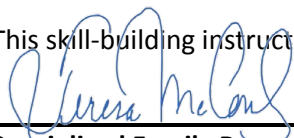



**SPECIALIZED FAMILY CARE
Provider Training**

Category:	Health Issue
Title:	About Stress Management
Materials:	Handouts from website: www.helpstartshere.com
Goal:	Provider can effectively manage stress in their everyday life.
Credit Hours:	2 Hours
Date Developed:	September 2006, Updated December 2016
Developed by:	Debbie Wiley, SFC Program

This skill-building instruction has been approved for Specialized Family Care Provider training by:



Specialized Family Program Manager 12/29/2016
Date



Content Reviewed and updated by: Carol Brewster, FBCS 12-16-2016
Date

Training Objectives:

- Specialized Family Care Provider can describe bodily systems which are impacted by stress
- Specialized Family Care Provider can define stress
- Specialized Family Care Provider can describe at least one self-help strategy to assist with stress management

Training Procedures:

- Specialized Family Care Provider initiated self-study
- Test completed b Specialized Family Care Provider
- Review of test responses by Family Based Care Specialist and Specialized Family Care Provider

I certify that I have completed all the materials associated with this training module. I feel that I have a basic understanding of the material completed.

Specialized Family Care Provider	Start Time	End Time	Date
Reviewed by: _____			
Family Based Care Specialist			Date

This Program is funded by the WV Department of Health & Human Resources, Bureau for Children & Families and administered by the Center for Excellence in Disabilities, West Virginia University.



About Stress Management

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July 6, 2005

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ What Is Stress?
- ▶ Impact of Stress on the Body
- ▶ Self-Help Strategies
- ▶ Keeping Diaries and Journals

Introduction

As you wait impatiently in the crowded supermarket check out line after work, your daughter calls on your cell phone, announcing that she needs a costume for a skit tomorrow in school. How can you possibly appease her, finish the work project you stashed into your briefcase because you couldn't complete it in the office, prepare a meal for your family after negotiating through a traffic pile up on the interstate, and even attend a heated community meeting tonight? Face it. You are stressed.

So is everyone around you these days, or so it seems. Blame it on the pace of 21st century American living, our outlandish expectations or our attempts to cram far too much into a day. The reasons are myriad.

Even the magazines you happen to scan at the check out line affirm this, with their screaming cover lines promising ways to alleviate your stress, "Banish stress NOW!!"

What Is Stress?

Frequently is referred to as the "fight or flight" reaction. The stress response happens automatically when you feel threatened. For primitive humans, the stressor would have been a lunging tiger. For us, it could be a demanding, angry boss, a sudden blinding rainstorm when you're driving on crowded highway, or hearing bad medical news about a beloved family member.

While experts have made huge advances in the study of stress, they are still baffled by it. Most puzzling is how its effect on our bodies is based upon how we perceive stressful situations. Some stressors can help us in performing at our peak ability; other stressors can be debilitating – it's all in the eyes of the beholder.

When you feel threatened, your pituitary gland, located at the base of your brain, responds to a perceived threat by speeding up the release of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), which signals other glands to produce additional hormones. It's as if an alarm system has gone off in your brain. This system is alerting your adrenal glands to unleash a flood of stress hormones into your bloodstream. These hormones, including cortisol and adrenaline, speed your reaction time, increase your strength and agility and hyperfocus your concentration.

When it's over, is it really over?

You may argue that once the initial stress-inducing event is over, you feel better. Normal, even. Maybe so. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Chronic stress takes a cumulative toll on your body. Here's how.

After you have faced a stressful situation, cortisol and adrenaline levels in your bloodstream decline. As a result, your heart rate and blood pressure return to normal and your digestion and metabolism resume a regular pace. But if stressful situations accumulate, one after another, your body has no chance to recover. This ongoing activation of the stress response system can disrupt all your body's processes, increasing your risk of obesity, digestive upsets, heart disease, insomnia and depression.

The Impact of Stress on the Body

- **Cardiovascular system** – High levels of cortisol can raise your heart rate, increase blood pressure and blood lipid levels. These are risk factors in heart attack and strokes.
- **Immune system** – Did you ever wonder why you appear to catch more colds and come down with other infections when you're stressed? Chronic stress tends to weaken your immune system making you more susceptible to whatever is "going around."
- **Nervous system** – If your flight-or fight response system never shuts down, stress hormones can produce constant feeling of helplessness, anxiety and impending doom.
- **Digestive system** – Is it any surprise that you you'll be stricken with a bout of diarrhea or a queasy stomach when you're under stress? This happens because stress hormones slow the release of stomach acid and the emptying of the stomach. The same hormones also stimulate the colon, which speeds the passage of its contents.

Self-Help Strategies

You can do many things to help alleviate or quell stress without medications or intervention, starting simply with breathing.

Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and try to answer this question. When was the last time you felt truly relaxed? What was happening in your life? Very likely you were in a quiet, comfortable place where there was no pressure to do anything, and you could sit back and enjoy the day. You felt peaceful and at one with the world. For most people, that's the definition of a vacation.

Think of it this way: Your body needs a vacation every day. Here are some ways to achieve that.

- **Deep Breathing** – When we are stressed, our breathing becomes shortened to the point that we can hyperventilate if we are faced with acute stress. Counter the natural instinct by deliberately taking four deep breaths every time you feel stressed. Slowly breathe in through your nose, hold it for five seconds and then release the air through your mouth.
- **Exercise** – Ongoing muscular tension goes hand in hand with chronic stress response. Counteract it by taking a brisk walk, playing a round of tennis, swimming a few laps. The goal is to keep your body limber and moving. For a more relaxing form of exercise, consider taking a yoga class or even tai chi.

Many gyms, community centers and adult night schools offer classes in this increasingly popular disciplines.

Set aside at least 10 minutes of your day to simply sit and be. It's easier said than done, yet the benefits are tremendous. Meditation practices are equally helpful in teaching people how to quiet their thoughts and totally relax.

Keeping Diaries and Journals

Some people find solace in the privacy of their journals or diaries. Studies have shown that writing about stressful events or even huge, traumatic experiences can help to alleviate the stress and even improve the immune system. Again, community colleges, adult night schools and sometimes even hospitals offer classes in "journaling" or therapeutic writing.

If you find that despite your best efforts to get a handle on things in your life, stress seems to be overtaking you, impeding you from living as you'd like to, making you feel chronically tired, or hopeless, a social worker may be able to help.

The goal of meeting with a skilled social worker would be to guide you to come up with a workable plan to help reduce or alleviate the stress in your life. This may entail psychotherapy to help you determine the source of the stress.

For further helpful information, visit these sites

- [National Women's Health Information Center](#)
- [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine \(NCCAM\)](#)



Managing Stress Triggers

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April 4, 2012

By **L.B. (LeslieBeth) Wish, Ed.D, MSS**

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Recognize Personal Stress Triggers and Symptoms
- ▶ Re-train the Brain
- ▶ Get Solution-Oriented
- ▶ Develop a Buddy System
- ▶ Minimize Self-Blame
- ▶ Be Realistic in Expectations for Change

Introduction

No one can avoid stress. In fact, it's a necessary part of life. Stress symptoms such as rapid heart beat, sweating and feeling fearful are basic survival reactions that signal people that they must become more alert and ready to act. In pre-historic times, the ability of a person to recognize and value these symptoms might determine whether he or she survived animal or enemy attacks.

At the opposite end of the scale of reactions, feeling tired and overwhelmed signals people that they must slow down, rest and select the most important tasks. Women hunter-gatherers often had to rest between foraging for food to save energy to breastfeed their young.

Today's modern warriors of home and workplace still have these hard-wired stress responses. Effective people know that stress management depends upon their ability to recognize their specific reactions and situations that trigger them.

Recognize Personal Stress Triggers and Symptoms

There are many ways to become more aware of stress triggers. What upsets one person may not upset another. For example, a song on the radio may bring back terrible memories for a person of ending an important relationship, but another person just hears the song without attaching any particular negative or positive feelings to it. Knowing personal

triggers is an essential part of feeling more in control of life. People who feel more in control of emotional reactions tend to be happier.

One way to learn about personal triggers and reactions is to keep a feeling and behavior diary. A person doesn't have to be a writer to keep one. Make sure to have a notebook or paper near the phone, computer or in a purse. Jot down the times when feelings occur of being "out of control" or "out of sorts" Look for typical stress reactions such as irritability, tiredness, insatiable hunger or dramatic drop in appetite, sleeplessness, increase in heart rate, increased perspiration or disinterest in previously fun activities. Put checkmarks next to the self-defeating behaviors—eating, spending, sleeping, yelling, criticizing, crying or using self-blame.

Then add the best guess as to what is triggering the reaction. Usually, people know what's bothering them. Common triggers include bill paying, misbehaving children, fights with one's partner, criticism from others, mistakes at work, too much work, illness or weight gain.

If a person doesn't have the time to write things down, use a small recording device to keep track of reactions. Another option is to say out loud or silently that an undesired over-reaction is occurring. Sometimes, just noticing it can calm down the stress.

Re-train the Brain

People can retrain their brains to interrupt impairing stress reactions. When stressed out feelings and behaviors occur, try saying out loud the following sentences—or find more personalized ones:

- I don't have to be perfect.
- I don't have to come up with all the answers.
- It's not personal.
- I am not a bad person.
- I can handle this—one step at a time.
- Stress reactions can be good—they are warnings to pay attention.

Get Solution-Oriented

It doesn't do much good to complain or blame one's self. Now is the time for action. Pretend that the problem and reaction to it are happening to someone else. Think about suggestions and sound advice to give that imaginary person. Removing one's self slightly from the situation can allow for an easier flow of solutions.

To curb jolts of appetite increases, WAIT. Don't grab that food. Have a glass of water or a cup of herbal tea instead. Often, hunger pangs are signs of thirst. Cravings are common in everyone, but they can be tricked into going away by toughing out the fifteen or twenty minutes the cravings need to subside. Concentrating on preparing herbal tea is an excellent distraction. Also, leave the kitchen or grocery store and substitute something better such as calling a friend, watching a favorite show, playing with the children in the family.

For anger outbursts and high frustration, take a breath and leave the room. Try to break down into small, small steps what has to be done so that feelings of helplessness or being overwhelmed don't take over.

Say out loud again those personalized brain-wire change sentences.

Develop a Buddy System

Recruit a friend to help. Make a buddy system with a good friend, spouse or other family member. Agree to call each other whenever stress increases. Research indicates that buddy systems are social networks of support that work. They make people feel less alone and accepted.

Minimize Self-Blame

Forgive setbacks. Everyone makes mistakes and has regrets. Just go forward, concentrate on solutions and be proud of getting pro-active. It is never too late for positive change. Use personal statements said out loud to counter the tendency to be self-critical.

Be Realistic in Expectations for Change

Keep a longer time horizon for success in reducing major stress reactions. For example, eating when anxious, lonely, sad or mad is a common stress behavior. However, losing weight and changing one's old methods of managing uncomfortable feelings cannot change in a few weeks. Think, instead, in terms of seasons.

It's never too late to be brave, face stresses and take charge.

The ABCs of Stress

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July 6, 2005

By **Bette J. Freedson, LCSW, LICSW**

What Makes Situations Stressful?

Stress is a normal part of life. It can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry or anxious. And what is stressful to one person is not necessarily stressful to another.

In small doses, stress can be good because it may motivate you to be more productive. However too much stress is bad. Prolonged stress can leave you vulnerable to physical and psychological **illnesses**. Persistent and unrelenting stress may lead to anxiety (a feeling of apprehension or fear and unhealthy behaviors, like overeating and abuse of alcohol or drugs). What follows is a more detailed description of the "ABCs" of stress and how social workers help their clients deal effectively with stress.

A ?The Activating Event

The activating event is whatever happens that gets your stress going. It could be called the AGGRAVATING event because it almost always is something that disturbs you in some way. The activating/aggravating event can be something that happens in your life, something that you worry might happen.

Activating/aggravating events lead you to think and feel uncomfortable, and can cause you to have negative thoughts and feelings. If you do not deal with these negative thoughts and feelings, you are unlikely to resolve them, and as a result may end up feeling bad about yourself.

B ?The Beliefs

When an activating/aggravating event occurs, you will have reactive thoughts and feelings, even if you do not think you do. There is a possibility that during difficult situations your thoughts will be negative, bringing up unpleasant emotions, such as frustration, disappointment, anger, rage, or fear. If you are unaware of having these feelings, you may act out your feelings in negative ways, rather than dealing with them effectively and solving problems that they may cause.

Our thoughts and feelings operate in a circular way, in which feelings lead to thoughts and thoughts lead to feelings. The thoughts we have about a situation will be based on the beliefs we carry from our families and other life experiences we have had.

C?The Consequences and D ?The Decisions

Thoughts and feelings lead you to make decisions about how to behave and cope in situations. When decisions are made from frustration, anger, resentment, or fear, the decisions may lead to undesirable consequences (for the situation or for yourself.) Awareness of what you are thinking and feeling based on conscious knowledge of your beliefs is your best friend for making good coping decisions that will bring positive consequences for all concerned, including increased self-esteem for you.

How Social Workers Help

Social workers help their clients to deal with stress by:

- Helping people identify internal and external sources of stress
- Helping people identify the coping resources they usually use in stressful situations, and evaluating the effectiveness of their existing methods
- Helping people understand how stress affects the body and the mind, and what the results of untreated long-term stress can be on both mental and physical health.
- Teaching people relaxation and meditation techniques that help to reduce stress.
- Teaching people the role of thinking and emotions in stress reduction, and helping them think through coping with stressful situations in a more productive way.
- Helping people develop more effective and healthy coping mechanisms, which then can become automatic parts of their response patterns to stress.

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Association of Social Workers or its members.

Forgiving Ourselves and Others: An Essential Part of Good Stress Management

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January 22, 2007

By **Julie Niven, MSW, LCSW, DCSW**

- ▶ Mistakes Are Inevitable
- ▶ Forgiving Ourselves
- ▶ Forgiving Others
- ▶ Emotional and Intellectual
- ▶ Writing a Letter Never Intended for the Post Office
- ▶ Prayer
- ▶ Self-Talk
- ▶ Serving Others
- ▶ Exercising, Eating Right, Getting Enough Rest, and Breathing
- ▶ Seeking Help Elsewhere
- ▶ The Bottom Line?

Mistakes Are Inevitable

“To err is human, to forgive divine.” A statement so simple, yet so profound. We all know how easy it is to make mistakes and mistakes can be very helpful if we learn from them. Indeed learning from our mistakes is a big part of shaping the life we want. We can’t always know what we want and get it right the first time. Sometimes we have to experience some “whoops!” along the way and use what we learn from our mistakes to correct the direction of our lives – similar to the way a sailor might adjust the sails on his or her ship when it gets off course.

Albert Einstein once said, “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” Even if we are doing the same thing over and over again, we are bound to mess up once in a while. Mistakes are inevitable. Forgiveness of ourselves and others when we make mistakes is a choice we must make actively. Making the choice to forgive frees our minds and hearts and relieves stress in our lives.

Forgiving Ourselves

So, it is easy to make mistakes, but is forgiving them easy? Not always! How many of us treat our family, friends, even our pets better than we treat ourselves? Would you treat yourself better if you thought of yourself as your best friend? This is

a good way to deal with yourself when you've made a mistake you are angry about or ashamed of making. Treat yourself as you would treat your best friend in a similar situation. Would you jump on your best friend with both feet and further humiliate him or her with shaming words after he or she made a mistake, or would you speak kindly and offer some encouragement? It's not helpful to turn on ourselves and become our own worse enemy when we make mistakes. Berating ourselves and beating ourselves up only creates added stress in an already stressful situation.

Forgiving Others

Perhaps we find it easy to forgive ourselves, but next to impossible to forgive others. Some people vow never to forgive an insult received in anger, a slight delivered out of forgetfulness, or a hurt borne out of a misunderstanding. However, holding onto anger and hurt can keep us from the peace and happiness forgiveness can bring. Focusing on the negative can block out the endless positive possibilities in daily life. Forgiveness can reset our mental focus.

Emotional and Intellectual

Forgiveness is both an intellectual and emotional action. Sometimes we decide that we want to forgive something that's been done to us, but our hearts won't or can't let go of whatever's bothering us. Holding onto anger and being unable to forgive can cause physical as well as psychological pain. Practicing forgiveness has been linked to lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, and lower levels of stress hormones in our bloodstream. Emotions truly have a physical component to them. Not being able or willing to forgive has been linked to depression, chronic anger, anxiety and guilt. When we are unable to forgive, we may feel out of balance. Perhaps our sleep is disrupted or our head, shoulders, and back feel achy.

Writing a Letter Never Intended for the Post Office

One way to work towards forgiveness is to talk out our feelings. This does not have to be done out loud. Writing a letter that we never intend to mail can provide a safe avenue through which to express feelings of sadness, anger, grief, and shame that we may not want to share with even our closest friend. Writing our thoughts down freely, knowing that we will not be judged for what we write is a cleansing exercise. Whether we are the one who made the mistake and now feels bad about it, or the one who is suffering someone else's mistake, writing out our feelings can help clear a path to forgiveness for us.

Prayer

All spiritual teachings have within them the principal of forgiveness and its importance in our lives. In the Christian New Testament, forgiveness is seen as an obligation and something to be repeated again and again. In Buddhism, forgiveness is a necessary action to prevent harmful emotions from causing mental disturbance. In Islam, forgiveness is combination of Allah's grace and the believer's good works. In Judaism, forgiveness is mandated if someone sincerely apologizes for his or her transgression. In Hinduism, the ability to forgive is viewed as a personal strength. Most of us are familiar with The Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." This prayer can be helpful when we wish to forgive ourselves or others. It can be posted somewhere that we will see it, spoken aloud, or chanted silently. And the word "God" at the beginning of the prayer can be replaced with whatever we call our Higher Power.

Self-Talk

Sometimes when we are upset, our minds fasten on the pain we feel, and we lose focus on other important things going on in our lives. Ruminating on painful thoughts is very stressful and can rob us of new joy. When we find ourselves going over the same thing in our minds again and again, it can be helpful to practice a simple thought-stopping technique. Tell yourself (silently or out loud) "I'm not going to think about (whatever the problem is) anymore today." This technique takes practice to perfect. Repeating it every time the unwanted thought comes into our minds can bring us relief and help us on our journey towards forgiveness.

Serving Others

Sometimes when we are feeling stressed, we can refocus our attention and feel better by helping someone in need. Serving others can provide a shift in our thinking and give us respite from internal hurts. We give ourselves a gift of sorts when we reach out to help another. It's harder to focus on anger and sadness when we are feeling good about ourselves for something we did to make someone else's life a little easier. Small acts of kindness are stress relievers and can aid us in our forgiveness work.

Exercising, Eating Right, Getting Enough Rest, and Breathing

It is always important to exercise, eat right and get enough rest. When we are under stress it is even more important. Stress takes a toll on our immune system. Making the extra effort to take care of ourselves helps us fight off illness and keeps our thought processes from bogging down. When we are stressed, we tend to breath shallowly. Directing our minds to focus on breathing deeply can help us live healthier, calm lives.

Seeking Help Elsewhere

These are only a few suggestions to help in our forgiveness of ourselves and others. Seek other answers elsewhere – from friends, family, a spiritual leader, advisor, books, lectures, etc. Give yourself time to work through difficult emotions and be gentle with yourself.

The Bottom Line?

Forgiveness is a gift we can give ourselves as well as others. Just as our anger and hurt only enslave the one who feels them, releasing these emotions frees each of us to move forward more happily. Forgiving ourselves and others is worth the effort it takes to do so and can reduce overall stress in our lives.

BETCHA You Can Become a Stress Conquering Mom

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July 10, 2009

By **Bette J. Freedson, LCSW, LICSW**

Introduction

The **BETCHA** process (**B**reath, **E**valuate, **T**hink, **C**hoose, **H**eart Approach, and **A**ct Appropriately) can help you gain confidence in your coping know-how. The more you practice, the more automatically you will be able to apply the six BETCHA steps to reduce stress during difficult and problematic situations that arise in the life of a mom.

Six Quick Tips for Calming Mom and Coping With Kids

Build a foundation of coping skills that will reduce parenting stress and increase Peace of Mind.

Tip #1 –BREATHE

Your breath is the pathway to healing your body, calming your mind, conquering your stress and coping with your kids. Conscious breathing improves focus and concentration, allowing access to inner wisdom and intuition when you encounter a stressful situation. When your mind is calm, you can make more effective coping decisions. When you feel stressed, start by taking one or two deep breaths—comfortably, not necessarily 100% full. Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth slowly. Feel your abdomen rise and fall as you breathe in and out. Feel where the relaxation starts in your body and allow it to spread, continuing to breathe normally and comfortably. When you want to deepen the calm feeling, you can try another deep breath.

Accompany your breathing with this affirmation:

Every time I breathe in I heal my body. Each time I breathe out I calm my mind.

I am able to know the best decisions to make for my children and myself.

Tip #2–EVALUATE

Now that you are calm, you can focus more clearly on the situation at hand. Pay attention to your thoughts and emotions. Ask yourself these questions: What am I thinking and feeling about these circumstances. How do I usually cope when I am stressed? Take a moment to evaluate how your typical coping strategies have worked in the past. How do you think they might work now? Are there other supports or skills you need?

Tip #3–THINK

Next take time to think about the facts of the situation. Sometimes things are happening fast, especially when kids are involved. Practicing thinking about what is going on will become more automatic over time. As you think, continue to notice your thoughts and feelings. Your awareness will help you to know what to do. Think about some coping options. Is this a situation similar to something you have handled successfully before? Think clearly about what you want to accomplish. Intentions and motivations play an important role in making choices. Your intuition is a part of your thinking process too. Gut feelings can help you recognize your intentions and select a strategy.

Tip #4–CHOOSE

When you have evaluated what is going on, have paid attention to your thoughts and feelings; have thought about your options, and have used your intuition to recognize what you want to accomplish, you are ready to choose a coping strategy. Matching motivation to strategy gives greater potential for an effective outcome.

Tip #5–“HEART” APPROACH

Notice ideas that seem to come from an inner sense of knowing what is right. This is the “heart approach.” Including your “heart” or “gut feeling” when thinking about how to handle a stressful situation helps you transcend negative emotions and choose wisely. This is particularly important when the kids are driving you mad. Using the “heart approach” along with factual evaluation of the situation will prepare you for the most effective action.

To access Heart try this affirmation:

I am able to stay centered and in touch with the higher good of my children and myself.

Tip #6–ACT APPROPRIATELY

If you have calmed yourself with some good breaths; have taken time to think; have evaluated the situation; have added the centering influence of your heart; and are clear about your feelings and intentions, you are now prepared to take appropriate action.

As you get more familiar with them you will find them readily available. You can use them in any order that is most helpful. Trust that the BETCHA steps will take you into new territory of learning to live life calmly and wisely, and find more effectiveness and satisfaction in being a stress-conquering Mom!



Stress Management Resources

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June 28, 2005

Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was created within the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1989, in response to a Congressional mandate to address the needs of veterans with military-related PTSD. Its mission was, and remains: To advance the clinical care and social welfare of America's veterans through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and stress-related disorders. This website is provided as an educational resource concerning PTSD and other enduring consequences of traumatic stress.

www.ncptsd.va.gov

National Institutes of Health Medline Plus

MedlinePlus, is a resource of health information from the world's largest medical library, the National Library of Medicine. Health professionals and consumers alike can depend on it for information that is authoritative and up to date. MedlinePlus has extensive information from the National Institutes of Health and other trusted sources on over 700 diseases and conditions. There are also lists of hospitals and physicians, a medical encyclopedia and a medical

dictionary, health information in Spanish, extensive information on prescription and nonprescription drugs, health information from the media, and links to thousands of clinical trials.

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stress.html>

National Mental Health Association

The National Mental Health Association is the country's oldest and largest nonprofit organization addressing all aspects of mental health and mental illness. With more than 340 affiliates nationwide, NMHA works to improve the mental health of all Americans, especially the 54 million people with mental disorders, through advocacy, education, research and service.

www.nmha.org