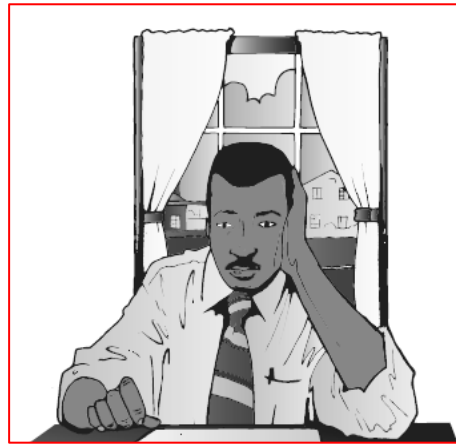


STRESS MANAGEMENT & FAMILY SUPPORT



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STRESS MANAGEMENT & FAMILY SUPPORT

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. If it's okay with you, I'd like to spend a few minutes sharing with you some information about stress management that I hope you will find helpful.

If at any time you have questions, please stop me and I'll do my best to answer them.
Ready to get started?

STRESS MANAGEMENT & FAMILY SUPPORT

Today's Topics:

- ✓ What is stress?
- ✓ Common causes of stress
- ✓ How does stress affect my body?
- ✓ How does stress affect my behavior?
- ✓ How does stress affect my emotions?
- ✓ Managing stress
- ✓ Managing emotions
- ✓ Family Support

What is stress?

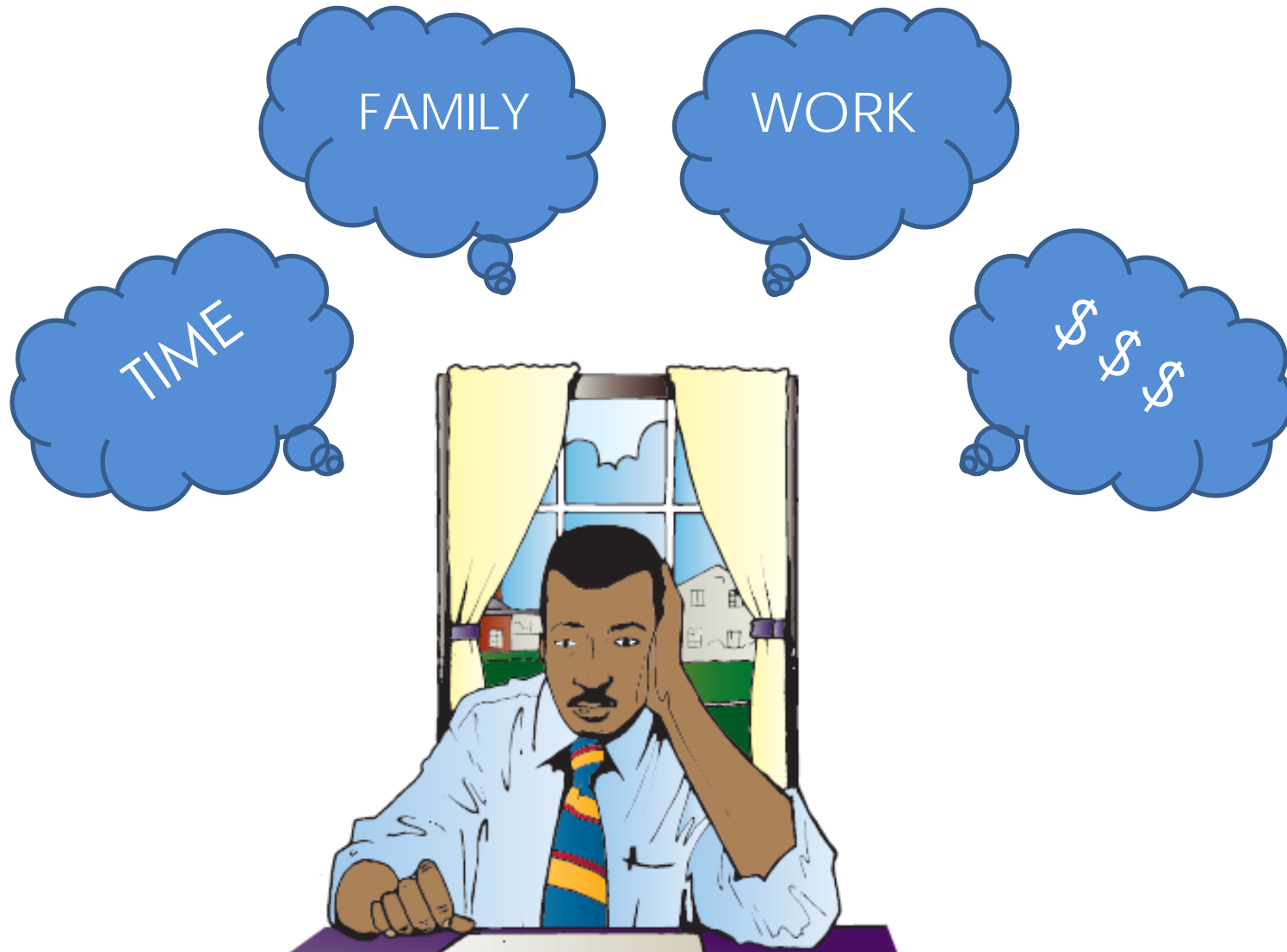
Say: Before we start talking about stress, we should define what stress means, right? Stress can occur when an event produces a strain on a person. It can also occur when a person thinks of a situation as challenging or threatening in some way, which causes our brain and our bodies to respond. Stress is influenced by both the person and their environment, and each one of us defines what we see as stressful.¹

Ask: What is stressful for you in your life?

Say: I can understand how those things would be stressful. But keep in mind, positive situations can also be stressful, such as marriage, starting a new job, or retirement. Even though these are all good things, they can make us feel anxious, excited, or nervous. Keep this in mind when you feel stressed, that not all stress is “bad” or negative.



What is stress?

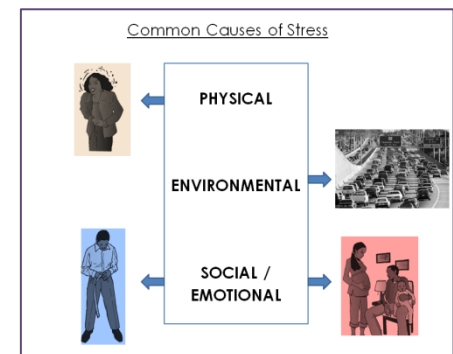


Common causes of stress

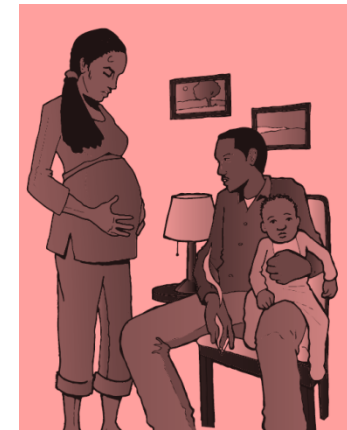
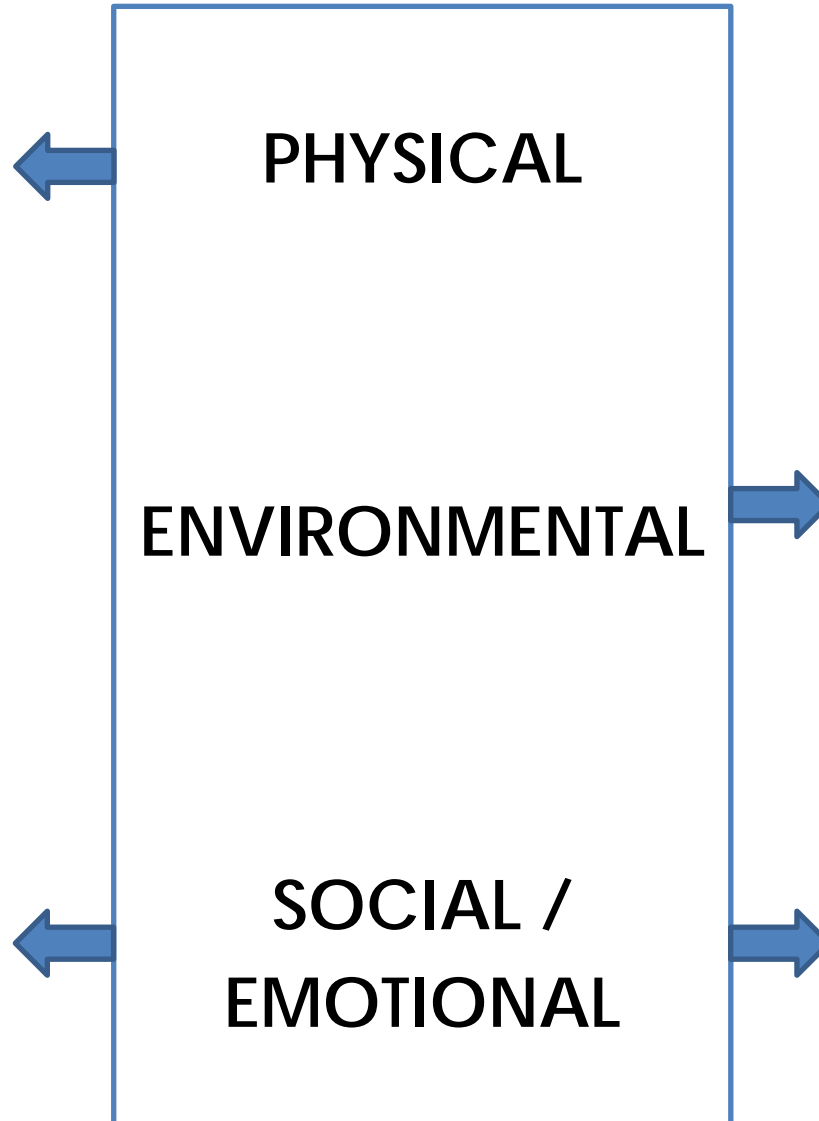
Say: Unfortunately, stress is part of everyone's life -- no one is without some kind of stress! But stress means different things to different people, and what causes stress for one person may not cause it for another. Something that causes stress is called a **stressor**, and there are three main types:

- 1) Physical Stressors -- These are things that cause your body stress. Examples include fever, pain, and illness.
- 2) Environmental Stressors -- These are things in our environment that are often beyond our control. Examples include weather, noise, housing issues, and traffic.
- 3) Social & Emotional Stressors -- These are things that cause us stress through our thoughts and reactions. Examples include concerns about money, job and family demands, having to make a big decision, guilt, loss, and change.²

Ask: Can you think of a time when you were confronted with a physical stressor? An environmental stressor? An social/emotional stressor?



Common Causes of Stress

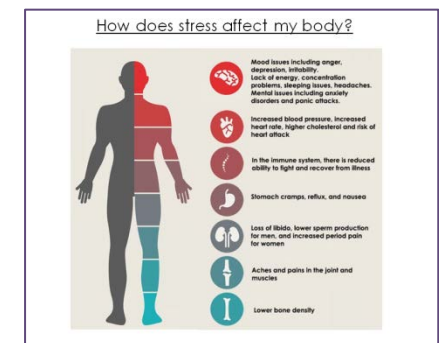


How does stress affect my body?

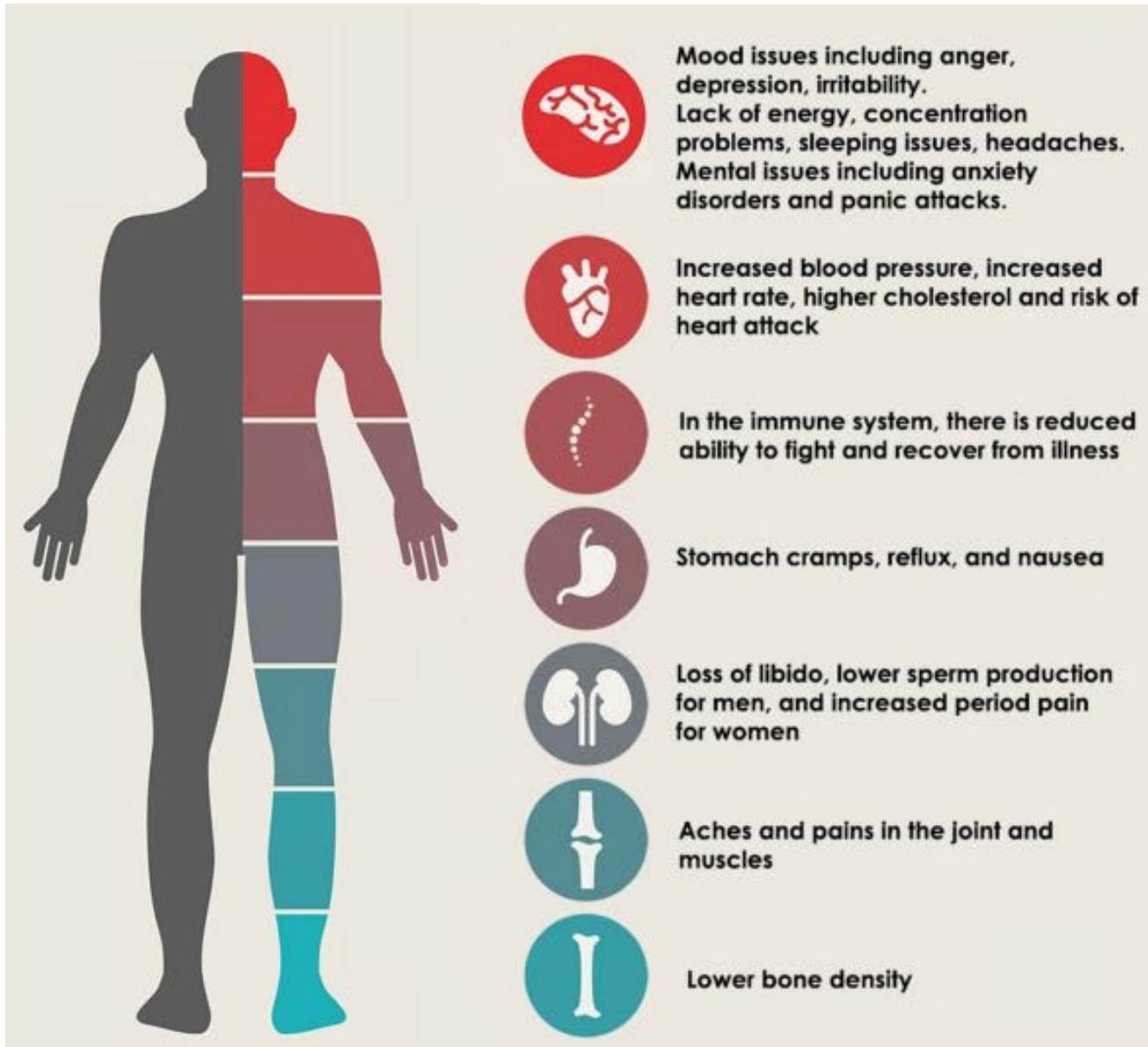
Say: The tricky thing about stress is that although it is an emotional response to a situation, it causes a reaction in our body known as “fight or flight” hormones, which make us feel different physically. These stress hormones increase your heart rate and blood pressure, make your breathing rapid and shallow, and can even cause your blood sugar level to rise. When these things occur in our bodies, we then use energy to “fight off” stress or get away from the stressful situation. This extra energy is often not used up all the way, which leaves us feeling tense, tired, or can even cause a headache.

Ask: Do you ever feel any physical symptoms in your body when you are stressed? [if participant unclear, provide example “Some people get headaches, stomachaches, or feel tension in their muscles.”]. If so, what do you do when you feel this way?

Say: Having chronic stress, or constant stress experienced over a long period of time, is very hard on your body and can cause long-term problems for your heart and blood vessels. Remember, the stress hormones make our heart rate and blood pressure increase, so over time this can increase the risk of hypertension (high blood pressure), heart attack, or stroke.¹



How does stress affect my body?



How does stress affect my behavior?

Say: When we feel stressed, it affects not only our bodies, but our minds and the way we behave.

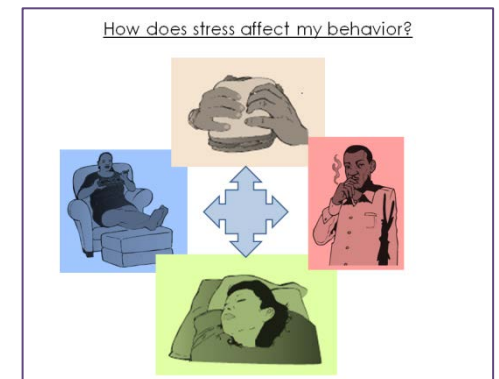
Ask: Does stress ever cause you to behave differently?

[if participant unclear or says no:]

Say: For example, high levels of stress can sometimes cause people to:

- lose interest in things that were previously enjoyable, like physical activity or socializing with others
- become inactive and withdrawn
- increase inactive behaviors, such as excessive TV watching, or using the computer/tablet/phone
- sleep too much or too little
- eat too much or too little
- drink or smoke too much³

Ask: Do any of these things ever occur when you are stressed?



Image¹

How does stress affect my behavior?



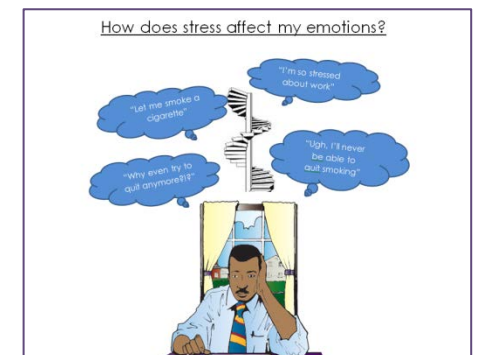
How does stress affect my emotions?

Say: So we've already talked about how stress can negatively impact our bodies and our behaviors; if that wasn't bad enough, stress can also affect our emotions! High levels of stress can sometimes make people feel irritable, anxious, and even isolated. Stress can also lead to negative thoughts, which can cause us to lose hope or criticize ourselves. These types of thoughts can "spiral," leading us into more and more negative thinking and eventually into bad decisions.

For example, you may have a friend or family member that has been causing you stress. After dealing with this person, you come home and feel anxious and irritable, and decide to smoke a cigarette even though you had decided to quit earlier in the week. After you have the cigarette, you feel upset with yourself for having relapsed and you think, "I did it again. I'll never quit smoking." So then you go on to continue to smoke, and your spiral of negative thoughts continues [point to participant flipchart].

Ask: Can you think of a time when this type of "spiral" has happened to you?

Say: The key to stopping the "spiral" is to recognize the negative thought, catch yourself, and then talk back with a positive thought. When this happens, picture a huge, red stop sign in your head and say "Stop!" to yourself. And then work on talking back to the negative thought with something positive. For example, instead of giving up on something, tell yourself "One step at a time. I've learned something from this, and I'll try it differently next time."⁴



Image¹

Ask: Now you try -- what is one negative thought you've had recently? How can you talk back with something positive?

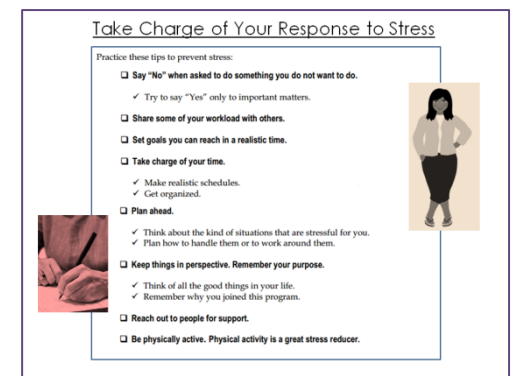
How does stress affect my emotions?



Managing stress

Say: Stress can be really difficult to manage, and I won't pretend to have all of the answers for you. But I can offer my support over the next few months, and a few tips that you might find helpful:

- 1) Practice saying "No." Saying "no" can be really hard, and that alone can cause stress. But that stress is usually short-lived, and if you say "yes," you may have hours, weeks, or months of stress as you do whatever you agreed to do.
- 2) Share some of your workload with others. This can be both at home and at your job. Sharing work does not mean you are being irresponsible; giving responsibility to others gives them a chance to learn, participate, and gain experience.
- 3) Set goals you can reach in a realistic time. Sometimes we create our own stress by trying to be perfect. If we set reasonable goals, we are more likely to succeed. When we succeed, we are less likely to feel stressed. Remember, we talked about this when we discussed negative thoughts; if we try to be perfect, we probably will not succeed! Periodically, take a good look at the demands you are placing on yourself. Ask yourself, "Am I expecting myself to do more than I could possibly do?"
- 4) Take charge of your time. Make schedules that are realistic; do not schedule yourself to do something in 30 minutes that will realistically take an hour. Devote some time to getting organized, and you will save time and stress in the long run.
- 5) Plan ahead. Think about the kinds of situations that are stressful for you. Those situations put you at high risk for eating unhealthy or skipping activity. So plan ahead for how to handle these situations, or work around them.
- 6) Keep things in perspective. Think of all of the good things in your life. Remember your purpose.
- 7) Reach out to people for support. Think about who you can turn to for support. Ask supportive people to help when you are overwhelmed.³
- 8) Find healthy ways to respond. Take a 10-minute "timeout," be active, laugh often, and try a relaxation technique. We will talk about this in a few minutes.²



Take Charge of Your Response to Stress

Practice these tips to prevent stress:

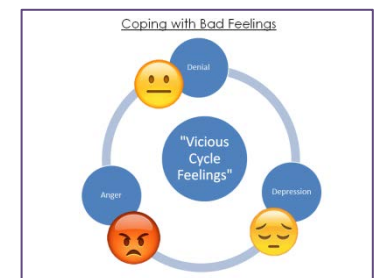
- Say “No” when asked to do something you do not want to do.**
 - ✓ Try to say “Yes” only to important matters.
- Share some of your workload with others.**
- Set goals you can reach in a realistic time.**
- Take charge of your time.**
 - ✓ Make realistic schedules.
 - ✓ Get organized.
- Plan ahead.**
 - ✓ Think about the kind of situations that are stressful for you.
 - ✓ Plan how to handle them or to work around them.
- Keep things in perspective. Remember your purpose.**
 - ✓ Think of all the good things in your life.
 - ✓ Remember why you joined this program.
- Reach out to people for support.**
- Be physically active. Physical activity is a great stress reducer.**



Managing Emotions

Say: Just like we have to learn to manage stress, we also need to know how to cope with bad feelings. Staying motivated to be healthy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week can tire anyone out. What happens if you lose your drive? If you find yourself in a “slump,” ask yourself if your emotions are getting in the way of taking good care of yourself. There are three common “vicious cycle” feelings that often get in our way:

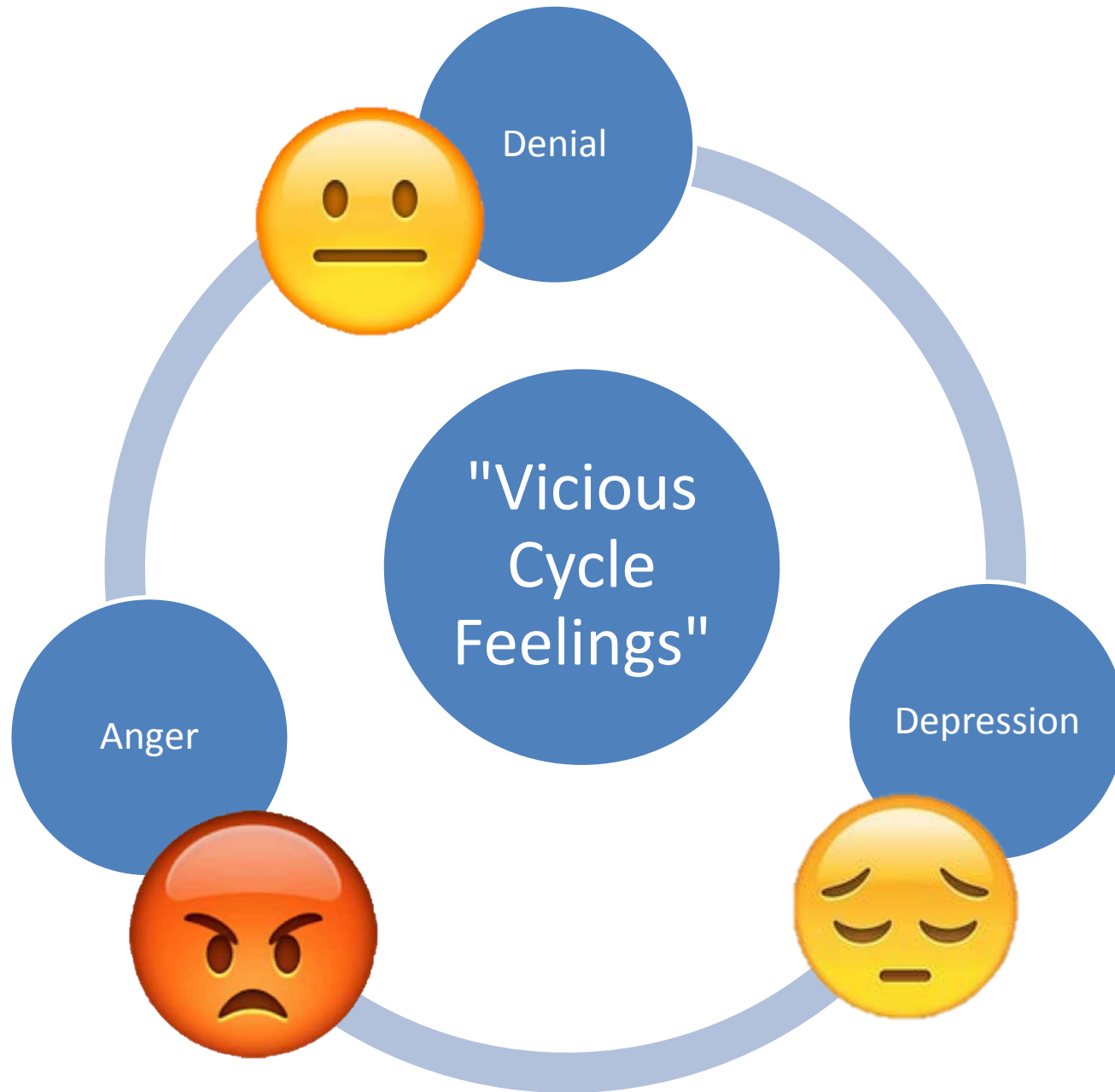
- 1) Denial: Denial is a way of coping with bad news, by pretending that nothing is wrong. Some people feel this when they are first diagnosed with diabetes or hypertension. But over time, it will prevent you from accepting the situation and addressing it so that you can move on. An example would be saying to yourself, “I feel fine today, I don’t need to check my blood sugar. I can probably cheat by eating fast food today too,” or “I can just take a few puffs of each cigarette instead of quitting.” Even though denial is a natural human reaction, it’s important to recognize when this is happening and fight back. Tell your friends and family how they can help too.
- 2) Depression: Feeling down once in a while is completely normal. But some people feel a type of sadness that just won’t go away and life in general seems hopeless. If you feel this way most of the day, every day for two weeks or more, this may be a sign of depression. It can leave you feeling without energy, which results in being inactive or unhealthy eating. If you feel symptoms of depression, don’t keep them to yourself. Talk them over with your doctor and your friends/family. I’m also happy to talk to you about getting more help if you need it.
- 3) Anger: You may get angry when you feel threatened, afraid, or frustrated, and this is a normal response. However, when we direct anger at ourselves towards others, we often harm the ones around us. But the good news is that you can put anger to work for you and use your anger constructively. Your anger can be a signal that you need to take action, so use this feeling to do something positive that will benefit your health.⁵



Ask: Can you think of a time where you felt one of these three emotions? How did you deal with it?

Image⁶

Coping with Bad Feelings

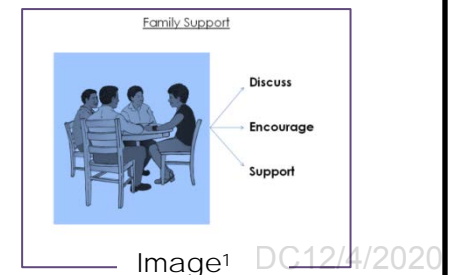


Family Support

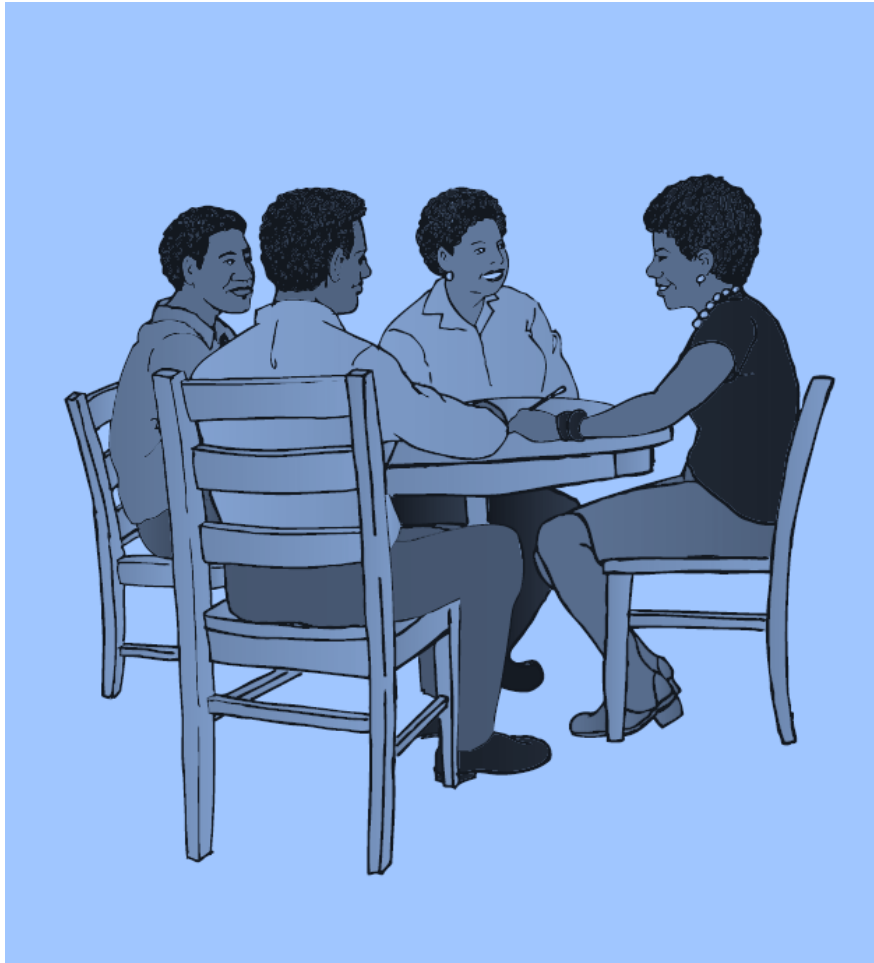
Say: Many people are afraid to burden their family with their fears or concerns. Often people make assumptions that children won't be able to understand, and that it is better to protect them from information about health problems. Some people assume that family members won't be willing or able to make lifestyle changes that would be better for the person with a health condition. But sometimes just talking about something with another person will feel like a huge relief.

In general, you should consider:

- 1) Discussing your health issues with family members. By not discussing them, you could be hurting yourself and your family and friends by not providing them with enough information.
- 2) Requesting encouragement when you are trying to make healthy choices. For example, if you are trying to maintain a heart healthy diet and your children or spouse complains about eating "healthy" foods, explain to them that by keeping yourself healthy and happy, you are better able to take care of them and support them. Or if you are trying to quit smoking, request that your friends and family members do not smoke in your home or near you.
- 3) Requesting support when you need it. Sometimes this might be emotional support, and you may just need someone to listen. Other times you may need actual support, such as asking someone to accompany you to a doctor's visit to help you remember important questions to ask.⁶



Family Support



Discuss

Encourage

Support

Session Review:

Say: Great! That's all the information I have for today. Just to review, we talked about the following topics today:

- ✓ What is stress?
- ✓ Common causes of stress
- ✓ How does stress affect my body?
- ✓ How does stress affect my behavior?
- ✓ How does stress affect my emotions?
- ✓ Managing stress
- ✓ Managing emotions
- ✓ Family Support

Say: Do you have any other questions about the information we went over? Were there things you learned or didn't know before today? Were there things I didn't talk about that you'd like to discuss at a future visit?

Ask: We have a few minutes left. Would you like me to show you a few breathing exercises you might find helpful to relieve stress? [if time allows, guide participant through visualization exercise and/or provide supplemental handout - "Belly Breathing Exercise" :]

Read slowly and in a calm, hushed voice, pausing for 15-20 seconds between sentences:

"Close your eyes and travel in your mind to a place in your life that was beautiful and peaceful. It can be any place where you feel happy, relaxed, and at peace. What do you smell? What do you hear? What do you feel? What do you see? Continue relaxing for a few minutes. Let go of these images in your mind slowly one by one. Take a deep breath, and open your eyes." [ask participant how did they feel during and after?]

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