





COPING WITH LIFE-CHANGING MOMENTS

How to overcome the curve balls in life

Week 4: Journey through the hurdles



IN YOUR WEEK 4 PROGRAMME, YOU WILL:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
|  FIND
How you cope in a crisis |  TRY
Coping techniques for your personality type |  SPOT
Your risk of stress-related illness |  KEEP
A stress resilience meter |
|--|---|--|--|

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**LIVE
GREAT**
PROGRAMME



WELLNESS TOOLS



HEALTH TIPS



MOBILE APPS



WORKSHOPS & EVENTS



EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGES

How to de-stress in 8 easy steps

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
Starting your Journey	Stress at Home	Stress at Work	 Life-changing Moments	How to Communicate	The 4As	Tots and Teens	Staying Happy

Coping with life-changing moments – Week 4

Welcome to Week Four of the Stress Management Programme!

Congratulations on reaching the halfway point of our stress management programme! Even though we are just four weeks in, we've already covered quite a bit of ground when it comes to keeping your stress in check. Last week, workplace stress was the focus of the programme, and we hope that our priority task list helped get your workload in order.

This week, let's take a deep breath and brace ourselves, because we're taking a look at how life's biggest events can affect us – or our loved ones.

Life-changing events are unavoidable, whether it's the loss of a spouse or relative, divorce, injury or retrenchment. When an event like this hits, we go through a series of emotions, such as denial, anger and sadness, to deal with the situation at hand.

It is natural because that's the way our mind protects and processes the information before kick-starting the healing process. The trick is to know how to deal with these emotions when they arise and, most importantly, how to move on with our lives.

Start small, live great.

START SMALL TIP #4

The write way to go



Write your emotions down to relieve stress

For nearly 20 years, Dr. James W. Pennebaker of the University of Texas at Austin has been giving people an assignment: write down your deepest feelings about an emotional upheaval in your life for 15 to 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days. His research has shown that writing about emotional experiences can have health benefits in the long run. If you are going through a rough patch right now, grab a pen and paper and give this a shot!

Find how you cope with life's crises

Before you downloaded this guide you completed a short questionnaire to find out how you cope in a crisis. (If you haven't taken the short quiz yet, [click here](#) to do it now. It will help you understand how you and your loved ones respond to life changing events.)

In times of life-changing crisis, most of us will go through different stages of emotional upheaval. If someone close to you is going through a difficult period in his/her life right now, it is reassuring to know that there are strategies to help them better handle life's major hurdles.



Just to refresh, here are the three ways people cope in a crisis:

The Denier

Being in state of denial is your mind's defence mechanism, it's when you refuse to acknowledge a stressful problem, avoid facing facts or try to minimise the consequences of the situation. A short period of denial is completely natural and can be helpful. It gives you the opportunity to unconsciously absorb distressing information at a pace that won't send you into a psychological tailspin.

The Short Tempered

When faced with a life-changing event, some people react with anger. Anger comes from a deeper emotional core when we are dealing with the unexpected. Try and ensure you are feeling as calm as possible. To set yourself up for the day try some breathing exercises first thing in the morning. Inhale through the nose for a count of four, and then exhale through the nose for a count of four. This helps calm the nervous system.

The Dispirited

It is common to feel discouraged and deeply sad when you are faced with a major life crisis. For example, you may be worried about the cost of a burial or how you're supposed to pay off your mortgage now that you've been laid off. Tears and grief are all a natural part of the process, and sometimes help from your loved ones and a few kind words like "I am just a phone call away" or "I am here for you" can make all the difference.

Try the coping mechanisms

Now that you have identified how you are likely to respond to a crisis, try the coping mechanisms below to help you best manage life's most difficult moments in the best way for you. Choose one or all as ways of support to help reduce the stress of any major hurdles.



Support For The Denier

We all need time to work through our individual crises and learn how to adapt to new circumstances. But it's important to realise that denial should only be a temporary measure. If you feel stuck, try joining a support group. You will find people with problems that are similar to yours. Benefits of participating in support groups may include:

- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Improving your coping skills and discovering a sense of adjustment
- Talking openly and honestly about your feelings
- Reducing distress and anxiety
- Developing a clearer understanding of what to expect in your situation
- Comparing notes about resources, such as doctors and alternative options

Support websites you might like to try:

[Singapore Health Promotion Board](#)
[Malaysian Psychiatry Association](#)



Calm For The Short Tempered

Anger is a natural reaction to an unexpected turn of events that we do not fully understand. Before you can comprehend, you need to put your relaxation skills to work to keep as calm as possible. The easiest way to do this is to focus on your breathing. Here's how:

- Take a slow breath into your lungs, through your nose and out through your mouth
- You don't have to take deeper breath than usual. Just the depth at which you normally breathe
- Slow down your breathing rate gradually. You can do this by breathing in and counting 1, 2, 3 before breathing out. You should aim to breathe at a rate of about 12 to 14 breaths in a minute
- Relax the muscles around your neck and your shoulders
- Continue these exercises for about 5 to 10 minutes until you feel more in control

For ways to relax try one - or all - of our 6 Apps to Help You Relax and Manage Stress see page 7.



Challenges For The Dispirited

As painful as coping with life changing crises gets, it is a natural and necessary part of the healing process. Experts like WebMD and The Mayo Clinic suggests that, instead of brushing anxieties under the rug, we should embrace and cope with the challenges. Here are some suggestions:

- **Planning a diversion:** Get together with friends when you are feeling lonely. Not only can they give you the support that you need, having some face time with the people that matter will also help you focus on the happiness that you have in life
- **Setting goals:** Pursue realistic goals that are meaningful to you rather than goals others think you should follow. It could be small goals like picking up that book you've been meaning to finish or travelling alone to somewhere you've always wanted to go!
- **Allowing yourself to feel:** It's OK to be sad and feel a sense of loss from time to time, whether for a loved one, a former relationship or a job. It will be difficult to start with, but small steps will soon mean your life will be more joyful than sad

Spot your risk of stress-related illness

Developed by psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, the Holmes and Rahe stress scale is a list of 43 stressful life events that can potentially lead to stress-related illness.



Circle the boxes that apply to you, add up the scores and see whether you or a loved one are at risk.

Death of a spouse	100	Business readjustment	39	Trouble with boss	23
Divorce	73	Change in financial state	38	Change in working hours or conditions	20
Marital separation	65	Death of a close friend	37	Change in residence	20
Imprisonment	63	Change to different line of work	36	Change in schools	20
Death of a close family member	63	Change in frequency of arguments	35	Change in recreation	19
Personal injury or illness	53	Major mortgage	32	Change in religious activities	19
Marriage	50	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	Change in social activities	18
Dismissal from work	47	Change in responsibilities at work	29	Minor mortgage or loan	17
Marital reconciliation	45	Child leaving home	29	Change in sleeping habits	16
Retirement	45	Outstanding personal achievement	28	Change in number of family reunions	15
Change in health of family member	44	Spouse starts or stops work	26	Change in eating habits	15
Pregnancy	40	Beginning or end school	26	Vacation	13
Sexual difficulties	39	Change in living conditions	25	Christmas	12
Gain a new family member	39	Revision of personal habits	24	Minor violation of law	11



Score of 300+: At risk of illness.



Score of 150-299: Risk of illness is moderate (reduced by 30% from the above risk).



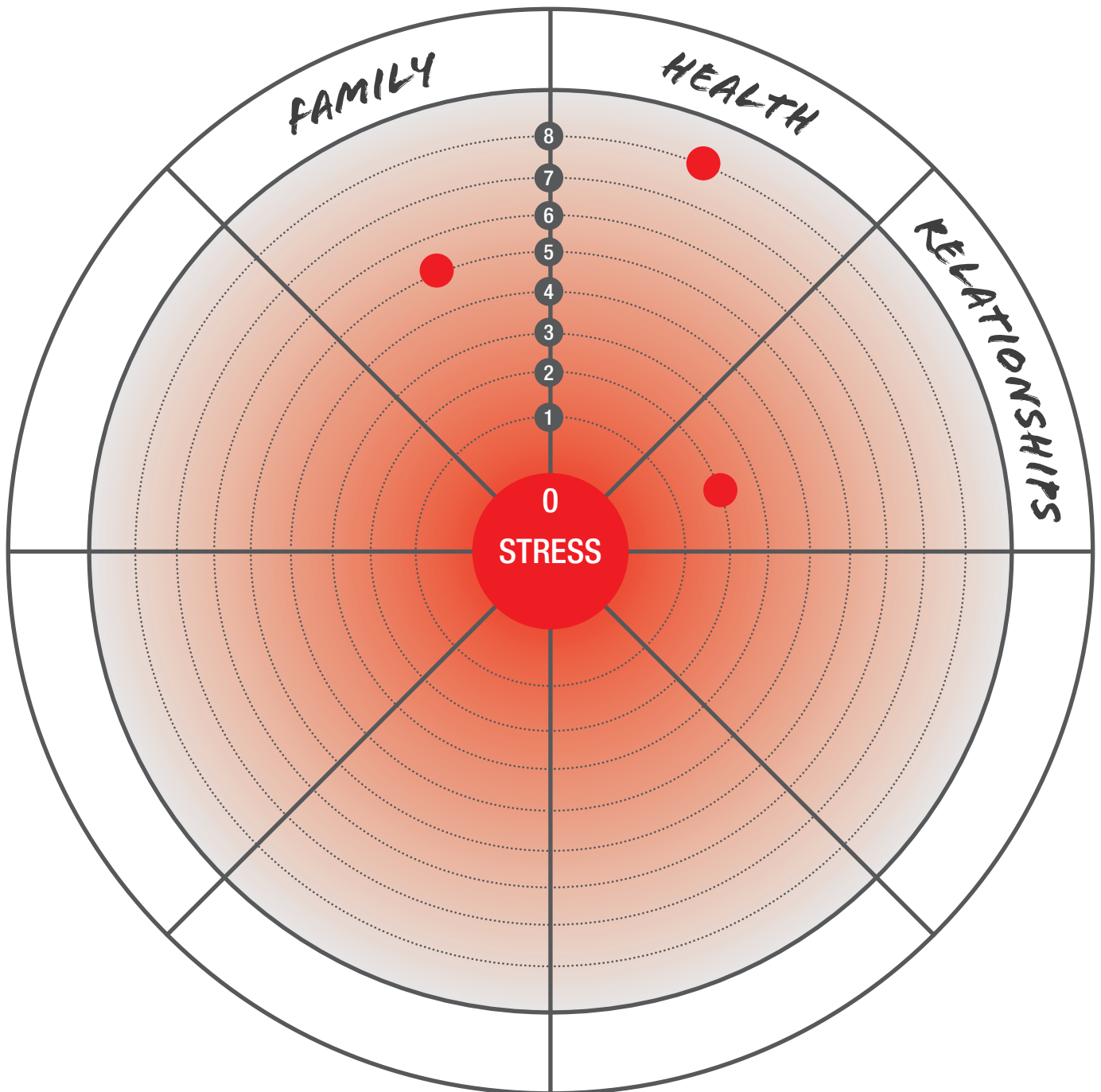
Score <150: Only a slight risk of illness.

Keep a stress crisis chart

Sometimes we don't recognise that we are heading for a crisis. As well as life's hurdles tripping us up, our own stress levels may also lead to an unwanted meltdown.

Charting where you are in the important areas of your life helps you to take control where you can and to smooth out the bumps in the journey. Use the wheel below to look at the zones that may need more or less attention to avoid you careering in to stress.

Along the outside of the circle fill in the sectors with the aspects of your life you rate as most important i.e. family, money, career, health - and then plot where in the circle you are today, from 0 (unhappy) to 8 (happy). The nearer you are to the outside edge in all situations, the happier you will be!



Print out the chart, complete it and keep it safe – then in a month's time do the same exercise again – in time you'll learn to make adjustments to give you an almost perfect circle!

Managing stress in times of crises is easier when you know how

Go to [Live Great Reads](#) for more useful articles, features and content.



How do Families Cope with Grief and Loss?

Expert advice from a psychologist



Stress Busting Tips From a Medical Expert

How to be happy and stress free



How to Stop Stress Making You Fat

Tips on how to stay healthy



6 Apps to Manage Stress

From calming music to talking to a virtual cat



Understanding stress and managing how you deal with it is a key to a happy life.

Next week...



We're halfway through our eight week stress management programme – we hope you have found the hints and tips useful in keeping your stressors under control.

Next week in Week Five we will help you discover how communicating effectively significantly reduces your stress, from the way you talk and listen to how you use your body language.

In next week's programme:

- Find out how to talk the talk
- Spot the signs of bad communication
- Keep track of events where you have turned conflict into compromise



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Questionnaire, personality types and techniques endorsed by:

Glenn Graves at www.counselingperspective.com

Based in Singapore, Glenn holds a Masters Degree in Psychology. He also has a certificate in Intermediate Training in Ericksonian Psychotherapy and Hypnosis from the Milton H. Erickson Foundation.



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