



Stressing Down Through Mind-Body Strategies

A 10-day Self-Directed Smorgasbord Challenge

November 14 to 23, 2022

“Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.”

Hans Selye, Doctor, Scientist and “father of stress”

What do the movies *As Good As It Gets*, *What About Bob*, and *Silver Linings Playbook* have in common? How about Disney’s *Finding Nemo*, *Frozen* or *Inside Out*?

The answer is stress. In these movies, we are introduced to various characters and lifestyles with debilitating stress and mental health conditions, like obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), anxiety, bipolar disorder and isolation. The intense topic of emotions and stress are explored in many movies, books and documentaries. These movies provide lessons and verbal references about stress as it relates to our mental health.

Inside Out, for example, takes a profound look at stress by showing viewers the conflict playing out, inside the main character’s mind, from the perspective of her emotions; joy, fear, anger, disgust and sadness. We can see how the emotions feed into the main character’s thoughts and behaviors. The added bonus to this movie from a mind-body perspective is the takeaway messages; embracing all emotions and maintaining a healthy balance in life is key. All of our emotions are necessary and play an equally important role in our overall mental and emotional well-being. Lastly, when the stress becomes too hard to navigate there are always others who can help redirect us.

To earn a prize, complete the log form attached. Return your completed log and prize forms to Mary Harrington at mharrington@mma.org or mail to MIIA, 3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108 by December 7, 2022, to be eligible for prizes (only MIIA/BCBS members are eligible for prizes). No registration is necessary.

MIIA 
Well Aware
 Work Well. Live Well.

Open to all employees, only MIIA/BCBS members are eligible for prizes.

Stressing Down Activity Challenge



What is Stress?

We now know that stress is the bodies' reaction to a threat, real or imagined, and the perception that we have inadequate coping resources to deal with the threat or situation. It is the "I can't handle this" kind of reaction. When we feel we can't control or manage a situation our bodies set into motion a physical response, preparing us to fight or flee (stress response). There is a release of stress hormones (cortisol), triggering a cascade of physiological changes in the body, including; sweating, increased heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and breathing rate.

This evolutionary based reaction was built by design and was necessary when our ancestors were being chased by tigers in the jungle. Our bodies needed to be able to react quickly to the life-threatening situation of being chased by a saber-toothed tiger. This kind of reaction, however, no longer serves us and can lead to chronic stress. When we perceive daily traffic, work deadlines, technology issues or a full inbox as equally stressful as a tiger chasing us, the same stress hormones are unleashed causing similar physiological changes in the body, making us vulnerable to a weakened immune system and illness. As the late Boston University Psychiatrist, Peter Knapp, explained, "When you get a Wall Street broker using the responses a caveman used to fight the elements, you've got a problem."

This is not to say that we have to eliminate stress completely. Our bodies are wired for stress and stress is a part of life. But, we don't want to drown in stress. We don't want stress to own us or keep us hostage. Some level of stress is good for us and we can thrive from it, particularly if we are running a marathon, taking an exam or planning a wedding. It is the unchecked, unmanaged and constant triggering of the stress response that contributes to disease and ill-health.

So, how can we stress down or stress better? Learning to cultivate the capacity to stress better can have a significant difference on our physical, emotional and mental health. It is crucial that we take recovery breaks during the day to practice effective mind-body strategies that will counteract the harmful effects of stress. Adjusting our emotions may reduce illness and help with recovery and resiliency. We may not be able to change the situation, but we can always change our reaction to it. With regular practice of mind-body techniques we can rewire our brains to new healthy habits and improve our overall well being. Let's change our stress response and begin practicing!

Program Requirements



1. Commit to practicing at least one mind-body strategy a day for at least 8 out of the 10 days. Even if you are not feeling overwhelmed with stress practice a technique. This is how habits are formed.
2. Sample at least four different mind-body strategies throughout the challenge from the list below. Being consistent with the practice of these strategies is what is important. Pick strategies that work for you and that feel good.
3. No registration is necessary. Complete the log and prize form attached and send to Mary Harrington, mharrington@mma.org or mail to Mary Harrington, MIIA, 3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108 by December 7, 2022.

To help get you started below are various mind-body strategies you can use for this challenge.

1. **Mindfulness** – Practicing moment to moment awareness, without judgement, can be very rewarding. Start off by simply paying attention to some daily activities like brushing your teeth, taking a shower or eating a meal and notice any changes in your focus, energy or mood.
2. **Meditation** – Carve out a few minutes daily to sit quietly and focus on your breath, a word, a phrase or an object. A few minutes of breath awareness can alleviate anxiety almost immediately. If you are a MIIA subscriber check out the [Headspace](#) app that is free for MIIA/BCBS members.
3. **Yoga** – Yoga is considered meditation in motion. Pay attention to the breath and sensations in the body while moving from one physical pose to another. Check out a yoga class with [Ompractice](#) for an invigorating or calming mind-body experience.
4. **Exercise** – Regular daily movement can relieve tension and stress and boost our physical and mental energy. Exercise is one of the best things we can do for our health. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week. Check out MIIA's pre-recorded fitness classes on our [MIIAWinners.org](#) site. [Click here](#) for instructions.
5. **Journaling** – Log your daily activities, thoughts, feelings and emotions or things you are grateful for in the evening before going to bed.
6. **Engage in self-care activities.** Examples of this could be walking in nature, drinking a cup of tea, taking a hot bath, listening to relaxing music.
7. **Sleep** – The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7-9 hours of sleep for adults. Children need more.
8. **Eating healthy** – Including a variety of healthy proteins, vegetables and fruits is important for weight management and overall good health. Schedule a visit with one of [MIIA's Health Coaches](#) to support you in your goals of healthy eating. Open to all MIIA/BCBS members.

Digital Mind-Body Resources:

[Ompractice](#)

[Headspace app](#)

[10% Happier App](#)

[Calm App](#)

[Guided Relaxation Exercises](#)

[Instructions to Access MIIA Wellness Videos](#)

Stressing Down Log Form



Please complete the following log form in full. Return it to Mary Harrington at mharrington@mma.org or mail to Mary Harrington, MIIA, 3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108 by December 7, 2022. To earn a prize you must choose at least four different mind-body strategies and commit to practicing one strategy a day for at least 8 out of the 10 days. Put an X in the box corresponding to the strategy you completed each day. All log forms must be unique in the case where a spouse or dependent is also participating.

Name _____ Employer _____

Date	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5	Strategy 6	Strategy 7	Strategy 8
11/14								
11/15								
11/16								
11/17								
11/18								
11/19								
11/20								
11/21								
11/22								
11/23								
Total # of days I stressed down								

Stressing Down Prize Form



Name _____ Employer _____

MIIA/BCBS subscriber: Yes No

Email _____ Phone _____

Mailing address _____

Prize choice. Choose 1st and 2nd choices. If you don't specify, we will choose your prize. [Click](#) to view below prizes. Can also view at emiia.org. Click on Well Aware, then click on Incentives. Only MIIA/BCBS members eligible for prizes.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terry Velour Robe, one size, white | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga mat | <input type="checkbox"/> Stainless steel water bottle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chill Watch - White, Black, Red, Cyan | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinus soother | <input type="checkbox"/> Pickleball Set |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camper 34oz Stainless Steel vacuum container | <input type="checkbox"/> Bike repair kit | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports towel in mesh bag |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fleece Blanket (navy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature Sound Spa | <input type="checkbox"/> Bamboo cutting board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freezable Lunch tote | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor headlamp | <input type="checkbox"/> Shaker bottle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collapsible cooler | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet Lovers travel kit | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardener's Kit |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Rivage Weekender tote | |

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