

Stress management (Reduce stress)

Address current psychosocial stressors:

- Explore trigger factors: Identify and discuss the relevant psychosocial issues that put the stress on the person and/or impact their life including, but not limited to, family and relationship problems, employment/occupation/livelihood issues, housing, finances, access to basic security and services, stigma, discrimination, etc.
- Support/facilitate to manage/cope: Assist the person to manage stress by discussing methods such as problem-solving techniques.
- Explore and manage any triggering factor: Assess and manage any situation of maltreatment, abuse (e.g. domestic violence) and neglect (e.g. of children or the elderly).
- Coach stress management strategies (relaxation techniques).

Stress Management strategies (Relaxation techniques)

- Many people exposed to hardship, danger and stressful life events complain of feeling overwhelmed by stress and anxiety, filling of stressful thoughts in their heads.
- Others may experience stress or anxiety in a very physical way, feeling tense or uptight all the time, breathing too quickly, faster heart beating than normal.
- It is first very important for the clients to know that it is safe for their body to do this. In fact, their body was designed to do this. But unfortunately, for you these physical sensations are very uncomfortable and not necessary when you are not in a life-threatening situation.
- Slow breathing strategy will help the people uncoil that tight spring. This may not happen straight away, but with lots of practice the spring will gradually uncoil until you feel more relaxed and calmer.
- Identify supportive family or community members and involve them as much as possible and appropriate.

Slow breathing strategy:

- “Firstly, relax the body a little bit.
- Shake out the arms and legs and let them go floppy and loose.
- Roll the shoulders back and

- Gently move the head from side to side.
- Place the hands on the stomach (belly).
- Then imagine that there is a balloon in the stomach, and when you breathe in you are going to blow that balloon up, so your stomach will expand. And when you breathe out, the air in the balloon will also go out, so your stomach will flatten. "Breathe out until all the air is out, then breathe in". (Practice for at least two minutes.)
- The second step is to slow the rate of breathing down, three seconds to breathe in and three seconds to breathe out. "Breathe in, one, two, three. And breathe out, one, two".
- If clients become stressed by trying to breathe exactly to the counts, this will not be helpful. Just encourage clients to try to "breathe in and breath out slowly, the main aim is simply to slow the breathing down."

Problem	Solution
The client is too concerned about breathing correctly (e.g. keeping to the three seconds in and out, breathing from their stomach).	• Encourage the client not to be worried about following the instructions exactly. • Help them to understand that the main aim is simply to slow their breathing down in the way that best suits them.
The client cannot slow their breathing down when they are at the peak of their anxiety or stress.	• Say to the client that this would be very hard for anyone to do straight away. even a helper. • Spend some time helping the client to identify early signs that they are beginning to feel anxious or stressed so they can start slow breathing earlier. • If this is too difficult, help them to schedule specific times throughout the day to practice slow breathing so they learn how to use it before they get too anxious.
Focusing on breathing makes the client speed up their breathing and feel more anxious.	• Help them to focus on a ticking clock and breathe to the count of the clock rather

	than focus only on the breathing (or a musical beat in a song).
They might also experience feelings of lightheadedness or dizziness, or feel they are losing control.	• Remind them that these sensations are safe and they are not losing control. • Encourage them to focus just on blowing all the air out (just the breathing out) and letting the in-breath come naturally (or by itself). • Then they can return to focusing on the whole process of breathing (in and out)