

Activity: Listening and Responding to Your Body's Stress Alarm

The human body is amazing and often recognizes that it is undergoing stress before you are cognitively aware of it – and it will give you signs. Becoming aware of the signs your body gives is one of the steps in becoming stress resilient. Each person may experience varying levels of comfort in listening to and trusting their body's signals of stress based on your personal experiences. It is also important to remember that your body can send you false alarms. That is why it may be important for you to take the time to reflect on what your body is signaling to you in times of stress and practice reframing how you perceive the impact of stress.

1. We experience stress in different ways. How does your body let you know that you are getting out of balance, heading into stress?

Often we adjust our habits related to caring for our body in response to stress. What patterns do you notice in the following three areas of your health habits?

2. Which are you most likely to tell yourself when you are experiencing stress?

- a. I have done it again! What is wrong with me that I can't stop from feeling stressed? Or...
- b. Stress is a normal part of life's ups and downs; sometimes it can even be helpful.

3. What are two positive outcomes you have experienced as a result of feeling stress?

Often our health habits change during times of stress. What patterns do you notice in the following three areas? *Circle your answer.*

4. What do you notice about your eating habits when you are stressed?

- a. I typically eat more foods that are less healthy for me.
- b. I typically eat less food than I know I need to keep my energy up.
- c. I typically recognize that I need to maintain a healthy diet when stressed to care for my body.

5. What do you notice about your physical exercise habits when you are stressed?

- a. I typically exercise less.
- b. I typically exercise more to burn off some of the stress energy.
- c. I do not make changes to my exercise based on the stress I am feeling.

6. How about your sleep pattern?

- a. I typically have a difficult time getting enough sleep.
- b. I typically sleep more than I do when I am not stressed.
- c. I typically am able to maintain my sleep pattern.

As you review your answers, identify:

7. What responses to stress do you want to do more of to build your stress resilience?

8. What responses would you like to change?

