

Dear Stress, Let's Break Up



Focus/Content Description

This content is designed to provide chapter members the chance to identify stressors in their life and practice stress management techniques. Practicing these techniques can be done in a large group or smaller groups, depending on the size of the group and availability of facilitators to lead each technique. It would be a great program to facilitate leading into recruitment, at a sisterhood retreat, as members prepare for finals/end of a term, or any time something is going on that causes increased stress.

The program should last **approximately 90-100** minutes.

This program **does not** have pre-requisites.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Identify specific stressors in their lives.
- Practice different types of stress management techniques.
- Articulate which stress management techniques worked for them.

Supplies

1. Guided imagery audio link: <https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/wellness-mindfulness/mindfulness-meditation/guided-audio-recordings/guided-imagery-visualization>
2. Diaphragmatic breathing audio link: https://healthyroadsblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/diaphragmaticbreathing_lesson.mp3
3. Mindfulness meditation audio link: http://media.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/mindfulness_just_this_breath.mp3
4. Yoga pose instructions: <https://www.doyouyoga.com/the-10-most-important-yoga-poses-for-beginners-25270/>

5. Progressive muscle relaxation audio link: <https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/topics/mindfulness-and-relaxation/>
 - a. [Scroll down and click on the guided relaxation audio for progressive muscle relaxation.](#)
6. Bluetooth speakers for audio, if possible. Ask chapter members if anyone has any that you can borrow. If not, use phones for audio.
7. Stress Management Techniques document, found on pages 7-10.

Preparation

1. Determine how you want to carry out the practicing of stress management techniques. Either as one large group or splitting into small groups. Make this decision based on the size of your group and if the space where you will host this program is able to accommodate the full group.
 - a. *Note: if you decide to do small groups, you will need multiple co-facilitators to assist in the practice of different stress management techniques. None of them need to be experts in a certain technique, just willing to lead members through a practice.
 - b. Tip: It would be beneficial to have someone with experience in practicing yoga to assist with this technique.
 - c. Tip: Be sure to give co-facilitators plenty of time to become familiar with the technique you will ask them to lead members through. Provide them with script and any audio links they might need.
2. Let the chapter know ahead of time they should wear comfortable clothing for this program.
3. Distribute electronic or hard copies of the Stress Management Techniques document to any facilitator(s).

Space Set-Up

1. If you are using one large group for this program: you will need a large enough space that accommodates everyone in the group to have enough space to partake in each of the stress management techniques.
2. If you are using small groups for this program: you will need a room or space that allows for people to break up into small groups. Ideally, you would have a space at the beginning for the large group to meet and then have a few separate rooms for groups to break off into. Consider reserving some small spaces in your campus student center, a gym on campus, or a few classrooms in the same building where the chairs/desks can be moved out of the way.
 - a. Break up the chapter into small groups ahead of time. Preferably mixing friend groups and new member classes. The number of people per group should be based on the number of techniques you are going to practice. So, if you are going to practice six techniques, break the chapter into six small groups.

Resources Utilized

1. Stress Triggers: How to Identify Yours https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rita-schiano/stress-triggers_b_878674.html
2. Hot Topics! College Students & Stress https://www.geneseo.edu/health/hot_topics_stress
3. Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World <http://franticworld.com/what-is-mindfulness/>
4. Guided Imagery and Visualization <https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/wellness-mindfulness/mindfulness-meditation/guided-audio-recordings/guided-imagery-visualization>

Facilitate

Introduction		Total Time: 5 Minutes
5 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet everyone and thank them for joining/participating/attending. • Introduce yourself as the facilitator. Include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Your name ○ Where you come from and/or currently live ○ Your role ○ Your connection to Sigma Kappa ○ Why this topic is important to you ○ An interesting short story about yourself or fun fact related to the topic • Review the learning outcomes and the return on participant investment. • SAY: Welcome to our 'Dear stress, let's break up' program. We are going to take some time to actually practice some stress management techniques. Various points in the year can be stressful for everyone and instead of just talking about ways to manage stress, we want to give you the chance to try out some popular techniques. The goal is for you to identify some techniques that might work to help you reduce your stress levels and create a healthier life. • If applicable: Introduce co-facilitators that will be assisting with the various techniques throughout the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Co-facilitators should take a minute or so to introduce themselves.</i> • Transition: Begin the program by taking time to identify stress triggers. This will then be used as motivation for practicing the techniques later on in the program. 	

What Stresses Me Out		Total Time: 10 Minutes
Discussion		
10 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by defining stress. Ask participants if anyone can define what stress is, not what stresses people out, but what stress actually is. • <i>Take some answers from the group. Be sure to review answers at the end and connect them to the following explanation of stress:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SAY: Stress is our body's physical reaction to something or certain situations. There are three important things to remember about stress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not all stress is bad – it can trigger your "fight-or-flight" mechanism to help you respond to an emergency. ▪ Stress affects everyone differently, and too much stress can cause serious health issues. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stress is a part of life and needs to be managed in order to be healthy and happy. • SAY: I want you to think about stress in a few different ways. As I talk about them, take a mental note of stress that is currently occurring in your life. <i>Read the following out loud:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emotional stressors – these might be fears/anxieties, things that you worry about a lot (what do people think of you as an example), always trying to be perfect, feeling helpless, lack of control of certain aspects of your life, troubled relationships, etc. ○ Family stressors – changes in relationships with significant others, divorce, sibling estrangement, financial struggles, etc. ○ Social stressors – dating, parties, public speaking, social media identity, etc. ○ Chemical stressors – drugs (prescription and illegal), alcohol, caffeine, unhealthy foods, etc. ○ Decision stressors – facing an important and/or looming decision that might affect only you, or could affect others. ○ Physical stressors – long hours without sleep, depriving yourself of healthy food, standing all day, sitting all day, too much exercise, PMS, etc.” ○ Environmental stressors – too much noise, lack of space, too hot, too cold, etc.” • Have participants partner up and share 3-4 personal stressors. No need to tell the fully story of the stressor, just state a list to your partner so they are out there in the world. <i>Give the group 2-3 minutes to share.</i> • Thank participants for taking the time to share some of their stressors. Sometimes it is hard to admit these aloud, but that is the first step of managing that stress. • Move on to a brief overview of stress management techniques before breaking into groups.
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Stress Management Techniques		Total Time: 10 Minutes
Introduce Activity		
10 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of the co-facilitators, or the primary facilitator, should give a quick description of each technique. This will be the only explanation before beginning the practice. • Guided Imagery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SAY: Guided imagery is a mind-body technique that uses your power of visualization to achieve a desired outcome, usually relaxation, health benefits or performance enhancement. During guided imagery, your body releases hormones, neurotransmitters and biochemical to help your body rest, restore and heal. This technique is popular with professional athletes and even used in mainstream medical practices. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaphragmatic Breathing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SAY: Stress management does not get any easier than learning how to breathe properly. Diaphragmatic breathing helps you combat the physical tension that comes along with stress. You will slowly inhale and exhale, while concentrating on keeping your chest still and expanding and contracting your stomach. • Mindfulness Meditation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SAY: Mindfulness is a way of paying attention in a particular way - on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally. You focus on your breath, observe your thoughts and let them go. It helps you to learn that your thoughts come and go on their own accord, that you are not your thoughts and you ultimately have a choice about whether to act on them or not. • Yoga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SAY: The word yoga means 'union' and is often thought of as a way to work out...at least here in the USA. However, it is actually a philosophy, a passion and a way of life. For our purposes, we are going to move through some yoga positions that can help you reduce stress by focusing on your body and breathing and bringing them into a union with each other. • Progressive Muscle Relaxation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SAY: Progressive muscle relaxation teaches you how to relax your muscles in a two-step process. It helps you distinguish between a tense muscle and a relaxed muscle, and then you can start to cue the relaxed state when stress starts to make your muscles tense up. • Prepare participants to begin the activity of practicing in each of the techniques for roughly 12 minutes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If applicable, put participants in their small groups, ready to rotate between each technique. • Answer any questions before starting the activity.
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Activity

	<p>Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference the Stress Management Techniques document for directions. • Note: Depending on if you decide to use groups that rotate through each technique, or decide to work through each technique as a large group, it will impact how long the activity takes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If using small groups: allot 12 minutes for each technique. ○ If doing as a large group: see timing breakdown below.
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<p>60 Minutes (Small Groups) OR 45 Minutes (Large Group)</p>	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin going working through each technique in small groups or as a large group. • Guided Imagery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timing for - ○ Small groups: 12 minutes ○ Large group: 9 minutes
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaphragmatic Breathing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timing for - ○ Small groups: 12 minutes ○ Large group: 7 minutes • Mindfulness Meditation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timing for - ○ Small groups: 12 minutes ○ Large group: 6 minutes • Yoga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timing for - ○ Small groups: 12 minutes ○ Large group: 12 minutes • Progressive Muscle Relaxation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timing for - ○ Small groups: 12 minutes ○ Large group: 9 minutes
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Wrap Up/Debrief	Total Time: 5 Minutes
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Reflection/Final Takeaways

5 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Once all the group(s) has/have moved through all the technique practices, they should reconvene as a large group. Each group leader should bring their group back to the original room you started in. As they come in, help them get situated quickly.</i> • SAY: Thank you all for opening your minds and being willing to take part in practicing some stress relief techniques. The purpose of today was to let you explore some ways that you can relieve stress in your lives. All of these practices were short introductions and of course, there are different techniques out there that we did not cover. • Debrief with the following question and pair/share with a partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Think about the techniques you just practiced...guided imagery, diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation and get moving. Which of these resonated most with you? Turn to a partner and share which was your favorite technique. <i>Let them share for 2-3 three minutes.</i> • SAY: As we wrap up our time together, I hope you remember these techniques and <u>use them</u>. Do what you can for yourself when it comes to reducing stress. But if you find that just can't seem to beat the stress, reach out to someone. Visit your campus counseling center, take a yoga class, go on a long walk with a good friend or think back to what you've learned here today. Remember to take care of yourself and be well! • Answer any final questions and then close by thanking everyone for their participation.
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Stress Management Techniques

Guided Imagery Practice, Instructions

- *As the group comes into the room, help them get situated quickly so the technique practice can begin. Have some relaxing music playing to set the tone, and speak in a calm and quiet voice. Encourage the members to take a seat and start to quiet their body and mind.*
- SAY: Welcome to our guided imagery practice. It is important that you work to create a quiet, calm environment as we begin. In order for this practice to be purposeful, you will need to take it seriously and commit to the practice. Ok, close your eyes and let's begin.
- *Start the [audio recording](#) for the guided imagery. This can be done on your phone or a computer. Either way, you will need to be connected to some sort of speaker.*
 - Note: There are several different audio recordings you can pick from.
- *Stop the audio recording at 8 minutes, 13 seconds and quietly say the following; Slowly open your eyes and bring your awareness back to the present. Take two more deep breaths.*
- Thank participants for taking part in the guided imagery practice. Stay and be well!
- *Assist in getting this group out and the next group in. Start the process over for each new group.*

Diaphragmatic Breathing Practice, Instructions

- *As the group comes into the room, help them get situated quickly so the technique practice can begin. Have some relaxing music playing to set the tone, and speak in a calm and quiet voice. Encourage the members to take a seat and start to quiet their body and mind.*
- SAY: Welcome to our diaphragmatic breathing practice. It is important that you work to create a quiet, calm environment as we begin. In order for this practice to be purposeful, you will need to take it seriously and commit to the practice. Ok, close your eyes and let's begin.
- *Start the [audio recording](#) for diaphragmatic breathing. This can be done on your phone or a computer. Either way, you will need to be connected to some sort of speaker.*
- *When the audio recording ends, quietly say the following, Slowly open your eyes and bring your awareness back to the present. Take two more deep breaths.*
- Thank participants for taking part in the diaphragmatic breathing practice. Stay and be well!
- *Assist in getting this group out and the next group in. Start the process over for each new group.*

Mindfulness Meditation Practice, Instructions

- *As the group comes into the room, help them get situated quickly so the technique practice can begin. Have some relaxing music playing to set the tone, and speak in a calm and quiet voice. Encourage the members to take a seat and start to quiet their body and mind.*
- SAY: Welcome to our mindfulness meditation practice. It is important that you work to create a quiet, calm environment as we begin. In order for this practice to be purposeful, you will need to take it seriously and commit to the practice. Ok, close your eyes and let's begin.
- *Start the [audio recording](#) for mindfulness. This can be done on your phone or a computer. Either way, you will need to be connected to some sort of speaker.*

- *Stop the audio recording at 5 minutes, 37 seconds and quietly say the following, Slowly open your eyes and bring your awareness back to the present. Take two more deep breaths.*
- *Thank participants for taking part in the mindfulness meditation practice today. Stay and be well!*
- *Assist in getting this group out and the next group in. Start the process over for each new group.*

Yoga, Instructions

- *As the group comes into the room, help them get situated quickly so the technique practice can begin. Have some relaxing music playing to set the tone, and speak in a calm and quiet voice. Encourage the members to take a seat on the floor, take off their shoes and start to quiet their body and mind. Have the instructions below available to you as you walk through the practice.*
- **SAY:** Welcome to our yoga practice. It is important that you work to create a quiet, calm environment as we begin. In order for this practice to be purposeful, you will need to take it seriously and commit to the practice. We are going to learn five yoga poses today. If you already know these poses well, please focus on your breath and body position while we learn them. If you are a yoga beginner, do not worry. Our focus today is simply to learn the poses. Let's begin.
- **Mountain Pose** is the base for all standing poses; it gives you a sense of how to ground in to your feet and feel the earth below you. Mountain pose may seem like 'simply standing,' but there is a ton going on. Practice this pose by following my instructions and watching me.
 - Start standing with your feet together. Press down through all ten toes as you spread them open. Engage your quadriceps to lift your kneecaps and lift up through the inner thighs. Draw your abdominals in and up as you lift your chest and press the tops of the shoulders down.
 - Feel your shoulder blades coming towards each other and open your chest; but keep your palms facing inwards towards the body. Imagine a string drawing the crown of the head up to the ceiling and breathe deeply in to the torso. Hold for 5 breaths.
- **Warrior poses** are essential for building strength and stamina in a yoga practice. They give us confidence and stretch the hips and thighs while building strength in the entire lower body and core.
 - **Warrior 1** is a gentle backbend; and a great pose for stretching open the front body (quads, hip flexors, etc.) while strengthening the legs, hips, buttocks, core and upper body. Practice this pose by following my instructions and watching me.
 - For warrior one, start in mountain pose. Take a giant step back with your left foot coming towards a lunge, then turn your left heel down and angle your left toes forward 75 degrees.
 - Lift your chest and press your palms up overhead. Step forward and repeat on the opposite leg.
 - **Warrior 2** is an external hip opener and opens up the inner thighs and groin. It's a good starting point for many side postures including triangle, extended angle and half-moon balance. Practice this pose by following my instructions and watching me.
 - Stand with your feet one leg's-length apart. Turn your right toes out 90 degrees and your left toes in 45 degrees. Bend your right knee until it is directly over your right ankle while keeping the torso even between the hips.

- Stretch your arms out to your sides and gaze over your right hand. Hold for 8 breaths before straightening the right leg and turning your feet to the other side to repeat on left side.
- **Plank** teaches us how to balance on our hands while using the entire body to support us. It is a great way to strengthen the abdominals, and learn to use the breath to help us stay in a challenging pose. Practice this pose by following my instructions and watching me.
 - From warrior two, reach down with your hands to the floor. Bend your knees so that you end up on all fours. Tuck under your toes and lift your legs up off the mat. Slide your heels back enough until you feel you are one straight line of energy from your head to your feet.
 - Engage the lower abdominals, draw the shoulders down and away from the ears, pull your ribs together and breathe deeply for 8 breaths.
- **Downward Dog** is used in most yoga practices and it stretches and strengthens the entire body. People say, 'a down dog a day keeps the doctor away.' Practice this pose by following my instructions and watching me.
 - From plank, come on to all fours with your wrists under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Tuck under your toes and lift your hips up off the floor as you draw them up and back towards your heels.
 - Keep your knees slightly bent if your hamstrings are tight, otherwise try and straighten out your legs while keeping your hips back. Walk your hands forward to give yourself more length if you need to.
 - Press firmly through your palms and rotate the inner elbows towards each other. Hollow out the abdominals and keep engaging your legs to keep the torso moving back towards the thighs. Hold for 5-8 breaths before dropping back to hands and knees to rest.
- Pull all the poses together and flow through them. Repeat this a couple of times for participants to catch on. Begin in the mountain pose.
- *Lead the group through all five poses. Say the instructions aloud and demonstrate as you flow. As you hit the end of each pose, hold for five to eight breaths then move on to the next pose. Do this as many times as you can until there are about two minutes left of your time.*
- Thank participants for taking part in the yoga practice today. Stay and be well!
- *Assist in getting this group out and the next group in. Start the process over for each new group.*

Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Instructions

- *As the group comes into the room, help them get situated quickly so the technique practice can begin. Have some relaxing music playing to set the tone, and speak in a calm and quiet voice. Encourage the members to take a seat and start to quiet their body and mind.*
- SAY: Welcome to our progressive muscle relaxation practice. It is important that you work to create a quiet, calm environment as we begin. In order for this practice to be purposeful, you will need to take it seriously and commit to the practice. Ok, close your eyes and let's begin.
- *Start the [audio recording](#) for progressive muscle relaxation. This can be done on your phone or a computer. Either way, you will need to be connected to some sort of speaker.*
- *Stop the audio recording at 9 minutes and quietly say the following, Slowly open your eyes and bring your awareness back to the present. Take two more deep breaths.*

- Thank participants for taking part in the progressive muscle relaxation practice today. Stay and be well!
- *Assist in getting this group out and the next group in. Start the process over for each new group.*