



...Developing top-notch CNAs, one inservice at a time



A Professional Growth Module for Nurse Aides:

Stress Management Skills



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time



A Professional Growth Module:

STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for nursing assistants like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____. Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

Define stress.



State at least two causes of stress.



State at least two symptoms of stress.



Learn how to manage stress by using four specific skills.



Explain how relaxation techniques help people cope with stress.

THANK YOU!



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

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A Professional Growth Module: Stress Management Skills

WHAT'S ALL THE STRESS ABOUT?

Which of these events do you think would be stressful?

- **Winning the lottery**
- **Getting fired**
- **Getting married**
- **Getting divorced**
- **Going on vacation**

Believe it or not, **all** of these events could be causes of stress. Stress is the way you react—either physically or emotionally—to change. Stress has physical and emotional effects on us that can be *positive* (good) or *negative* (bad). It may be the feeling you get when faced with a new and challenging situation **or** it may be the faint sense of anxiety you feel after “one of those days!”

Stress can come from big events or from the small problems of everyday life. When you think about it, in some ways, stress is like falling in love:

- It's different for everyone.
- It often shows itself in strange ways.

- It's a powerful force that can do a lot of good or a lot of harm.

Stress affects you physically, mentally *and* emotionally. Physically, stress can be damaging to your overall health. Mentally, it can interfere with concentration and decision-making. Emotionally, stress can affect the way you interact with co-workers, loved ones, and others around you.

Why is it important to learn about stress management?

By understanding stress, you'll be able to stay in control—you *won't let stress control you*. Keep reading to learn:

- What stress is and where it comes from.
- The symptoms you can have from stress.
- How to manage stress by using four specific skills.



STRESS IS...

PHYSICAL

When you're under stress, your body releases hormones into your bloodstream. This is called the "**fight-or-flight**" response. Adrenalin is pumped into your bloodstream and causes a number of changes to help you survive including:

- Speeding up your heart rate.
- Moving sugars to key places so your body will have more *strength, energy, and stamina*. This gets you ready to fight harder and faster.
- Increasing the blood supply to your muscles.
- Reducing the blood supply to your skin. This will decrease bleeding if you're hurt and makes sure that energy isn't wasted.
- Dilating your pupils to improve your vision.
- Slowing digestion.
- Getting rid of excess waste that may slow you down—by causing nausea or diarrhea.

Your body is all geared up—ready to help you take on the stress (**fight**) or run away from the stress (**flight**). This fight-or-flight response was useful in the old days, when people dealt with real threats to their survival (like wild animals)! But, in modern daily life, you don't usually fight your way through a stressful situation or run away from it. So, unless you get rid of the adrenalin—through exercise or relaxation—you will stay in a constant state of useless tension.

MENTAL

Stress isn't all in your head, but that is where stress starts. Events don't cause stress. It's how you *interpret* and *react* to the events that cause stress.

POWERFUL

Instead of stress being a negative force, it can become a personal power that you can use to get what you want. After you've had a chance to do a little "skill building," this inservice will help you create a plan to make stress a personal power.

HARMFUL

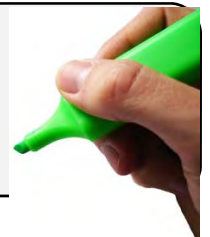
Stress hurts when it becomes a way of life. Long-term stress that builds up in the body has been linked to heart disease, ulcers, and cancers. Up to 3/4 of diseases that people suffer may be stress-related. Stress becomes negative when people stay "geared up" and *don't or can't* relax after meeting a challenge. When stress happens all the time, it causes health problems. People may have physical problems - from tension headaches to heart attacks. For instance, an aide makes nine home visits in eight hours. The next morning, he wakes up with a headache. This may be because he didn't take time to relax after being "geared up."

HELPFUL

A lot of people do their best work under pressure. Stress can be a powerful force for growth. We often learn most when we're *pushed* - by a stressful event. Stress can help you think, focus, and perform better. It is your body's way of rising to a challenge. It can push us to action and create a new awareness or new perspective on things. Without stress, life would be dull and boring. It adds spice, challenge, and opportunity to life. Many people do their best under stress. Once the stress has passed, they take time to relax and "wind down." This helps them build up the physical and emotional strength to get ready for the next challenge. For example, an aide who works in an emergency room likes it when emergencies come in. She thinks better in those situations and relaxes when they are over.

WHAT'S NEW?

Grab your favorite highlighter! As you read through this inservice, **highlight five things** you learn that you didn't know before. Share this new information with your supervisor and co-workers!



WHERE DOES STRESS COME FROM?

STRESS THAT COME FROM INSIDE YOU: This kind of stress comes from worrying about things beyond your control. Your personality often affects the way in which you experience stress. If you are a/an:

- **“Type A”** personality: you thrive on stress...the more, the better!
- **“Type B”** personality: you’re more relaxed and mellow.
- **“Perfectionist”** personality: you have very high standards. Always trying to be “perfect” can put a lot of stress on you.
- **“Excessive Self-Worth”** personality: you constantly pay attention to other’s needs. But you become unhappy and stressed because no one looks after *your* needs.
- **“Anxious”** personality: you’re concerned that things are out of control and tend to worry frequently.

STRESS FROM FATIGUE AND OVERWORK: This kind of stress builds up over a long period. Usually, it occurs when:

- You try to do too much in too little time.
- When you’re not using effective time management strategies. (For example, you schedule yourself to see two clients at the same time).
- You don’t take time to relax.

SURVIVAL STRESS: You experience survival stress when:

- Your physical and emotional health is at risk.
- You are under a lot of pressure.
- You experience unpleasant challenging events.

This source of stress is controlled by the release of **adrenalin**. This hormone gives you a “surge” of energy to help you deal with serious stress. Adrenalin prepares your body for action.

ENVIRONMENT AND JOB STRESS: Where you live and/or work can cause you stress. *The stress comes from:*

- Crowding or invasion of personal space.
- Noise.
- Dirty or untidy conditions.
- Pollution.
- A badly organized or run-down environment.
- A workload that is too heavy.
- Work hours that are too long.
- Conflicts/misunderstandings with co-workers.



FOOD can also contribute to the stress you experience. Here are some examples:

- **Caffeine** increases the levels of stress hormones in your body causing you to feel more irritable and making sleep difficult.
- **Bursts of sugar from sweets or chocolate** can make you *feel* like you have more energy. However, your body reacts to the abnormally high sugar level by releasing too much insulin. This causes a *serious decrease* in energy. Without energy, your body has trouble handling stress.
- **Too much salt** increases your blood pressure and puts your body under chemical stress.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

High levels of stress over a period of time can be harmful to your health. If you experience serious symptoms of stress, you should consult your doctor. If you notice them in your clients—talk to your supervisor. Here are some common symptoms of stress, and the bad effects that a lot of stress can cause.

Short-Term Physical Symptoms

When your body prepares for something that seems like a physical threat by releasing adrenalin it causes:

- Faster heartbeat and breathing.
- Increased sweating.
- Cool skin, hands and feet.
- Feelings of nausea, or butterflies in your stomach.
- Tense muscles.
- Dry mouth.
- A desire to urinate.
- Diarrhea.

Short-Term Performance Effects

Adrenalin can make it harder for you to function because it:

- Interferes with clear judgment and makes it hard to take the time to make good decisions.
- Can seriously decrease your enjoyment of your work.
- Gets in the way of your skills.
- Makes you get less work done.
- Causes situations to seem like a *threat* instead of a challenge.
- Takes up mental energy, leaving you distracted, anxious, frustrated, and short-tempered.
- Can lead to burnout.
- Can lead to injuries due to tiredness and poor concentration.



Long-Term Physical Symptoms

These occur when your body has been exposed to adrenalin over a long period of time. Adrenalin prepares the body for action by giving more energy and oxygen to the muscles. Once a stressful situation ends, your body works to restore balance. However, if stress returns too soon, your body will never regain this balance. This can produce a long-lasting, low-level stress that is hard on your body. If you are exposed to adrenalin for a long period, your health may start to get bad. This can show up in the following ways:

- Change in appetite.
- Frequent colds.
- Illness (heart disease, high blood pressure, asthma, back pain, digestive problems, headaches and skin problems).
- Sexual disorders.
- Aches and pains.
- Feelings of intense and long-term tiredness (fatigue).

Internal Symptoms of Long-Term Stress

When you are under stress or are fatigued, you may find that it's hard to think clearly and rationally about problems. This can lead to internal emotional "upsets," such as:

- Worry or anxiety.
- Confusion and an inability to concentrate or make decisions.
- Feeling ill, out of control, or overwhelmed.
- Mood changes (depression, frustration, hostility, helplessness, impatience, and restlessness).
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Drinking more alcohol and smoking more.
- Relying more on medication.

STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Here are just a few of the potential sources of stress that you may experience on the job:

Stress in Facilities

- Not enough staff
- Sicker clients who require constant attention
- Call bell ringing all the time
- Equipment not working
- Problems with other staff members
- Problems with supervisor or administration
- Clients falling
- Clients not breathing or their heart stopping
- Being on your feet all the time
- Death of a client—expected or unexpected
- Client refusing care

Stress in Home Care

- More than 7 home visits a day
- Not enough staff
- Clients falling
- Problems (conflicts) with client's family
- Taking care of a really sick client
- Having to be at two places at once
- Death of a client—expected or unexpected
- Being stuck in traffic and having to be at a client's home at a certain time
- First day on the job and an emergency happens
- Client refuses care



**HERE ARE
SOME
STATS!**

Many surveys show a large number of employees miss work because of stress. Studies show that:

- An estimated one million workers are absent every day due to stress.
- Over half of the working days missed in the U.S. are due to stress.
- The number of employees calling in sick because of stress has tripled in recent years.



**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

In recent years, stress has led to a rise in violence in the workplace. Unfortunately, studies show that murder is the second-highest cause of workplace deaths. Even postal workers, who usually work in a safe environment, have had problems with employee job stress that has led to violence. We have all heard the term “going postal” used to describe someone becoming violent. This rise in violence at work has made stress management in the workplace more important than ever.

More physical assaults happen in healthcare facilities than in any other type of workplace. Healthcare workers are at risk for violent behavior from clients, co-workers, family members, and strangers. However, the biggest risk of violence comes from aggressive clients.

MANAGING STRESS

Stress is a fact of life, but it doesn't have to be a **way** of life. There are many things in life that you can't control, *but* there are things that you can learn to manage, such as negative stress.

The art of managing stress is to keep yourself at a level of stimulation that's healthy and pleasant.

Learning to manage stress has three parts to it:

1. Identifying the symptoms and the causes.
2. Learning the four skills for managing stress.
3. Using those skills to control stress.

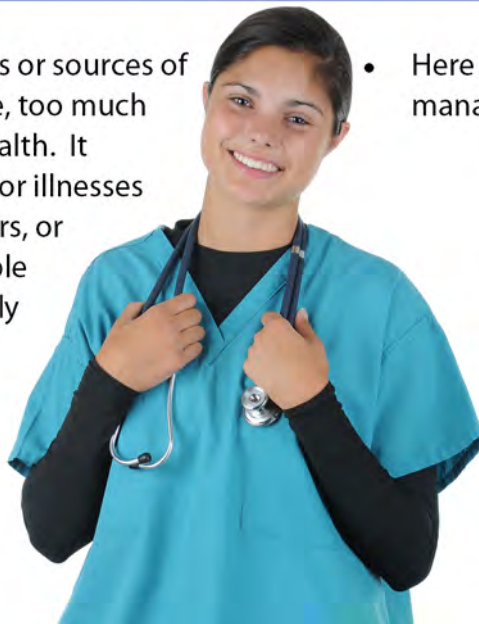
How you deal with stress depends on the source.

- If stress is caused by something out of your control—your only way out is to learn **acceptance**.
- At other times, **coping** skills may help you adapt to the stress or change the situation.
- When stress is caused by something you can control, you can take **action** to change the situation.



Four Skills Needed to Manage Stress

- No matter what symptoms or sources of stress you may experience, too much can be harmful to your health. It contributes to 80% of major illnesses such as heart attacks, ulcers, or cancers. It's also responsible for around 70% of all family physician visits and costs American businesses as much as \$300 billion every year!
- Here are four skills needed to help you manage stress (each will be discussed in detail):
 1. Awareness
 2. Coping
 3. Acceptance
 4. Action



SKILL #1: AWARENESS

The first step to managing stress is to become aware of **things** that make you feel stressed and of **the way** you feel when under stress. If you skip this step, you'll have a hard time getting rid of stress.

What causes stress in your life? Try to identify the situations in your life (called stressors) that make you feel tense. The first thing we usually think of are those events that make us angry or upset. It can also come from small things that build up. Look at the things that cause you stress and how serious each of them really is. Remember, you can cause stress through your thoughts, feelings, and expectations.

- Here are some common stressors:
 - "I never have enough time."
 - "It's hard for me to handle unexpected changes in plans."
 - "My kids/spouse get to me."
 - "I feel that I can't do my job."
- Recognize your stress symptoms. Listen to what your body tries to tell you about stress. Most of us don't realize warning signs when they happen—such as **physical** symptoms, **emotional** symptoms, or **behavioral** symptoms. *Think about the times you were under stress and see which of the following symptoms you experienced:*



Physical Symptoms

- Tight neck and shoulders
- Pounding heart
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Eyestrain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Rashes
- Headache
- High blood pressure
- Upset stomach
- Cold or sweaty hands
- A lot of sweating
- Nervous tics
- Grinding teeth

Behavioral Symptoms

- Overeating
- Change in sleep habits
- Forgetfulness
- Negative attitude
- Increase in smoking or drinking alcohol
- Reckless driving
- Drug use
- Acting out with violence

Emotional Symptoms

- Depression
- Anger
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Apathy
- Impatience
- Feeling that you can't cope



Some people find it helpful to keep a Stress Diary. Write down the things that cause you stress when they happen. Write your stress level on a scale from one to ten. This can help you to see what causes you stress and it can help you in dealing with it.

Each event that sets off a stress response in you is a stressor. For each stressor ask yourself two questions and jot the answers down in your diary:

1. How important is it?
2. Can I control this event?

SKILL #2: ACCEPTANCE

Have you ever worried whether it will rain or not? If so, did it do you any good to worry about it? Sometimes all you can do is learn to **accept** things as they are. Here are a few tidbits to help you with the second step to managing stress:

Keep It In Perspective

Do you worry that you'll forget to do something important for a client? Do you "beat yourself up" if you are five minutes late to work? Many of us worry about things that will never happen. We also put unnecessary stress on ourselves by making a big deal over a minor situation. When worries and fears are causing you a lot of stress, ask yourself:

- Has this happened before?
- What did I learn?
- What's the worst that could happen?
- Can I do anything about this?
- What would I tell a friend in this situation?

Talk to Yourself

Many people find that repeating certain sayings to themselves help them **accept** things. Here are some examples:

- "Every cloud has a silver lining."
- "Things could be worse."
- "This too will pass."
- "It's a learning experience."
- "They'll get over it."
- "Calm down."

You can choose your own phrase to use as a "secret weapon" when times get tough or when you're having a bad day.

Keep A Positive Attitude

Picture this: It is a busy day on the unit, the call lights are ringing, the phone is ringing and Mrs. Jones falls out of her wheelchair! Ever have days like that?

- It's hard to smile when things go wrong. There are times when you have to blow off steam or express your feelings. But letting bad emotions take over completely only makes the situation worse.
- If you keep a positive attitude, you're more likely to find a way out of the problem — or learn to accept the situation.
- A positive attitude can become contagious. It can make it easier to live and work with others.



Get Counseling

Sometimes you need professional help to get through stressful events, such as the unexpected death of a client.

- Getting counseling is NOT a sign of weakness. It takes strength to see that you can't always do it alone.
- If you feel completely alone, overwhelmed, or hopeless, you may need a counselor to help you.
- If you are not comfortable with a counselor, talk to a friend.

SKILL #2: ACCEPTANCE, continued...

Develop a “Stress-Resistant Personality”

Some people *create* stress for themselves. They are known as “Type A Personalities.” People who are “Type A’s” tend to:

- Set high goals that are hard to meet.
 - Have a hard time relaxing.
 - Be hard to please.
 - Always be in a hurry.
- Doing regular (non-competitive) exercise is a good way to “cool down” a Type A personality.**
- If you see these qualities in yourself, be aware that they can make you more prone to both minor and serious diseases.
 - Try to **accept** that reality often falls short of what your expectations may be.
 - People who are always rushing often get less things done than those who take time to plan and relax. Remember, “haste makes waste.”
 - Another way to develop stress resistance is to consider problems as “challenges.” Look for possibilities and creative solutions. Commitment to family, friends, spiritual and community activities also helps reduce stress and put problems in perspective. Being “connected” to others can provide strength.
 - Recognize what you can change and what you can’t. Learn to let go of the things you can’t do anything about.
 - Improve your time management. In patient care, you often aren’t able to plan things out on a schedule, but work on planning in those areas that you can.

What Can I Change?

Can you avoid or get rid of your stressors completely? Can you reduce the level of stress? Can you take a break during stressful times? Ask yourself these questions and see if there are simple things like these that you can do to reduce your stress.

You Can Also Change Your Reaction to Stress

Try to:

- See problems as solvable.
- Be aware of overreacting in a stressful situation.
- Be aware of expecting too much from yourself.
- Avoid worrying about things that are out of your control.



SKILL #3: COPING

Learning to **cope** with the stress of daily life is an important skill. Coping may help you adapt to stress or change the situation. Here are some coping skills for you to try:

Physical Fitness

Here's your chance to run away from stress **or** to swim, bike or walk it off. Physical fitness helps fight stress in two ways:

1. A physically fit body is better at tolerating the effects of stress.
 - A well-balanced fitness program that has good nutrition and adequate sleep gives you the energy and endurance to handle whatever comes your way.
2. Exercise has a soothing effect that lasts long after you've exercised.
 - Exercises that calls for repetition like running and swimming can produce a mental state like meditation.
 - Aerobic exercise that gets your heart pounding for at least 20 minutes releases chemicals in the brain (called endorphins). They decrease depression and stress.
 - Non-aerobic stretching exercises like yoga are also calming because they induce a deep breathing-like mental state.

So, Move It...

- Do whatever it takes to get your heart pounding and work up a sweat!
- Take a brisk walk.
- Jog.
- Swim a few laps.
- Dance your stress away.

Relax

There are many ways you can relax, including drinking, smoking, watching TV, or eating. **However**, these do nothing to **reverse** the physical effects of stress. True relaxation is a skill that you can learn and use when you need it. Stress tenses your body in the following ways:

- Makes your breathing shallow.
- Raises blood pressure.
- Makes the heart pound.
- Clouds your judgment.



And Stretch It...

- Roll your shoulders. Then, raise them to your ears.
- Do side bends and reach for the stars.
- Draw circles with your feet.
- Stand up, stretch, breaking the pattern of muscular tension.

Relaxation skills can make you *feel* better, *think* better and *perform* better. There are relaxation activities you can do like:

- Yoga—a combination of breathing exercises and body poses.
- T'ai Chi (pronounced tie-chee)— a martial art that uses slow and gentle exercises that help calm your mind.
- Deep Breathing.
- Regular Exercise.

SKILL #3: COPING, continued...

Do Something For Yourself

Doing fun things that you enjoy is a good way to relieve stress. Find a hobby. Create a garden in your backyard. Go to a movie. Read a book. Get a massage. Do whatever relaxes you and puts a smile on your face.

Live a Balanced Life

Having a good balance between work and family life (and friends, of course) can go a long way in keeping stress from becoming a problem. It can also keep you on an even keel when stress does arise.

Don't over commit yourself.

You can only do so much!



...and speaking of smiles...



Just Laugh!

Study after study shows the physical benefits of laughter. It lowers stress hormone levels and increases the 'feel-good'

chemicals (called endorphins) in your body. It also brings more oxygen into your body. So go to the video store and rent a comedy. Or go to the circus. Do whatever makes you laugh!

Get Away From It All

Try a little meditation and progressive muscle relaxation. When you get stressed out go to a quiet place. Sit or lie in a comfortable position and try this:

- Scan your body looking for tension by focusing on each part. Start with your feet and work up to your head.
- Let your jaw drop. Let your eyelids get heavy and relaxed.
- At each place that you feel tension, take a deep, full breath and imagine the tightness "melting" when you breathe out.
- You can also tighten each area and count to 5 and then relax it. Try squeezing the muscles in your face, arms, legs and buttocks. Tightening the muscles helps you focus on that area and appreciate the different levels of tension and relaxation.
- Allow your thoughts to pass through your mind without paying attention to them. Repeat the following:
 - "I'm relaxed and calm."
 - "My hands are heavy and warm."
 - "My heartbeat is slow and regular."
 - "I feel peaceful and still."
- Continue to breathe slowly and regularly. Once you're relaxed, enjoy it.
- Imagine you're in a beautiful place such as a beach, a forest or a mountain top. Stay in this relaxed state for five to ten minutes before slowly awakening.

SKILL #4: ACTION

Okay. You've looked at your life and realized that some of the stress you feel is from things you cannot change. Those are the stresses you need to accept and/or cope with. But, you might have realized that some of the stress in your life is from things that you can change. That's where taking **action** comes in.

Make a Plan

Think about the top three things that cause you stress. For Susan, a nursing assistant, they include:

- Taking care of her sick mother—after she's taken care of her clients all day.
- Helping her kids with their homework after a long day at work.
- Fighting the crowds at the grocery store on the weekends.

Let's see. Susan can't change the fact that her mother is ill or that her kids need her help with their homework. And, she has to buy groceries! So, what kind of a plan can she make?

Consider Susan's plan:

- Susan switches with her sister—so now she's helping her mother on the weekends instead of after work on the weekdays.
- Susan tells her kids that she needs one hour to relax after work before she can help them with their homework. She asks her kids to finish all their "easy" homework while she's relaxing.
- Because the grocery store is less crowded on weekday evenings, Susan changes her shopping time from Saturday afternoon to Monday at 8 pm. She finishes her shopping in half the time, and after the kids help her put the groceries away, they all sit down and have a special dessert.

Has Susan done away with the things that caused her stress? Not really. She still takes care of her mother, helps her kids, and goes grocery shopping. But, by **taking control** of when and how she accomplishes these things, Susan has decreased her stress dramatically. She feels happier and gets more done.

Can you make a plan that will manage your stress?

THINK about it!

Change Bad Habits. Do you have any of these bad habits?

- Smoking
- Eating too many unhealthy foods
- Being a "couch potato"
- Staying up too late at night
- Drinking too much alcohol

Many people find that if they change a bad habit into a good habit, they have less stress in their lives. For example, if you are usually a night owl, try going to bed an hour earlier every night for three weeks. See if it makes a difference in how "stressed out" you are.

Ask For Help. It's very common for people to get stressed out when they think they have to "do it all." They feel like they have to take care of a home, a family, and a job—and that they have to do everything by themselves. Don't fall into this trap! If you feel stressed out, think about asking for help from:

- Friends
- Relatives
- Co-workers
- Supervisors
- Church members
- Community service

Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it!



SKILL #4: ACTION, continued...

Communicate

Lack of communication is the beginning of many troubles, hurt feelings, misunderstandings, missed deadlines, and connections not made. In other words, **STRESS!** Here are some statements that are the result of a failure to communicate:

- “What do you think he meant by that?”
 - “If you didn’t understand the instructions, why didn’t you ask instead of doing the whole job wrong?”
 - “You never listen to me!”
- Successful communication takes at least two people—a **sender** (talker) and a **receiver** (listener). Some people are good at saying what they mean, but not good at listening. Others listen well, but don’t send clear messages. It takes practice to be good at both sending and receiving!
 - Much of how we deal with people is through what’s called nonverbal communication (body posture, tone of voice, the expression on our face). Paying attention to these things is important in understanding someone.
 - Below are skills to help you communicate better—when you are talking and when you are listening.

Talking Skills

1. Be exact: *“This is exactly what I expect from you.”*
2. Be assertive: *“Yes, I’d like that.”*
3. Be sensitive to the listener’s needs: *“How do you feel about that?”*

Listening Skills

1. Keep an open mind: *“That sounds interesting.”*
2. Focus on the message: *“And then what happened?”*
3. Be understanding: *“That must have made you feel great.”*
4. After listening to someone, check to make sure you understood what was said: *“The way I understand it, this is what you said...”*



WHAT I KNOW NOW!

Now that you’ve read this inservice on stress management, take a moment to jot down a couple of things you learned that you didn’t know before.
