

# Understanding Stress and Stress Management Techniques

# Learning Outcomes

Identify areas of possible tension in the body when stressed.

Demonstrate different techniques for relieving tension and stress and comment on their effectiveness.

# Physical Effects on the body

Continued stimulation of muscles through prolonged stress can lead to muscular pain such as backache. Together with our sedentary lifestyles and bad posture, this makes back, shoulder and neck ache extremely widespread.

Furthermore, most migraine sufferers say that stress contributes to their headaches, which can last for days.

# Task 1

Identify possible areas of your body where tension may occur when the body is stressed.

# Techniques for Relieving Stress and Tension

*Muscle tension from anxiety is not unlike muscle tension from other issues, such as exercise or sleeping on the wrong side of your body.*

*While anxiety itself will need to be addressed in order to prevent future muscle tension issues, once the muscles are tense, they can be relaxed using any method of relieving physical tension available.*

*For example:*

# Hot Shower

## Hot Shower –

A hot shower or bath is a great tool for reducing muscle tension.

Warm water is very soothing to tense muscles, and can give you a little bit of instant relief for your muscle tension.

A hot bath is ideal, but since most people don't have the time and energy to sit in a bath for an extended period of time, a shower should still work well.

# Massage

## Massage –

A massage is also a fantastic tool for releasing tension.

Muscles tension is a physical change, and those skilled at massage can actually feel the knots and tension in your muscles and push them out so that your muscles feel relaxed.

There are also self-massage techniques, but they can be somewhat complicated.

# Stretching and Yoga

## Stretching and Yoga –

Stretching and yoga poses can improve how your muscles feel as well.

While not a perfect technique, "stretching" is the act of making sure that your muscles aren't bunched together.

The same exercises that make it easier to exercise without injury are useful for muscle tension.

# OTC Painkillers

## OTC Painkillers—

Several over the counter medications may also be useful for combating muscle tension.

While not ideal, since medications should never be used unless you need to use them, over the counter medicines can help control inflammation in your muscles and ultimately reduce some of the pain.

*Each of these strategies – and any useful muscle relaxing techniques that you can do at home – are effective at relieving tension. Even though the tension is caused by anxiety, your muscles do physically change when you're stressed, and by reducing the effects of tension you can control some of the pain.*

*But of course, unless you control your anxiety and stress your muscles will tense up again. While exercise, stretching, and massage will continue to relieve the tension, you need to stop your anxiety if you want to prevent muscle tension from coming back again.*

*To do that, you need examine your symptoms and find out which treatments are best to control it.*

# Task 2

Research different types of techniques for relieving tension and stress.

Make sure you reference your sources.

# Task 3

In your workbooks, comment on the effectiveness of each technique.

Do you think they work? When?

Do you think they don't work? Why?