
- Discuss the importance of self-care.

#### RESOURCES

- Learning Activity instructions
- Steps for Instructors on Guided Visualization
- Activity material

### Preparation

- Prepare steps in a guided visualization. An example is included below. It includes:
  - An introduction
  - Reflection on when each person last felt truly, totally relaxed
  - Introduction to *breathing* as the backbone of managed relaxation
  - Description of *deep breathing* – focusing on the physical steps
  - Slowing down the mind – focusing on calming mental effects
  - When deep breathing can help – in emergencies, in acute pain
  - Back to the group
- Practice speaking *slowly* through the guided visualization steps – half-speed, in a relaxed tone.
- Make sure the room is big enough for all to have some private space.
- Consider preparing handouts on an individual breathing exercise for participants to take away.

### Instructions

1. Introduce the exercise. Get people to spread out.
2. Move through prepared steps, at a slow and easy pace. Give people time to relax at the beginning, easing them into the exercise. Relaxing is a process, not an on-off switch. People in high gear may not have experience relaxing. Be encouraging. Maintain a calm, easy pace and relaxed voice.
3. Close the exercise. Highlight the following points:
  - a) Our breathing patterns change when we are stressed – faster and shallower
  - b) Relaxation exercises help you get control of your breathing, re-establish physiological balance
  - c) Deep breathing is a simple and valuable exercise

### Variation

- Participants may have experience with mindfulness and meditation. Check with the group. Invite anyone with that experience to guide the exercise.
- Integrate deep breathing and guided relaxation exercises through a course, not only in one exercise. More practice, more likely to use these positive practices.

### 3.10.3 Steps for Instructors on Guided Visualization: Can You Relax?

Step in Guided Visualization	Sequence of Points
An introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• our minds are always active</li> <li>• sometimes our thoughts race</li> <li>• they can carry us away with them</li> <li>• learning to relax can help us cope</li> <li>• learning to relax <i>before</i> a crisis can prepare us</li> <li>• settle into your chair comfortably</li> <li>• turn inward – close your eyes if you like</li> <li>• for the next 15 minutes, follow my directions to let yourself slip into a relaxed state</li> </ul>
Reflection on when each person last felt truly relaxed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• try to clear your mind of clutter, still the voices in your head</li> <li>• think of a clean wind and open space</li> <li>• turn your mind to your own life</li> <li>• when was the last time you felt really relaxed? Think back. Remember. Recreate that feeling ...</li> <li>• was it at a beach? on a mountain? at home? on a trip?</li> <li>• were you alone? with another person? other people?</li> <li>• reach back, to recapture that feeling – feel it in your body, and your mind</li> <li>• let the tension go from every muscle</li> <li>• as thoughts come into your mind, let them go as you become conscious of them</li> </ul>
Introduction to <i>breathing</i> as the backbone of managed relaxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on your breathing – in (1,2,3), and out (1,2,3); <i>repeat several times</i></li> <li>• now concentrate on your stomach. Inhale, and feel your stomach rise. Push out your stomach as you inhale, to get a deeper breath. Consciously pull in your stomach as you breathe out (in 1, 2, 3, 4; out 1, 2, 3, 4 <i>repeat</i>)</li> <li>• feel your chest rise naturally as the space you create in your abdomen lets your lungs fill. Don't stick your chest out. Keep your stomach rising and falling.</li> <li>• open your mouth just a little, and breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth (in 1, 2, 3, 4; out 1, 2, 3, 4 – to a steady rhythm).</li> </ul>
Description of <i>deep breathing</i> – focusing on the physical steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• notice how deeper breathing has helped your body still and relax</li> <li>• when you inhale, imagine the air flowing right down into your toes. As you exhale, gently blow the air from your toes and thighs and stomach back out into the air (in 1, 2, 3, 4 and hold; out 1, 2, 3, 4 and hold; <i>repeat</i>)</li> <li>• as you inhale, feel the air filling every part of your body – your legs, your torso, your lungs, your chest, your back, the back of your head</li> <li>• as you exhale, concentrate on getting out all the dead air in your lungs, freeing up space for fresh oxygen and renewed energy</li> </ul>

<p>Slowing down the mind – focusing on calming mental effects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shift your attention to your mind as regular, slow, deep breathing helps relax your physical muscles; let your whirling thoughts go, as you empty your mind</li> <li>• set an envelope of calm around yourself; feel your breathing calm everything in that envelope</li> </ul>
<p>When deep breathing can help – in emergencies, in acute pain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 1, 2, 3, 4 hold; out 1,2,3,4 hold. You are relaxed, driving in a car. Suddenly, smash! An accident! Imagine it. Fill in the details. Experience it. Your breathing rate will speed up. Make yourself breathe deeply again. In 1, 2,3,4 hold; out 1, 2,3,4 hold. Count the inhales and exhales. Slow it down. Feel your pulse rate even out.</li> <li>• In 1, 2, 3, 4 hold; out 1, 2,3,4 hold. Bring back the accident image. Imagine your first reaction when you know you are seriously hurt. You're in pain. Again, you imagining this traumatic event will speed up your heart-rate and your breathing. Slow them down, deliberately, consciously, mindfully. In 1, 2,3,4 hold; out 1, 2,3,4 hold.</li> <li>• Being able to control your breathing can help you control panic and pain. In 1, 2, 3, 4 hold; out 1, 2, 3, 4 hold. Repeat. Concentrate on your breathing.</li> </ul>
<p>Back to the group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go back in your mind to when you last felt relaxed. Feel your body go soft and limp, as if you are drifting into sleep.</li> <li>• Imprint that memory. Place it carefully in your memory banks. You'll be able to find it when needed.</li> <li>• Bring your attention back to the classroom. Increase your awareness of people around you. Open your eyes if you closed them.</li> <li>• Practicing deep breathing is one of the most practical things we can do to improve our stress management. Each of us breathes. Everyone one of us can practice deep breathing to help relax in everyday as well as challenging situations.</li> <li>• Staying calm in crisis helps you and others. Strengthening your capacity to manage stress and respond to stress without "losing it" will make you a better peacekeeper.</li> <li>• Try to practice deep breathing, regularly. It works!</li> </ul>

### 3.10.3 Learning Activity Material: Can You Relax?

#### Key points to remember:

- Our breathing patterns change when we are stressed – faster and shallower
- Relaxation exercises help you get control of your breathing, re-establish physiological balance
- Deep breathing is a simple and valuable exercise

#### Instructions for an individual breathing exercise:

1. Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be interrupted
2. Concentrate on your breathing
3. Breathe from the stomach area, not high in your chest
4. Try to clear your mind of thoughts
5. Say to yourself, "Breathe in. Breathe out" in a regular rhythm
6. Keep doing the exercise for at least five minutes
7. Try it at your desk, in your car, on the bus, at home, anywhere – at least several times a day
8. Clearing your mind can be a challenge – practice makes it easier
9. Practicing deep breathing means in an emergency or crisis, you'll be able to call on that practice to manage panic or pain, and stay calm