

# EMPOWER



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# Healthy Foundations

## ACTIVITY SHEET



How do you know if your stress is turning into dis-stress? In the same way you can SPEAK to your body (encouraging, instructing and reminding it), it's important to also LISTEN to what your body is trying to tell you. Work together with your body to establish healthy foundations.



### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**This session is designed to help you understand:**

- (a)** people react to stressful life events in different ways
- (b)** when overwhelmed, your body gives you signals so you can make a change
- (c)** five foundations for mental and emotional health

# Body Signals



**PLACE AN “A”** next to the signals your body gives when feeling **“Agitated or Angry”**

**PLACE AN ‘S’** next to the signals your body communicates when feeling **“Stressed”**

**PLACE A “D”** next to the signals your body gives when feeling **“Down in the Dumps”**

**PLACE A ‘W’** next to the signals your body communicates when feeling **“Worried”**

Thoughts	✓	Feelings	✓	Behaviours	✓
Clenched jaw		Jittery & restless		Short fuse	
Tense shoulders		Dizziness		Shaky voice	
Cloudy thinking		Racing mind		Can't sit still	
Grinding teeth		Harsh words spoken		Temper trouble	
Frequent need of toilet		Shallow breathing		Headache	
Sweaty hands or feet		Tummy butterflies		Sleep onset insomnia	
Racing heart		Muscle tension		Shortness of breath	
Low energy		Loss of libido		Dry mouth	
Upset stomach		Difficulty swallowing		Forgetfulness	
Chest pain		Fidgeting or pacing		Acne breakout	
Frequently teary		Increased appetite		Decreased appetite	
Early morning insomnia		Sore throat		Nail biting	
Disturbing dreams		Intrusive memories		Chronic fatigue	

\*You may encounter the same body signals for different mental and emotional states.

When feeling overwhelmed, your body will give you signals (much like a light on a car's dashboard). Signals communicate “something may be wrong”. However, different signals can mean different things. Therefore, to know what the issue is and how best to respond, learn what YOUR specific body's signals mean.

# The Foundational Five

It's critically important to understand and respond to the signals your body gives you. However, even better than being reactive, is to be proactive. You can't always control what happens TO YOU, but you can control what happens IN YOU. With healthy foundations, rather than being a thermometer (always reacting to the temperature), you can train yourself to be a thermostat and proactively set the temperature.

**FIVE OF THE MOST RELIABLE  
FOUNDATIONS A PERSON CAN  
ESTABLISH TO MAINTAIN MENTAL  
EMOTIONAL WELLBEING INCLUDE**

**sleep, diet,  
exercise,  
relationships  
and thoughts.**





## SLEEP HYGIENE

Rate the quality of your current sleeping patterns:

1. Very Poor

2. Poor

3. Mediocre

4. Good

5. Very Good

Rate how you would like your sleep quality to be:

1. Very Poor

2. Poor

3. Mediocre

4. Good

5. Very Good

**Q:** If your sleep quality improved, what else would improve in your life?

What practical steps could you take to see your sleep patterns improve?

Establish a consistent bedtime	Y	N	Avoid afternoon naps (but if required, no longer than 30mins)	Y	N
Reading before bed (non-digital)	Y	N	Commit to going to bed earlier	Y	N
Make my room darker and/or cooler	Y	N	Create a winddown routine	Y	N
Avoid time checking / clock watching	Y	N	Improve pillow comfort	Y	N
30min gap between screens & bed	Y	N	Avoid Social Media before bed	Y	N
Wake up at a consistent time	Y	N	Pray with love ones before bed	Y	N
Cut back on caffeine (at least 6 hours before bed)	Y	N	Reduce alcohol consumption (no alcohol at least 2hrs before bedtime)	Y	N

Critical incidents and high impact life events have a way of impacting your appetite. You may experience a loss of appetite or seek comfort in food. It's important to be mindful of what you eat because it effects how you feel and function. In fact, there's a vast amount of research linking healthy eating habits with mental health and performance. So, be intentional about providing your brain and body with the best fuel possible to prepare you for the journey that still lays ahead.

**Rate the quality of your current diet:**

1. Very Poor
  2. Poor
  3. Mediocre
  4. Good
  5. Very Good

**Rate how you would like the quality of your diet to be:**

1. Very Poor
  2. Poor
  3. Mediocre
  4. Good
  5. Very Good

**Q:** If the quality of your diet improved, what other improvements would you expect?

**When it comes to diet, in which of the following areas could you be more intentional?**

Preparing healthy meals	Y	N	Eating complex carbohydrates	Y	N
Consuming less sugar	Y	N	Having 3 regular meals per day	Y	N
Eating more fruit and vegetables	Y	N	Cutting back on comfort foods	Y	N
Taking time to enjoy meals	Y	N	Reducing alcohol intake	Y	N
Consuming less unhealthy fats (e.g., margarine, shortening, animal fat)	Y	N	Consuming more healthy fats (e.g., fish, nuts, avocado, coconut)	Y	N





 **EXERCISE**

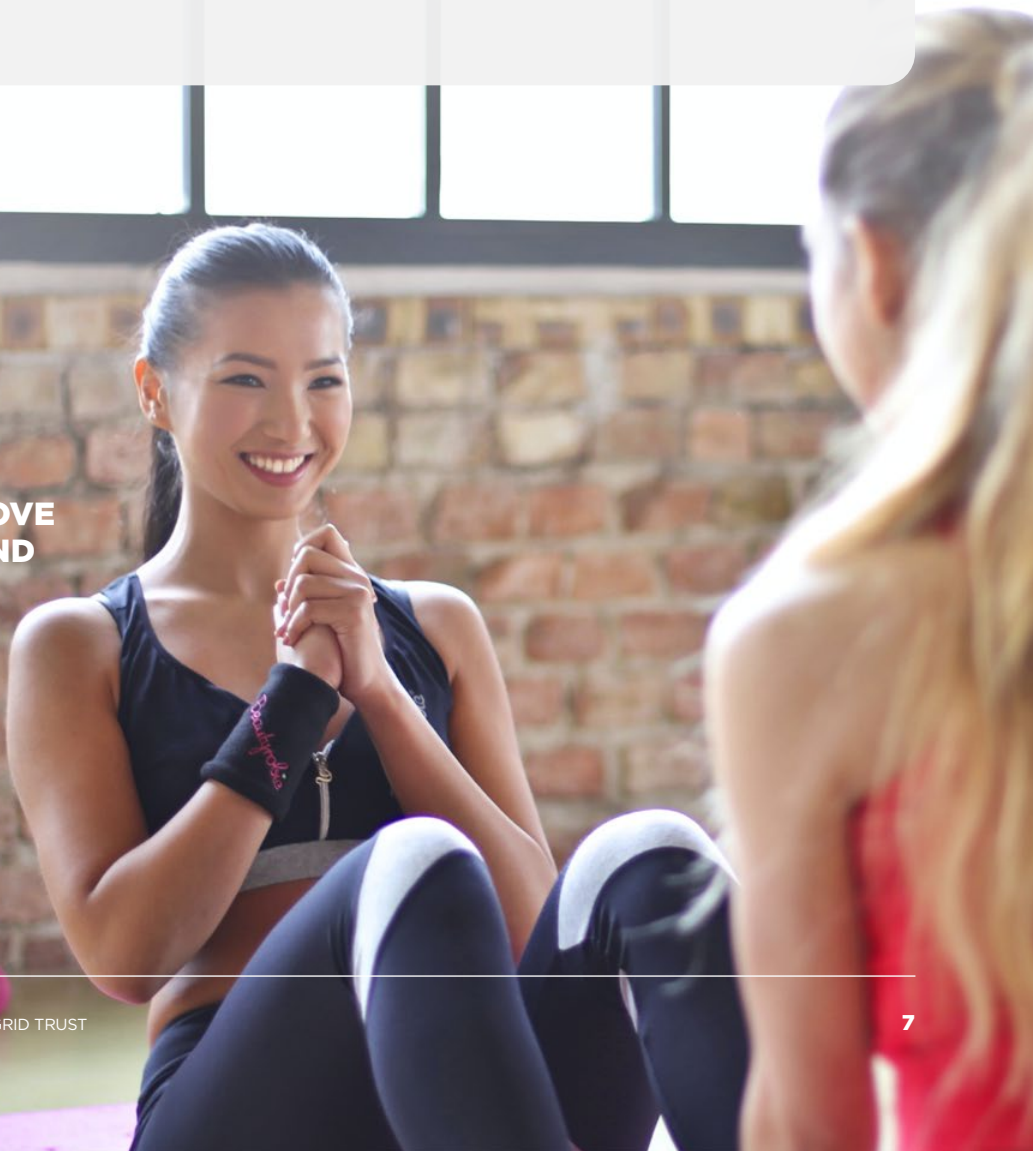
When you tense and relax your muscles through vigorous exercise, you release endorphins (neurochemicals that help reduce pain and promote pleasure). Endorphins help counteract your stress hormones. As such, regular physical activity can help you feel good, improve your sleep and contributes to clarity of mind.

**What are some simple ways that might motivate you to get active?**

Go walking with a friend	Y	N	Join a class or boot camp	Y	N
Park the car further away	Y	N	Get off one bus stop earlier	Y	N
Set a target and a reward	Y	N	Sign up for a fun run	Y	N
At least once p/week, ride to work	Y	N	Make 'walk time' a time of prayer	Y	N
Tell someone, stay accountable	Y	N	Create a social media campaign	Y	N

**Q:** Based on your selections, starting today, without delay, how can you get moving?

**DO YOURSELF  
A FAVOUR:  
MOVE YOUR  
BODY TO IMPROVE  
YOUR MOOD AND  
INVIGORATE  
YOUR MIND.**





## RELATIONSHIPS

Investing in quality relationships results in a double reward. On the one hand, when we engage socially, friends help you laugh, comfort you when you're down and offer you wise council when in need. But on the other hand, it gives YOU the opportunity to serve others, share burdens and pray. It doesn't mean problems magically go away, but relationships lend reassurance.

### Rather than waiting for others to engage you, what could you do to invest in others?

Call or message a long-lost friend	Y	N	Volunteer for a good cause	Y	N
Bless friends for no obvious reason	Y	N	Take the time to visit someone	Y	N
Ask how you can pray for friends	Y	N	Make (don't buy) someone a gift	Y	N
Prioritise people over productivity	Y	N	Offer someone a compliment	Y	N
Arrive at work or church early to connect socially	Y	N	Go above and beyond to do something special for neighbours	Y	N

**Q:** Which one of the above ideas that you selected will you choose to action?

**WHO:**  
**WHEN:**  
**HOW:**



**NOTE: PROFESSIONAL CARE:** If you have encountered thoughts about harming yourself or others, tell your Doctor right away. If you're engaging in excessive substance use or risk-taking behaviours, speak with a licenced therapist or trusted Pastor for additional support or referrals.



## THOUGHTS

Thoughts lead to feelings, and in turn feelings impact your biology. Your immune system is constantly eavesdropping in on your subconscious dialogue. So, having the presence of mind to be intentional about improving your sleep, diet, exercise and relationships is not only a step in the right direction for your psychological well-being, but also your physical health.

*'Thoughts' to be continued...*

