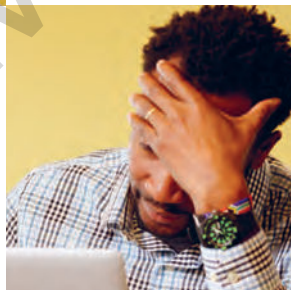


# Understanding Stress 4



**Make Parenting A Pleasure®**

Second Edition



*Parenting Now!*

SAMPLE SESSION

# Make Parenting A Pleasure

Second Edition



## Session 4

# Understanding Stress

Original curriculum developed by: Minalee Saks with Ellen Hyman, Linda Reilly, and Juvata Rusch

Second Edition by Leslie Finlay

*Parenting Now!*

SAMPLE SESSION



## Understanding Stress

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### KEY CONCEPTS

- ▶ Unwanted stress can harm our health and relationships.
- ▶ There are simple ways that we can reduce the negative effects of stress.



## GOALS FOR SESSION 4

**By the end of this session, parents will:**

1. Understand the unhealthy effects of unwanted stress.
2. Learn some simple approaches for calming the stress response.

SAMPLE SESSION



## AGENDA (120 total minutes)

Gathering Time	15 minutes <i>before session begins</i>
1 Welcome and Announcements	2 minutes
2 Review Today's Agenda	5 minutes
3 Review Last Session	5 minutes
4 Review the Home Practice: Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time Cards	10 minutes
5 Introduction to Stress Busters	5 minutes
6 Notice: Sources of Stress	15 minutes
7 The Stress Response	10 minutes
8 Break	15 minutes
9 Notice: Physical Symptoms	15 minutes
10 Notice: Thoughts and Feelings	10 minutes
11 Breathe	10 minutes
12 Home Practice: Notice and Breathe Cards	10 minutes
13 Session Review	5 minutes
13 Close	3 minutes



## PREPARE FOR SESSION 4

### 1. Review Content

- Read the agenda
- Study the session material and handouts in appendix
- Preview video: *The Stress Response*

### 2. Connect with families. Contact parents who need additional support or information, or anyone who missed the last session.

### 3. Prepare Materials

- Copy handouts as needed

*Calming the Stress Response* (Appendix, page 29)

*Take Home Ideas* (Appendix, page 32)

- Copy Appendix handouts

*Pie Chart* (Appendix, page 30)

*Pie Chart Labels* (Appendix, page 31)

- Create flip charts or slides

Agenda for Session 4: Understanding Stress

Stress Busters

Physical Symptoms of Stress

Thoughts and Feelings when Stressed

Session 4 Take Home Ideas (keep for Session 5)

- Create *Home Practice Cards* (two for each parent):

*Notice and Breathe Cards* (Appendix, pages 33–34)

- Copy/print double-sided the *Home Practice Card* on cardstock.
- Prepare the *Home Practice Cards* by trimming the cards along the cut lines.
- Use a hand-held hole punch to make a hole at the gray dot shown on the card.
- Each session, once you have collected completed cards from the parents, place each card on a separate, single loose-leaf ring. You will have a loose-leaf ring for each parent to which you add their cards each week.





- For parents who miss any session, place a blank card for that session on their loose-leaf ring.
  - During the final session, you will present a collection of their eleven completed cards to each parent.
- ☐ Special supplies for Session 4
- Flip charts
- Make Parenting A Pleasure Group Agreements (from Session 1)
  - Session 3 Take Home Ideas
  - Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time Cards* (from Session 3) collected from parents
  - Cut out the *Pie Chart Labels of Stressor* (Appendix, page 31)
  - Tape or glue sticks
  - Sticky notes
- ☐ Gather supplies (for every session)
- Blank name tags and felt tip pens
  - Flip chart, colored markers, and easel
  - Pens or pencils and plain paper
  - Plates, cups, and napkins for snack

## PREPARE ROOM

- Set up the video equipment and make sure everything works.
- Arrange the room so that parents can sit in a semicircle and see the flip chart, video screen, and each other.
- Set up supplies on a table: Name tags, pens and paper, and refreshments.
- Relax, remember to breathe: Get ready to enjoy yourself and the families!



## Before You Begin, Think About This

What parents learn in this session will help normalize and validate their own reactions to stress. When parents see that all humans share the same stress response and that most parents have times when they are reactive and behave in ways that don't fit with their values for raising their children, they often feel a sense of relief, let down some defenses, and are willing to reflect on their own mistakes.

Most parents are familiar with the idea that stressors can come from the outside world, yet many parents have not considered their own thoughts and feelings as sources of stress. Because humans have the gift of language, we can find it difficult to calm ourselves after a stressful event. Our thoughts and feelings can actually extend and amplify stress, especially when we ignore them or attempt to push them away.

The activity *Notice: Physical Symptoms* helps parents become more aware of their individual responses to stress so that they can identify signs of stress early and intervene. In the next activity, *Breathe*, parents gain a simple skill they can practice anytime and anywhere they experience unwanted stress.

Together, *Notice* and *Breathe* are important tools in lessening the grip of stress. Regular use of these skills makes it more likely parents will choose responses that fit with what they value for themselves, their children, and their families.

Be mindful of the developmental differences of the children in your group. Adjust the language you use and the literacy demands to be inclusive of all parents and caregivers.

# SESSION 4



## Gathering Time

(15 minutes *before* session begins)



**POST FLIP CHART: Agenda for Session 4: Understanding Stress**

**POST FLIP CHART: Group Agreements** (from Session 1)

Be in the room well before the session is scheduled to begin to greet parents. As parents gather, greet them warmly by name. Take this opportunity to follow up with parents about issues brought up in the previous session, to specifically acknowledge the contribution they make to the group, or to help connect them with each other. Begin the session on time.

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## 1 Welcome and Announcements

(2 minutes)

- Greet parents as they enter the room and encourage them to fill out a name tag.
- When parents are comfortably seated, make any announcements.



## 2 Review Today's Agenda

(5 minutes)



**REFER to POSTED FLIP CHART: Session 4: Understanding Stress**

### **Session 4: Understanding Stress**

Welcome / Agenda

Review Last Session

Review Home Practice: Special Time Cards

Stress Busters

Stress Response

#### **Break**

Notice

Breathe

Home Practice: Notice and Breathe Cards

Review

Next Session: Stress Busters

Review the agenda for this session and answer questions.

## 3 Review Last Session

(5 minutes)



**POST FLIP CHART: Session 3 Take Home Ideas (from Session 3)**

### **Session 3 Take Home Ideas**

- Sharing time with those we care about is a basic need.
- Children cannot thrive, learn, and grow in healthy ways if they do not get focused attention.
- Children feel more secure, confident, and loved when at least one person knows and cares for them.



Ask the group to share reflections and ideas that they took away from the last session.

Hear and affirm responses. Answer questions. Emphasize *Take Home Ideas* as needed.

- Sharing time with those we care about is a basic need.
- Children's need for focused attention is so great that they cannot thrive, learn, and grow in healthy ways if they do not have it.
- When children know that there is at least one person in their lives who knows and cares for them, someone who invites them to participate in shared activities, they feel more secure, confident, and loved.

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## 4 Review the Home Practice: Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time Cards

(10 minutes)



Distribute to each parent the *Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time Card* completed and collected during Session 3. The purpose of reviewing these cards is to reinforce the importance of parents spending *Special Time* with their children as part of their daily routine and to celebrate parent successes. (Be sure to collect these again from the group as they will be used in Session 12.)



## Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time

I, \_\_\_\_\_, YOUR NAME

will spend Special Time with my child this week during

\_\_\_\_\_, TIME OF DAY

**C**hild chooses activity  
**U**ndivided attention  
**P**redictable



## Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time

*A close, nurturing, and responsive relationship is the single most important factor affecting your child's well-being.*

*Make this connection now, when your child's brain is rapidly developing.*

*Help wire your child's brain in ways that help him/her learn, grow, and thrive!*



For our Home Practice, we planned to spend Special Time with our children.

Ask parents to break into pairs and discuss their experience with *Special Time* during the week.



After a few minutes, return to the larger group and lead a discussion about the parents' experiences with *Special Time*.

Use the following questions as appropriate:

- Were you able to find a time during your daily routine to spend *Special Time* with your child?
- If you were, what was your experience?
- How did your child respond?

Hear and affirm responses.



**Note to the Parenting Educator:** Whether parents were able to follow through with this activity or not, we want to be sure that we create an environment that is realistic, supportive, and accepting of parents even while we encourage parents to keep trying the *Home Practice*.

If you were not able to follow through with your *Special Time* activities, what got in the way?

Hear and affirm responses. As needed, discuss possible solutions to the barriers with the large group.

Collect the *Fill Your Child's CUP with Special Time Cards* and keep them for the remainder of the sessions. You will use them again in Session 12.

---

## 5 Introduction to Stress Busters

(5 minutes)

During our time together, we have talked about how daily hassles and major life events get in the way of creating the family life we want. When we have too many demands on our time and attention, we feel stressed.

And (no surprise here) unwanted stress can play a role in how well we are able to meet our children's needs. Unwanted stress can have such a negative effect on our children and on us that we'll focus on it today.

We'll learn some *Stress Busters*. *Stress Busters* will not change the fact that we are experiencing stress, but they will help us notice, accept, and respond to it in healthy ways.



## POST and REFER to the FLIP CHART: Stress Busters

### Stress Busters

**N**otice

**B**reathe

**A**ct

To help us remember the Stress Busters, let's think about basketball. Playing basketball, as well as other kinds of physical activity, can be a great stress reducer. Anyone here play basketball?

You may have heard about the NBA, the National Basketball Association. In our group, NBA will also stand for our Stress Busters: Notice, Breathe, and Act.

This session we will talk about the ways our bodies respond to stress—the stress response. We'll talk about our sources and symptoms of stress and what can help.

## 6 Notice: Sources of Stress

(15 minutes)



**Note to the Parenting Educator:** Be cautious not to spend too much time on this activity, nor to let the conversation move into detailed or lengthy descriptions of parents' individual challenges so that you have enough time for discussion about the stress response and the *Stress Buster, Breathe*, before the end of the session.

Events that occur outside of us, like losing a job, can lead to stress; and internal events such as worries, strong emotions, and difficult thoughts and judgments can also increase our stress. We refer to these events as "stressors."

We are all unique. What is stressful for one person may be quite different from what is stressful for another. Becoming familiar with our stressors can help us take steps to manage our response to them.

What causes stress for us depends, at least in part, on our perception of it. For example, the morning drive to work in traffic may trigger anxious thoughts and tense muscles for one person, whereas someone else might enjoy the time alone. The situation is the same—driving to work in traffic—but the thoughts and feelings about the situation are different.





Let's identify what is stressful for each of us.

**Activity Directions:**



- Pass out a blank *Pie Chart* handout to each parent (see Appendix, page 30).
- Provide glue sticks or tape, paper labels with a stressor on each one (see *Pie Chart Labels* in Appendix, page 31 for the label template), and colored markers.
- Labels have these stressors printed on them:
  - Children
  - Work
  - Money
  - Couple relationship
  - Extended family
  - Housing
  - Physical health
  - Mental/emotional health
  - Other personal issues
- Also, there are blank labels for parents to write additional stressors.
- Ask parents to think about their own stressors and label their pie slices accordingly, by gluing or taping the labels onto their *Pie Chart* handout.
- Let parents know that if one area causes a lot of stress for them, they can use more than one label of the same stressor to cover more than one slice.
- Give parents about 5 minutes to complete their pie.
- Ask for volunteers to share their pies.
- Solicit examples of the external situations and/or the internal thoughts and feelings that cause stress within the different slices. For example, for a slice labeled “money” examples might include:
  - Can't pay bills on time
  - Have to move but can't afford first and last month's rent
  - Always fighting with partner about money
  - Feel bad that I can't afford things the children want



These are very real sources of stress. And life is full of these kinds of challenges.



**Note to the Parenting Educator:** As you discuss stress, parents might notice that becoming more aware of the stress in their lives and how it affects them is stressful in itself. If this comes up, reassure parents that the response is normal and that you are available to each of them for discussion and/or referral if needed. Assure parents that they will learn some healthy ways to handle stress. The first step is to recognize and accept our reactions to stress.

## 7 The Stress Response

(10 minutes)

By learning what happens to our bodies under prolonged or intense stress, we can understand why learning to manage stress is an important part of taking care of ourselves.



**SHOW VIDEO: *The Stress Response*** (3 minutes)

What are your responses to this video?

Hear and affirm responses.

As needed, review the following content from the video with the group:

When we experience stress, there are symptoms.

Maybe we get a headache or a churning stomach. We might snap at our children or cry more easily. We might think negative or depressing thoughts, or get tunnel vision.

These symptoms tell us that something is happening in our bodies. What is going on? When there is a perceived danger, our bodies release a surge of hormones—a normal physical response to stress—which helps us prepare to take action.

These hormones can cause our:

- Heart rate to increase
- Respiration to increase
- Blood pressure to rise
- Blood sugars to rise
- Digestion to slow down
- Blood to rush to our muscles



At one time, these responses helped us survive. When being chased by tigers, we needed to be able to fight back or run away!

Luckily, most of us are not surrounded by dangers; the problem is our bodies still respond as if we are.

Our nervous systems aren't very good at knowing the difference between emotional and physical threats. Whether you're stressed over a mountain of bills or a fierce tiger, your body reacts in the same way.

And the more often our stress response is activated, the more easily it gets turned on and the harder it is to shut it off. The result is that many of us live in an ongoing state of fight or flight.

Over time, the activation from chronic stress causes harmful changes in our bodies. These changes can lead to health problems like:

- Heart disease
- Sleep problems
- Digestive problems
- Depression
- Obesity
- Memory problems

It's not a pretty picture, is it? But we don't have to get all stressed out over it! The risks of stress can be offset by learning to handle stress in healthy ways.

First, we pay attention to our sources of stress and learn to notice our stress symptoms—thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations—then, we practice simple strategies to interrupt the stress response.

---

## 8 Break

(15 minutes)

Tell parents the group will take a 15-minute break for refreshments and to use the restroom.



## 9 Notice: Physical Symptoms

(15 minutes)

Think about a time when you were coming down with a cold. What were the symptoms you experienced that let you know you were getting sick?

Hear and affirm responses. Possible responses include:

- Fatigue
- Stuffy nose
- Headache
- Watery eyes

We probably can all agree that it is important to notice and accept the symptoms of a cold so that we can be sure to care for ourselves by drinking plenty of fluids, getting lots of rest, and eating well, etc. What happens if we do not notice and accept these symptoms, or we ignore them?

Hear and affirm responses. Possible responses include:

- Our cold gets worse
- We infect others with our cold
- We go on with normal responsibilities, but can't handle them well because we are sick

Just like fatigue, sore throat, stuffy nose, and watery eyes can let you know you are coming down with a cold, we experience symptoms with unwanted stress, though we might not notice them.

**When we learn to tune into the ways we respond to stress, to detect the “symptoms” of stress, we can respond early, before the stress becomes a problem.**

Blaming or judging ourselves for our reaction to stress just makes it worse.

Ignoring our symptoms of stress doesn't help either. As with a cold, it's possible to experience significant stress symptoms and not even be aware of it until the situation has gotten out of hand!

There are some simple things we can do to reduce the stress response. **Studies show that recognizing and accepting the physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings that come with stress helps calm the response and gives us space to respond in more healthy ways.**

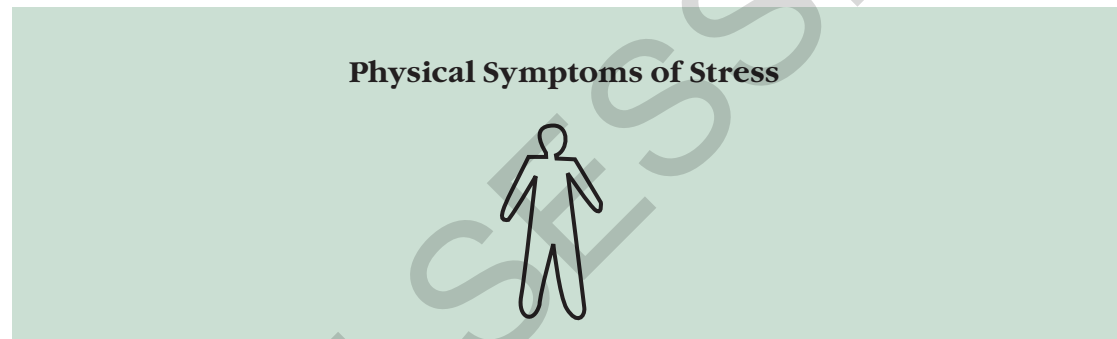


**Note to the Parenting Educator:** The purpose of the following activity is to help parents learn to be aware of their own responses to stress and to normalize their experiences. Once parents increase their awareness of how they think and feel when stressed, they are more able to effectively find healthy responses.



### POST FLIP CHART: Physical Symptoms of Stress

Draw outline of body on flip chart.



Let's identify some **physical symptoms** of stress we experience. For example, I know that I'm stressed when I clench my jaw.

As you say this, draw a representation of your stress symptom onto the figure on the flip chart. For example, a clenched jaw can be shown with zigzags representing teeth clenched in a rectangular-shaped mouth.

What happens **in your body** when you feel stressed?

#### Activity Directions:

- Provide colored markers such as red and green as well as black.
- Invite parents to come up and share a physical symptom they experience and draw a representation of that symptom on the figure on the flip chart.
- Allow each parent a turn sharing their symptom with the group and drawing that symptom.

Possible responses:

- Clenched teeth
- Stomachache
- Headache



- Overall muscle tenseness
  - Tired
  - Sweating
- At the conclusion of this activity, the picture can be humorous and the group may laugh, which can create a lighter tone as the group discusses this sensitive topic.
  - The picture can also be serious when parents think about the impact their stress can have on their children.

It's not a pretty picture, is it? It doesn't feel very good to feel this way, yet this can be how we look to our children when we are stressed, right? What affect does our stress have on our children?

Hear and affirm parents' reflections.

Keep the "Physical Symptoms of Stress" flip chart posted where it can be seen.

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## 10 Notice: Thoughts and Feelings

(10 minutes)



### **POST FLIP CHART: Thoughts and Feelings when Stressed**

Pass out sticky notes and pencils or pens to the group.

#### **Thoughts and Feelings when Stressed**

If you are comfortable, please close your eyes and recall a recent situation that was stressful. Focus on a "daily hassle" kind of stress, rather than a major life event.

Pause.



Now I'd like you to write on your sticky note one or two thoughts or feelings you had during the stressful event.

Give your own example, as appropriate.

For example, when the elevator of my apartment building was broken this morning, and I had to walk down the stairs carrying all kinds of things, I thought, "This place is such a dump!" So, on my sticky note, I will write this negative thought about where I live.

Give parents time to write their responses. Help parents individually as needed.

Once you have written your thoughts and feelings, please post your notes on the flip chart.

Give parents time to post their notes, then ask for a parent volunteer to read the sticky notes.

What are your reactions to hearing each other's thoughts and feelings?

Hear and affirm comments. Normalize parents' difficult thoughts and feelings, and validate their experiences.

Being short-tempered, critical of others or ourselves, or being defensive are common and normal responses to stress. Our bodies are wired for this response.

Some people feel numb and indecisive and want to withdraw when they get stressed. This is also normal. The nerve and chemical signals in our bodies result in these responses when we are stressed.

**We all have negative and difficult thoughts and feelings in response to stress.**

The problem with this response is that our thoughts and feelings can be perceived as threats themselves, and it keeps our bodies in a fight or flight reaction, even after the stressful event has passed.

Think about the tiger example in the video. What **difficult or negative thoughts** might we be having, as a result of our stress, long after the tiger is gone?



Hear and affirm responses. Add examples as needed to illustrate common negative thoughts people experience when stressed. Possible responses include:

Thoughts:

- The tiger will come back.
- Why do I attract tigers?
- I shouldn't get so upset by tigers.
- What if the tiger comes back?
- I deserve to get attacked by tigers.
- I hate living in a world with tigers.
- I shouldn't keep thinking about the tiger.

We can notice our thoughts and accept that negative thoughts are a normal response to stress. We can also recognize that our thoughts may not be true or helpful. After all, just because we think the thought, "I deserve to get attacked by tigers," doesn't make it true, does it? Of course not!

Any reflections on how this can apply to our own thinking under stress?

Hear and affirm responses.

Now, thinking again about the tiger example in the video, what **difficult or negative feelings** might we have as a result of our stress, long after the tiger is gone?

Hear and affirm responses. Add examples as needed to illustrate common negative feelings people experience when stressed. Possible responses include:

Feelings:

- Scared
- Ashamed
- Embarrassed
- Hopeless
- Despair
- Depressed
- Anxious





These normal thoughts and feelings can keep our stress response activated especially when we deny or ignore them. Another, more helpful approach can be to notice our thoughts and feelings and to accept them as normal responses to stress.

**Noticing our thoughts and feelings, then accepting them, “Aha! I am really stressed. And boy, I am having negative thoughts and feelings,” can help interrupt our stress response.**

# 11 Breathe

(10 minutes)



**REFER to the FLIP CHART: Stress Busters**

## Stress Busters

**N**otice

**B**reathe

**A**ct

We’ve talked about the Stress Buster, Notice. Now let’s talk about the next Stress Buster, Breathe.

One of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce stress is to breathe deeply. Remember the physical symptoms of stress—increases in heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure? Breathing deeply and slowly through our nose helps to lessen these effects on the body.

When we don’t breathe deeply enough, which is a common response to stress, a lack of oxygen to our brain can turn on our body’s fight or flight response, intensifying our stress response. Breathing deeply through the nose engages the part of our body’s nervous system that calms the body, slows the heart rate, and relaxes and soothes us.

Lead the group in taking deep breaths, giving the following directions slowly.

Let’s practice taking deep breaths right now. If you are willing, please get comfortable sitting up tall in your chair with both feet on the ground.



Breathe in and out slowly and deeply through your nose.

Make your stomach rise and fall as you breathe.

As you inhale through your nose, notice how the air feels as it moves through your nose and into your body.

Now imagine your body as a bottle. The bottom of the bottle is your stomach, and the neck of the bottle is your chest.

As you begin to inhale, fill your stomach first; then as you near the end of the inhalation, fill your chest.

As you exhale, empty your chest first and your stomach last.

As you exhale through your nose, notice how it feels as the air leaves your chest and stomach and moves through your nose.

Pause. Model breathing deeply.

Thank you. How does it feel to breathe slowly and deeply through your nose?

Hear and affirm responses.

When you are in a stressful situation or when you notice symptoms of stress, **take three deep breaths through your nose**. Inhale and exhale forcefully.

Deep breathing “clears” the head and can help reduce negative feelings and emotions. When we take deep breaths, we are more likely to respond to life’s events in a helpful way. Breathing deeply three times buys us a few seconds to help us collect ourselves and think more clearly.

Using the Stress Buster, Breathe, is one of the simplest and most effective strategies we can use to manage our stress in the moment. But deep breathing isn’t just about getting through stressful times. Regular practice of deep breathing over time is proven to have lasting effects on our health and well-being. These include effects such as lower blood pressure, increased energy levels, and reduced depression and anxiety.

I imagine that some of you already use the Breathe strategy when you are stressed, though maybe not in just this way. Have you noticed that it helps?

Hear and affirm responses.



Direct parents’ attention to ***Calming the Stress Response*** (see Appendix, page 29) in their *Parent Booklets*, page 13 (or distribute handouts).



# 12 Home Practice: Notice and Breathe Cards

(10 minutes)

For Home Practice this week, we will use the Stress Busters, Notice and Breathe, to interrupt our stress response.

First, we'll pay attention to the physical sensations that tell us we are stressed, including the thoughts and feelings that accompany the physical sensations.

Next, we will take three deep breaths. Deep breaths through our nose help us calm the stress response.

Have two **Notice and Breathe Cards** (see Appendix, pages 33–34) ready for each parent. The goal of this activity is to help parents remember to notice their stress symptoms and then take three deep breaths.



## Notice and Breathe

When I, \_\_\_\_\_, YOUR NAME

**notice stress symptoms** such as

\_\_\_\_\_ , WRITE DOWN YOUR STRESS SYMPTOMS

I will take **three deep breaths** through my nose to help calm my body's stress response.



## Notice and Breathe

**Notice physical sensations** that let you know you are stressed. **Be aware of thoughts and feelings** that accompany the physical sensations.

**Take three deep breaths.**

**Inhale and exhale deeply through your nose**, delivering needed oxygen to your brain and communicating to your system that you are not in danger.

**Practice regular deep breathing** to benefit both mind and body.

**1... 2... 3**

### Activity Directions:

- Pass out two *Notice and Breathe Cards* to each parent. Both cards say the same thing: one card is for parents to take home and post in a visible spot; the other card is for the Parenting Educator.
- Ask the group to form pairs.
- Ask parents to talk in pairs about times they might use the *Stress Busters* in the coming week and what their stress symptoms might be.
- Ask the group to write down, on their cards, stress symptoms that they might notice.
- Collect one card from each parent.
- Ask parents to take their card home and carry out the activity.
- Suggest parents post their card in a location they will see, so they are more likely to remember to follow through with their *Notice and Breathe* activity.
- Next session, return the cards to the parents and ask if they were able to follow through with their *Notice and Breathe* activity and how it went.



# 13 Session Review

(5 minutes)



Direct parents' attention to **Take Home Ideas** (see Appendix, page 32) in their *Parent Booklets*, page 14 (or distribute handouts).



**POST FLIP CHART: Session 4 Take Home Ideas** (Save this flip chart; it is used in the next session.)

## Session 4 Take Home Ideas

- Stress can harm parents' and children's health.
- Knowing our stress symptoms helps parents respond before stress becomes a problem.
- Recognizing and accepting physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings of stress helps calm the stress response.

Ask parents to share something discussed during the group that was meaningful or helpful to them.

Hear and affirm responses. As needed, emphasize *Take Home Ideas*.

The Take Home Ideas for this session are:

- Unwanted stress can harm our health and our children's health.
- When we tune into the symptoms of stress, we can respond early, before the stress becomes a problem.
- Recognizing and accepting the physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings that come with stress helps calm the stress response.



## 14 Close

(3 minutes)

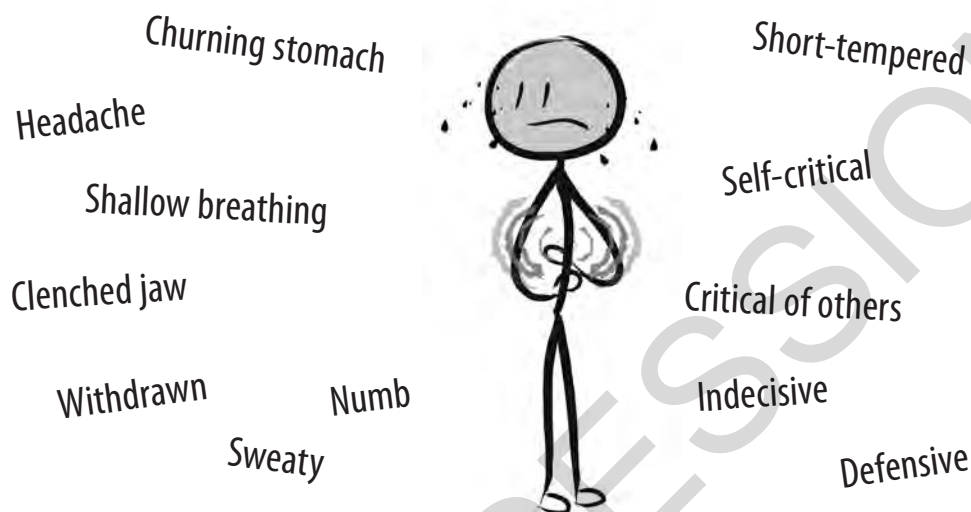
Acknowledge that this material can sometimes be difficult to talk about because it can lead us to think about how much stress we are under or times we have not managed our stress well in the past. Share your impressions of this session in terms of parents reflecting on their responses to stress, and thank the group for spending time on this important topic.

SAMPLE SESSION

# Calming the Stress Response

## Stress symptoms

Physical symptoms and negative thoughts and feelings are normal responses to stress.



## Notice and accept difficult or negative thoughts

Denying or ignoring our thoughts and feelings can increase our stress. Noticing and accepting our negative or difficult thoughts and feelings can interrupt the intensity of the stress response.



## Breathe deeply

Breathing deeply through the nose engages the part of the body's nervous system that calms the body, slows the heart rate, and relaxes and soothes us.

Regular practice of deep breathing over time is proven to have lasting effects on our health and well-being; effects such as lower blood pressure, increased energy levels, and reduced depression and anxiety.

When you are stressed, you have your foot on the gas, pedal to the floor.

When you take slow, deep breaths, that is... engaging the brake. ~ Dr. Esther Sternberg





































# Pie Chart

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# Pie Chart Labels

 Children	 Money	 Extended Family
 Children	 Money	 Extended Family
 Children	 Money	 Extended Family
 Work	 Housing	
 Work	 Housing	
 Work	 Housing	
 Physical Health	 Couple Relations	
 Physical Health	 Couple Relations	
 Physical Health	 Couple Relations	
 Mental/Emotional Health	 Other Personal Issues	
 Mental/Emotional Health	 Other Personal Issues	
 Mental/Emotional Health	 Other Personal Issues	

# TAKE HOME IDEAS

## **During Session 4, we talked about the following important ideas:**

- Unwanted stress can harm our health and our children's health.
- When we learn to tune into the "symptoms" of stress, we can respond early, before the stress becomes a problem.
- Recognizing and accepting the physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings that come with stress helps calm the stress response.

## **Group Ideas:**



# Notice and Breathe

When I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
YOUR NAME

**notice stress symptoms** such as

\_\_\_\_\_  
WRITE DOWN YOUR STRESS SYMPTOMS

I will take **three deep breaths** through my nose to help calm my body's stress response.



*Parenting Now!*

*Make Parenting A Pleasure, Second Edition*

Session 4: Understanding Stress

# Notice and Breathe

When I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
YOUR NAME

**notice stress symptoms** such as

\_\_\_\_\_  
WRITE DOWN YOUR STRESS SYMPTOMS

I will take **three deep breaths** through my nose to help calm my body's stress response.



*Parenting Now!*

*Make Parenting A Pleasure, Second Edition*

Session 4: Understanding Stress

# Notice and Breathe

**Notice physical sensations** that let you know you are stressed. **Be aware of thoughts and feelings** that accompany the physical sensations.

**Take three deep breaths.**

**Inhale and exhale deeply through your nose**, delivering needed oxygen to your brain and communicating to your system that you are not in danger.

**Practice regular deep breathing** to benefit both mind and body.

**1... 2... 3**

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SAMPLE SESSION

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