United State Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Inspection Service

Employee Wellness Training Workbook

Food Safety and Inspection Service

Wellness Training Program

Job Aid One: Exercises for the Low Back

Improving flexibility and strength increases mobility in the back. The following nine exercises increase both flexibility and strength in the back. Exercise to the point of tension, not pain, and remember to warm up. (A warm-up period consists of walking and light general exercises designed to stimulate the muscles, heart, and lungs.)

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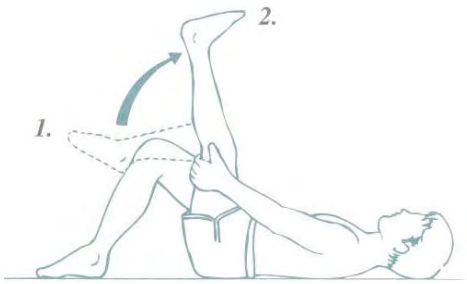
1. Gluteus maximus stretch (on ground)

2. Hamstring stretch (on ground)



- Lie with feet flat on the floor
- Gently bring one knee to chest **(1)**
- Hold for 10-15 seconds
- Press heel toward the ceiling until a gentle stretch is felt **(2)**
- Hold for 10-15 seconds
- Repeat with other leg

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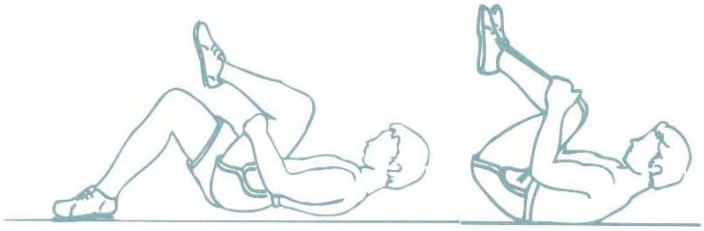
3. Lower back stretch (on ground)

- Lie with feet flat on the floor
- Gently bring one knee to chest
- Hold for 10-15 seconds
- Repeat with other leg
- Repeat with both legs



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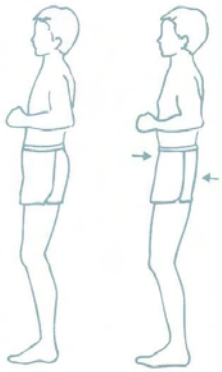
4. Pelvic tilts (on ground)

- Lie with feet flat on the floor
- Contract abdominal muscles, pushing back to the floor
- Hold for 3-5 seconds
- Repeat 8-10 times

5. Standing pelvic tilts

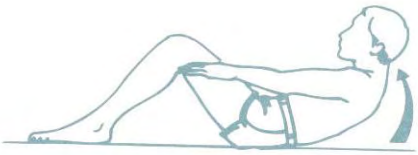


- Stand with feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent
- Contract the abdominal muscles, tilting the hips forward slightly

NOTE: This exercise is good to do while working.

6. Abdominal crunches

- Lie with feet flat on the floor
- Raise shoulders off the floor by contracting abdominal muscles (keeping lower back on floor)
- Begin with one set of 8-10 repetitions

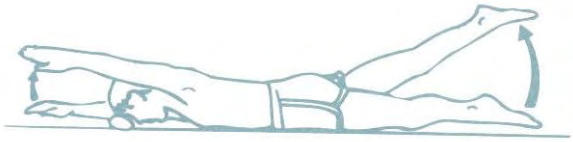


7. Shoulder lifts (prone position)

- Lie face down with hands on chest
- Keep head in line with spine by keeping eyes down
- Lift shoulders off ground
- Hold for count of 5
- Repeat 5 times

8. Opposite leg opposite arm (prone)

- Lie face down with hands above head (a pillow may be placed under the forehead)
- Lift opposite leg and arm at the same time (keeping head down)
- Hold for count of 5
- Repeat 5 times



9. Calf-flexor stretches (standing, against wall)

- Place hands on the wall at shoulder height
- Bring one foot behind the other, keeping feet in the same direction
- Maintain straight line from back heel to top of head
- Hold for 10-15 seconds
- Repeat with other leg

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Job Aid Two: Exercises for Strengthening Joints and Tendons

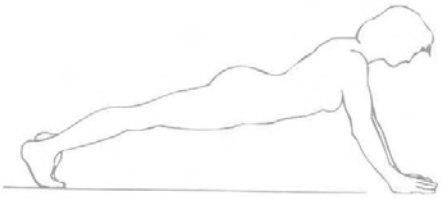
Each set of exercises should be performed daily. They may be repeated as often as you like, but not to the point of fatigue. A total of three to five minutes of exercise, repeating each set two to three times, would be a good goal for which to strive.

Pushups

Pushups are one of the easiest ways to increase strength in the upper body. The pushups can be modified to avoid wrist deviations by performing standing fingertip pushups on the wall.

For those with strong backs:

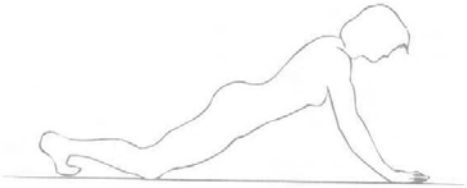
- Place hands shoulder width apart
- Keeping back straight (not sagging), bring body to four inches from floor
- Return to starting position
- Begin with one set of 8-10 repetitions



For those with weak backs:

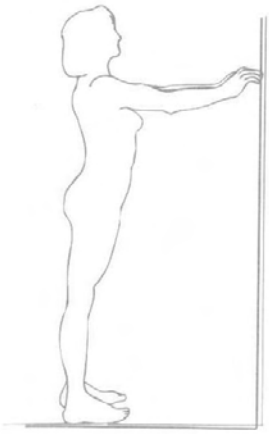
- Perform the exercise as stated above, but place knees on floor

  NOTE: Padding should be placed under the knees to avoid injury.



For beginners or those with weak wrists:

- Stand arm's length away from a wall placing fingertips on surface
- Press the body toward the wall
- Return to the starting position
- Begin with one set of 8-10 repetitions



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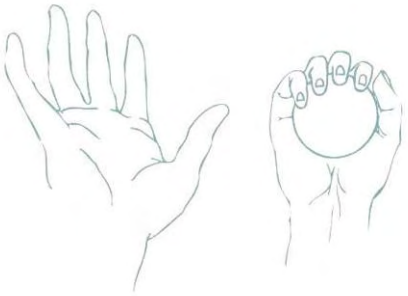
To strengthen the forearm, the following exercises can be performed:

Hand Squeezes

- Place tennis ball in palm of hand
- Gently squeeze the ball, contracting muscles of forearm
- Repeat 8-10 times
- Repeat with other hand



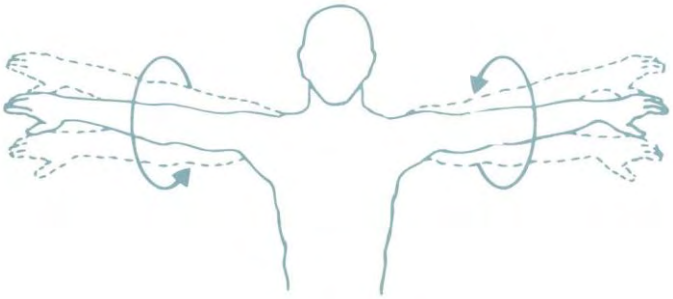
Wrist Curls

- Make a fist
- Slowly flex and extend wrists
- Perform 8-10 times

While at work, change positions frequently. During breaks, you can relieve stress in the muscles by performing these simple stretching exercises: **(The pelvic tilt exercise from Job Aid One is also good to do during breaks.)**

Range of Motion Exercises

- **Stand in a pelvic tilt**
- Raise arms to the side
- Slowly circle arms forward
- Repeat 8-10 times
- Repeat, circling arms backward



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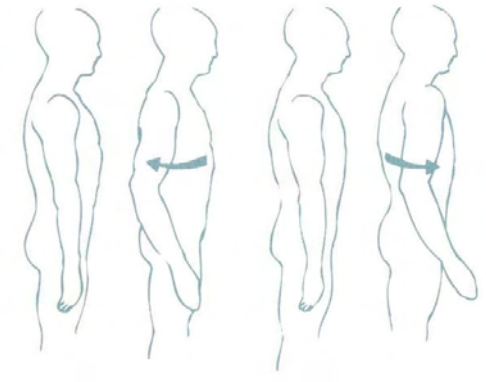
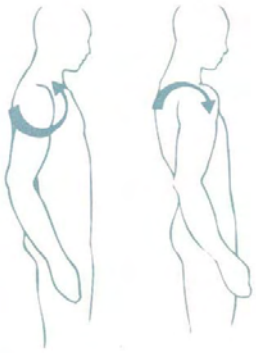
Shoulder Presses

- **Stand in a pelvic tilt**
- Slowly press shoulders backward
- Slowly press shoulders forward
- Repeat 8-10 times



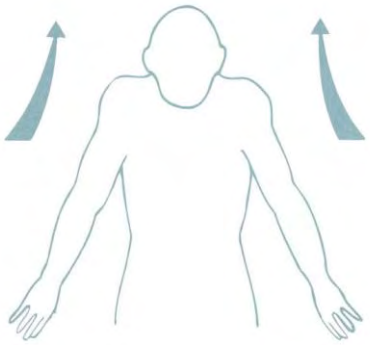
Shoulder Rolls

- **Stand in a pelvic tilt**
- Slowly roll shoulders backward 8-10 times
- Repeat in the forward position



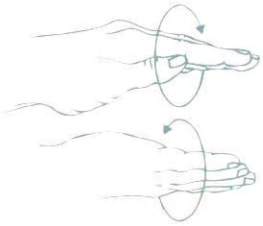
Shoulder Shrugs

- **Stand in a pelvic tilt**
- Slowly bring shoulders toward ears in a shrugging motion
- Slowly return to starting position
- Repeat 8-10 times



Wrist Curls

- Circle hands at the wrist 8-10 times
- Repeat in other direction



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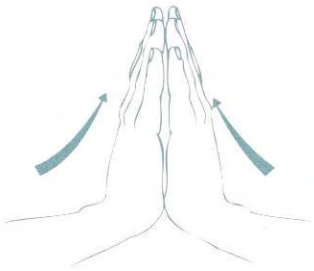
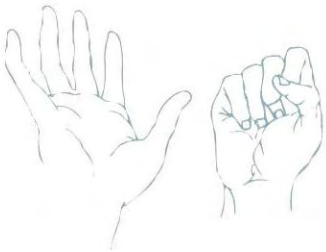
Prayer Stretches

- Place hands together in a prayer position
- Gently press hands together
- Hold for 3-5 seconds
- Repeat 5 times



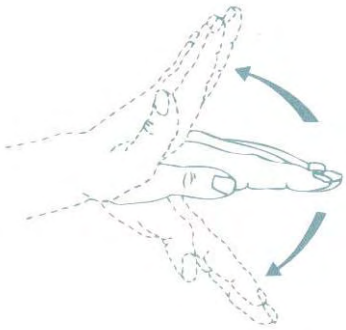
Opening and Closing Fingers

- Gently extend fingers
- Return hand to closed position
- Repeat 8-10 times



Flexing and Extending Wrists

- With hands in neutral position, slowly flex and extend wrist
- Repeat 8-10 times



Job performance and physical exercise may stress the same muscles and joints. Therefore, the combined effects of work, home, and play contribute to Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs). Take the same precautions when performing physical exercise as you do in performing your job.

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Worksheet One: Identifying Stress Triggers

Instructions:
The following is a list of stress triggers. Print out this worksheet and then place a check mark by any event that you regularly experience or have experienced in the last year. Please add any other stress triggers that you experience at the end of each section.

Daily Hassles

- ❑ Confined to one area
- ❑ Break time delayed or inconsistent
- ❑ Equipment breakdown
- ❑ Unpredictable overtime
- ❑ Short staffed/double coverage
- ❑ Poor presentation of product (e.g., "bad birds")
- ❑ Disagreement with Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO), coworker, or plant employee
- ❑ Oversleeping
- ❑ Traffic jam
- ❑ Other(s) _____

Major Events

- ❑ Being transferred to a new job site
- ❑ Divorcing or breaking up
- ❑ Getting married
- ❑ Going away to FSIS training
- ❑ Receiving the diagnosis of a serious medical disorder (e.g., Cumulative Trauma Disorder)
- ❑ Being laid off or fired
- ❑ Promotion
- ❑ Having a baby

(*Major Events continued)*

- ❑ Having surgery
- ❑ Accident at work (e.g., a bad cut or fall)
- ❑ Other(s) _____

Ongoing Pressures

- ❑ Having to defend decisions to condemn product
- ❑ Protecting the public
- ❑ Chronic illness (e.g., Carpal Tunnel Syndrome)
- ❑ Temperature extremes at work
- ❑ Line speed
- ❑ Repetition
- ❑ Tension with plant management
- ❑ Money worries
- ❑ Poor relationship with family member or friend
- ❑ Alcoholism or drug addiction
- ❑ Other(s) _____

Look back over the stress trigger items you checked. Can you find any pattern or discover any insights about what stresses you? Are your checkmarks spread around or concentrated in one category? Are they work-related or more personal in nature?

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Worksheet Three: Identifying Your Stress Signature

Instructions:
The following is a list of stress exhaustion symptoms. Print out this worksheet and then place a check mark by any symptom you have experienced in the past **three months.** Mark accurate selections from this list to identify your **Stress Signature.**

Physical

- ❑ Elevated blood pressure
- ❑ Increased muscle tension
- ❑ Elevated pulse and breathing
- ❑ Moist or sweaty palms
- ❑ Cold hands or feet
- ❑ Upset stomach
- ❑ Ulcers
- ❑ Increased frequency of urination
- ❑ Irritable bowels
- ❑ Diarrhea
- ❑ Constipation
- ❑ Jaw tension
- ❑ Muscle spasms
- ❑ Muscle tics, tremors
- ❑ Back pain
- ❑ Heart pounding
- ❑ Weight change, up or down
- ❑ Hyperventilation
- ❑ Increased illness
- ❑ Increased clumsiness
- ❑ Dry mouth
- ❑ Skin rash
- ❑ Laryngitis
- ❑ Blurred vision
- ❑ Overeating or undereating
- ❑ Appetite change
- ❑ Headaches
- ❑ Fatigue
- ❑ Insomnia
- ❑ Colds
- ❑ Digestive problems
- ❑ Accident-proneness
- ❑ Teeth grinding
- ❑ Restlessness
- ❑ Foot tapping
- ❑ Finger drumming
- ❑ Increased drug, alcohol, or tobacco use
- ❑ Other _____

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Mental

- ❑ Increased mistakes
- ❑ Poor judgment
- ❑ Excessive daydreaming
- ❑ Reduced creativity
- ❑ Loss of interest
- ❑ Easily excitable
- ❑ Cynicism
- ❑ Forgetfulness
- ❑ Dulled senses
- ❑ Low productivity
- ❑ Negative attitude
- ❑ Confusion
- ❑ Lethargy
- ❑ Whirling mind
- ❑ No new ideas
- ❑ Boredom
- ❑ Spacing out
- ❑ Negative self-talk
- ❑ Poor concentration
- ❑ Other _____

Emotional

- ❑ Withdrawal from close relationships
- ❑ Emotional outbursts
- ❑ Excessive hostility, anger, or resentment
- ❑ Phobias
- ❑ Excessive fears
- ❑ Obsessions (unwanted thoughts)
- ❑ Chronic low self-esteem
- ❑ Feeling guilty
- ❑ Anxiety
- ❑ Frustration
- ❑ "The blues"
- ❑ Mood swings
- ❑ Bad temper
- ❑ Nightmares
- ❑ Crying spells
- ❑ Irritability
- ❑ The feeling that no one cares
- ❑ Depression
- ❑ Nervous laughter
- ❑ Worrying
- ❑ Easily discouraged
- ❑ Little joy
- ❑ Other _____

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Relational

- ❑ Excessive blaming of others
- ❑ Snapping at others
- ❑ Isolation
- ❑ Intolerance
- ❑ Resentment
- ❑ Loneliness
- ❑ Lashing out
- ❑ Hiding
- ❑ Clamming up
- ❑ Lowered sex drive
- ❑ Nagging
- ❑ Distrust
- ❑ Lack of intimacy
- ❑ Using people
- ❑ Fewer contacts with friends
- ❑ Other _____

Behavioral

- ❑ Trying to do several things at once
- ❑ Talking very fast
- ❑ Watching more television
- ❑ Smoking more cigarettes
- ❑ Drinking more alcohol
- ❑ Taking tranquilizers
- ❑ Other _____

Spiritual

- ❑ Emptiness
- ❑ Loss of meaning
- ❑ Doubt
- ❑ Unforgiving
- ❑ Self-inflicted martyrdom
- ❑ Looking for magic solutions
- ❑ Loss of direction
- ❑ Apathy
- ❑ Needing to prove self-worth
- ❑ Other _____

Look back over your checklist. Are there any patterns evident in the types of symptoms you are experiencing? Are the checkmarks distributed evenly among the six categories, or do they collect in specific areas? Are there any surprises? Confirmations?

Your selections from the stress exhaustion symptoms mentioned in this module identify your stress signature. Your individual reactions to prolonged stress can be changed to increase your stress resistance. Module VI addresses this topic.

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Module IV: Personal Review

1. In reviewing my responses to the checklist on Worksheet One, "Identifying Stress Triggers," I discovered that most of my responses fell in which area?

   ❑ Daily Hassles ❑ Major Events ❑ Ongoing Pressures

2. My "Stress Signature," as indicated by my responses on Worksheet Two, "Identifying Your Stress Signature," suggests that I am more prone to problems in which of these areas?

   ❑ Physical ❑ Mental ❑ Emotional

   ❑ Spiritual ❑ Behavioral ❑ Relational

3. My physical symptom that concerns me most is _____.

4. After completing Module IV, the following effects of stress in my life are a major concern:

   A. _____

   B. _____

   C. _____

5. According to my Holmes-Rahe Life Event score, I have a _____ percent chance of having a negative health change within the next year.

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Worksheet Six: Identify Your Current Job Stressors

Instructions:
Print out this worksheet and then take two or three minutes to make a list of current job stressors that you feel comfortable sharing in a discussion with your coworkers.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Share your list with your coworkers. Take a couple of minutes to discuss the items on your list. Choose one stressor that you have in common and one that is unique to each member.

_____ Common Stressor

_____ Unique Stressor

Discuss the differences and commonalties in the stressors that you and your fellow coworkers experience at work.

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Worksheet Seven: Identify Coping Techniques for Your Job Stressors

Instructions:
Print out this worksheet and then list three to five examples of coping techniques you use (such as drinking a cup of coffee, exercising, or taking a hot bath).

_____

_____

_____

_____

After spending a couple of minutes to make your list, ask a fellow coworker what coping techniques he/she uses to deal with stress. Compare the things each of you do to help cope with job stress. Discuss the things you have in common and the things that are unique to each of you for a few minutes.

_____ Common coper

_____ Unique coper

After discussing with your coworker, discuss coping strategies with other coworkers in your area to discover the coping techniques and strategies that are common and unique among your group.

This Wellness training program will further these coping ideas by giving you opportunities to learn new relaxation techniques and other stress reduction coping strategies.

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Module V: Personal Review

1. According to your score on "Worksheet Four: Identify Your Symptoms of Job Stress," you

   ❑ are probably coping adequately with the stress of your job

   ❑ are suffering from job stress

   ❑ need to take preventive action to avoid job burnout

   ❑ are burning out and must develop a comprehensive job stress management plan

2. List the categories in which you scored 12 points or more on "Worksheet Five: Identify the Sources of Your Job Stress."

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. After completing "Worksheet Six: Identify Your Current Job Stressors," list the job stressor you had in common with most people in your group.

   _____

4. List a job stressor that you had that was unique to you within your group.

   _____

5. After completing "Worksheet Seven: Identify Coping Techniques for Your Job Stressors," list a coping technique that was a new idea to you.

   _____

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Job Aid Three: Deep Breathing

When you are under stress, your muscles tense and your breathing tends to become shallow and rapid. One of the simplest and best ways to stop this stress response is to breathe deeply and slowly. It sounds simple, and it is. Deep breathing is a good foundation for other techniques and you can use it anytime, anywhere.

Deep Breathing Exercise

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, without crossed legs or arms.
- Place your hands on your stomach.
- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose as though you are breathing into your stomach. Hold your breath for just a second or two.
- Let the air escape through your lips in a controlled, even manner.
- Do this deep breathing for two minutes or more, each time. When first learning how to use deep breathing, you may find it helpful to keep your eyes closed while you are doing it.

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Job Aid Four: Stretching Exercises

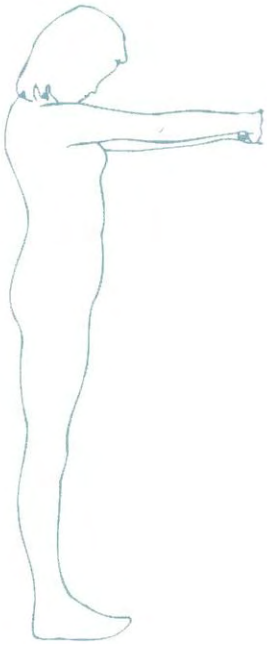
A variety of stretching exercises can help your body to relax. Here are three simple ones:

Neck Stretch

- Stretch your neck by gently rolling your head in a half circle starting at one side.
- Drop your chin to your chest.
- Roll your head in a half circle to the other side.
- Repeat two or three times, gently rolling.

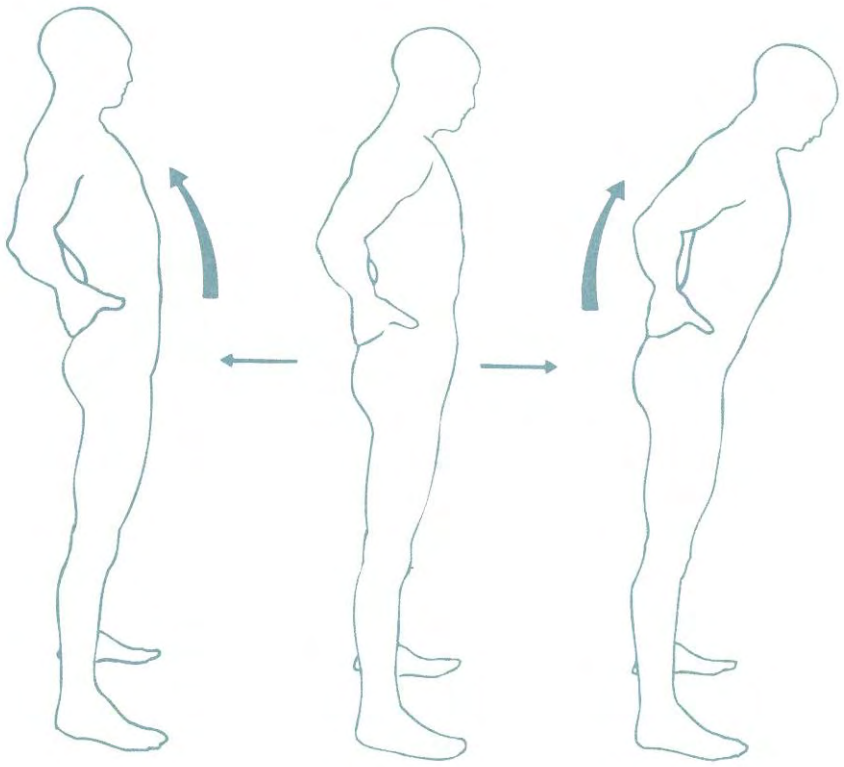
Shoulder Stretch

- Extend your arms in front of you at shoulder height and interlace your fingers.
- Turn your palms outward.
- Lower your chin to your chest and extend your arms forward.
- Hold for 10 to 20 seconds.
- Repeat two more times.



Back Bend

- Stand and place your palms on your lower back.
- Slowly lean your upper body back without overextending your neck and hold for five seconds.
- Slowly lean forward until you feel your lower back muscles stretch. Hold for five seconds.
- Repeat these steps twice.



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Job Aid Five: Visualization

Visualization uses your imagination to help you take a mental vacation away from your current situation.

Visualization Exercise

- Sit down in a relaxed position with your eyes closed.
- Breathe in through your nose, hold for a couple of seconds, breathe out through your mouth, and repeat this several times.
- Picture yourself in a favorite setting. It can be a real place or an imaginary place where you have never been before. (An example would be seeing yourself on a deserted island beach.)
- Through the use of your imagination, use all your various senses to experience the place where you are. (For example, on a deserted beach, hear the waves as they crash in on the beach. Feel the sun on your face. Hear the seagulls calling off in the distance. Feel the wind rustle your hair. Dig your toes into the warm sand. Smell the sea salt in the air.)
- Imagine that you are alone and undisturbed in this peaceful place. Experience the feelings of calm, peace, and relaxation.
- Continue breathing in through your nose, hold for a few seconds, and breathe out through your mouth.
- Open your eyes and take with you, for the rest of the day, the feelings of refreshment and relaxation.

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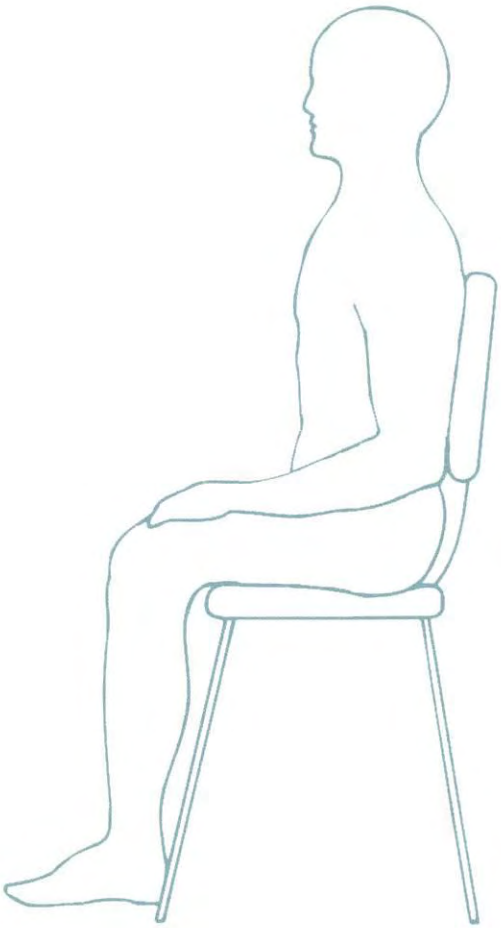
Job Aid Six: Autogenics

Autogenics uses mental suggestions to create physical symptoms that help your body to relax. By telling yourself that you feel warm and heavy, you help your body to create a relaxation response. Your body learns to follow the suggestions of your thoughts.

Autogenics Exercise

- Sit comfortably without crossing your arms or legs. Loosen any tight clothing. Close your eyes and try to clear your mind.
- Mentally focus on your right arm, repeating to yourself in your mind, "my right arm feels warm and heavy," until your arm feels warmer and heavier.
- Repeat this same suggestion with different parts of the rest of your body, until you feel completely relaxed.



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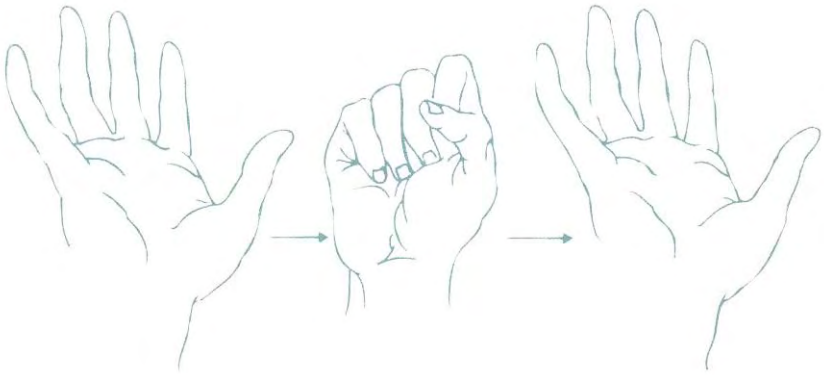
Job Aid Seven: Progressive Relaxation

Progressive Relaxation, a powerful relaxation technique, is based on the premise of teaching the different parts of your body how to tell the difference between the sensation of being tense and the sensation of being relaxed. Progressive relaxation is a process of tightening and releasing separate muscle groups.

Progressive Relaxation Exercise

- Tighten your hand muscles by making a fist. Feel the tension in your hand. Hold this position for a few seconds.
- Relax your fist, letting the tension melt away. Your hand may feel almost like it could float. Your forearm may also feel lighter.
- Note the difference between the tensed and relaxed states.
- Repeat these steps with each muscle group in your body; you can start with your arms, face, neck, back, chest, stomach, legs, and feet.



The above techniques can be used at work during a 10-minute break or during down time. They require no special equipment and can be done in less than 10 minutes.

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Worksheet Eight: Positive Self-Talk Exercise

Instructions:
Print out this worksheet and then write two or three things you would like to happen in Column One. In Column Two, write your self-talk response to those things. In Column Three, after you have completed step two, write down a thought that is the opposite of the one in Column Two.

Things I Would Like To Happen	My Self-Talk	Opposite My Self-Talk

Compare the columns. Which column is negative and which is positive? If Column Two is more positive than Column Three, you are already on your way to thinking positively. If Column Two is more negative, look at Column Three for a helpful, healthier response.

Practice choosing positive self-talk and you will feel happier, more confident, and less stressed.

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Worksheet Nine: Controlling Stressors Exercise

Instructions:
Print out this worksheet and make a list of stressors in your life that you can possibly control in Column One. (These might be daily hassles, ongoing problems, or more rarely, major events in your life.) In Column Two, list the stressors in your life that you cannot control at all.

Stressors Under My Control (Courage)	Stressors Beyond My Control (Serenity)

Now review the stressors in Column Two. Are there any items in this column that may seem, at first glance, to be beyond your control? If you find new ways of looking at these stressors and make some changes in your life, you may be able to move them into Column One.

If the stressors in Column Two truly are out of your control, acknowledge that you can do nothing about these stressors, and turn your attention to the stressors in your life that you *can* control.

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Worksheet Twelve: Priority Balance Sheet

Instructions:
Print out this worksheet and then use the key below to decide whether you are making a low, moderate, or high energy commitment to the major priorities of your life. After completing all the items in the first column, proceed to the "Level of Importance" column, and decide whether you want to make each item a low, moderate, or high priority. Your priorities may change between the Energy Spent Now and the Level of Importance that you assign to each of life's major priorities.

KEY: Low (L) Moderate (M) High (H)

Major Priorities	Energy Spent Now	Level of Importance
Exercise	_____	_____
Nutrition	_____	_____
Family	_____	_____
Friends	_____	_____
Significant other/Spouse	_____	_____
Time alone	_____	_____
Recreation	_____	_____
Hobbies	_____	_____
Work	_____	_____
Community involvement	_____	_____
Spiritual involvement	_____	_____
Other(s)	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Were you surprised to find that some of the major priorities in your life do not get very much of your energy? Does this give you any ideas about things that you want to change in your life? Many times the "squeaky wheel gets the grease," even when it is a low priority item.

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Worksheet Thirteen: Design a Personal Stress Management Program

Instructions:
Hopefully, you are already doing some things that help make you stress resistant. Print out this worksheet and place a check mark by the coping skills you already have in your lifestyle.

Physical Skills	**People Skills**
❑ Eat three meals daily	❑ Ask for help when I need it
❑ Exercise at least three times weekly	❑ Say how I feel
❑ Don't smoke	❑ Give and receive love
❑ Drink alcohol no more than three times per week	❑ Say "no" if I need to

Personal Management Skills	**Action Skills**
❑ Plan my time well	❑ Have hobbies
❑ Be on time when I'm expected	❑ Feel good about what I do
❑ Take "time out" to get perspective	❑ People can count on me
❑ Know how to laugh at life	❑ Try new things

Now, you have an opportunity to construct your own Personal Stress Management Program. You have had a chance to look at the things that you already do that help you cope with stress, and you have had an opportunity to read about a variety of things that can help you become more stress resistant.

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Look back over Stress Management Modules VI and VII to get specific ideas for areas of improvement that would be appropriate in your life. While reviewing the possibilities for areas of improvement, write down four to six new skills or lifestyle changes that you would ideally like to incorporate into your life.

Areas For Improvement

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Look over this list of ideas for improvement. Choose one to three new skills or lifestyle changes to which you think you could really commit in your life. Be honest with yourself here. Draw a circle around the items that you have chosen to take a risk on and make the commitment.

In a month or so, check back to assess what kind of progress you are making in your commitment to these new skills or lifestyle changes. At that point, you can add or adjust commitments you have made toward creating a more stress resistant, relaxed lifestyle.