

# The Stress Thermometer

## & Controlling What You Can

# WELCOME

Hello and welcome to this course on The Stress Thermometer and controlling what you can.

We are so excited that you are part of the Community for Caregivers and hope you find strength and support here!

This workbook provides you with all of the tools and activities we cover in this course. It also gives you space to write your thoughts and action plans as we go through each section.

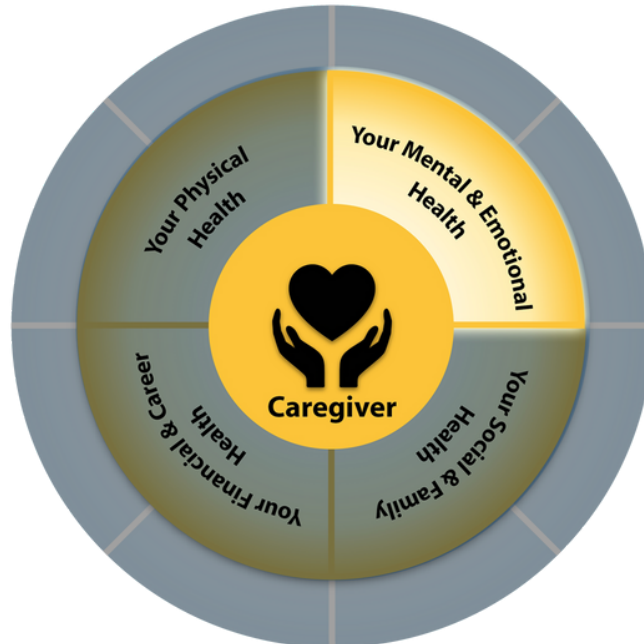
Please save a blank copy of this workbook so you always have it for reference. As your situation changes, you may find yourself wanting to revisit the principles taught in the course.

Go ahead and PRINT this now so you can begin writing. Let's get started!



# MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

## Understanding and Managing Your Stress



**We KNOW that there is a strong relationship between your caregiving and your mental and emotional health.**

This course explores ideas to help you understand your stress levels, your triggers, and your mind / body connection. It includes activities that help you to identify and manage your stress levels. You will also practice using a tool that can help you discover the areas where you need additional help and how to make changes that will improve your caregiving situation.

We'll cover:

- The Stress Thermometer Activity
- Sorting Your Spheres / Controlling What You Can

# MANAGING STRESS AND EMOTIONS

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals. This stress thermometer scale is to be used as a tool, the word descriptions may not reflect your range of emotions and you may not experience these emotions in the sequence shown below.

This reflection activity is a tool to help you:

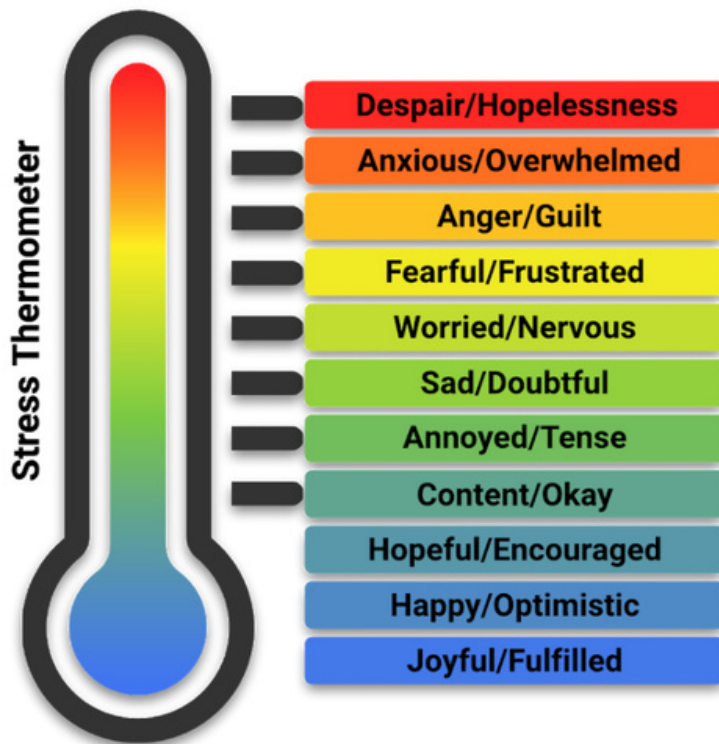


1. Identify and label your stress levels
2. Observe where you feel stress in your body
3. Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress
4. Recognize aspects of stress that you can control
5. Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

## The Stress Thermometer

1. Become Self-Aware - Identify and label your stress levels

How do you feel right now? Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings; they are valid. Let yourself feel what you are feeling right now. Circle the words that describe your feelings? Add words as needed.



# MANAGING STRESS AND EMOTIONS

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals. This stress thermometer scale is to be used as a tool, the word descriptions may not reflect your range of emotions and you may not experience these emotions in the sequence shown below.

This reflection activity is a tool to help you:

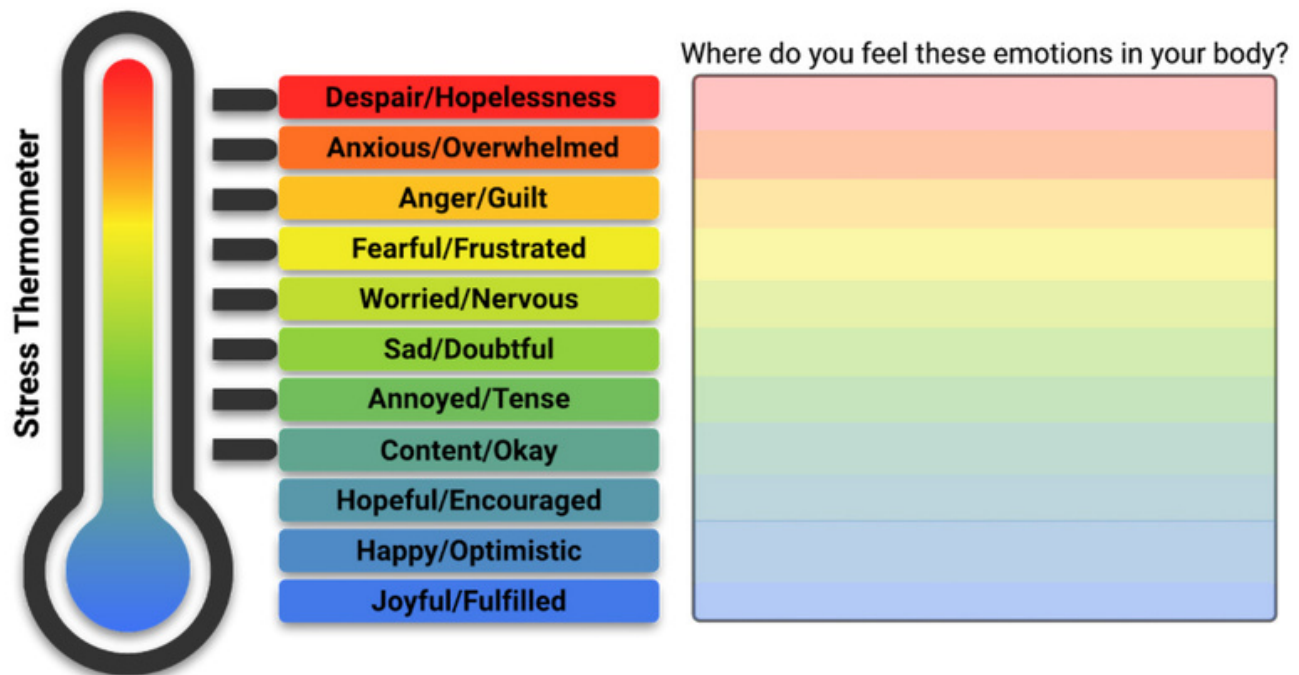


1. Identify and label your stress levels
2. Observe where you feel stress in your body
3. Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress
4. Recognize aspects of stress that you can control
5. Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

## The Stress Thermometer

2. Connect Mind & Body - Observe where you feel stress in your body

Where in your body do you feel stress? In your gut; heart; tensed shoulders; headaches; low energy; other? This can help you recognize signs of stress early. Write down in the box below where you think you feel your stress to help you connect your mind and body.



# MANAGING STRESS AND EMOTIONS

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals. This stress thermometer scale is to be used as a tool, the word descriptions may not reflect your range of emotions and you may not experience these emotions in the sequence shown below.

This reflection activity is a tool to help you:



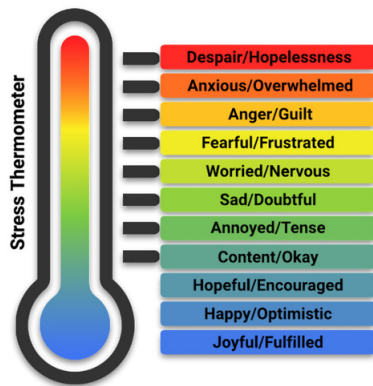
1. Identify and label your stress levels
2. Observe where you feel stress in your body
3. Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress
4. Recognize aspects of stress that you can control
5. Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

## The Stress Thermometer

3. Identify Triggers - Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress

What do you think triggers your stress? What increases your stress levels? Think about where you placed yourself on the stress thermometer.

Write in the colored boxes below what contributes to you feeling this way.



# CONTROLLING WHAT YOU CAN

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals.

This reflection activity is a tool to help you:



1. Identify and label your stress levels
2. Observe where you feel stress in your body
3. Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress
4. Recognize aspects of stress that you can control
5. Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

## Sort Your Spheres

4. Sort Your Spheres - Recognize aspects of stress that you can control

Sort between what you *can* control, what you *can* influence, and what you *can't* control or influence.



What you **can** control



What you **can** influence



What you **can't** control or influence

# CONTROLLING WHAT YOU CAN

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals.

This reflection activity is a tool to help you:



1. Identify and label your stress levels
2. Observe where you feel stress in your body
3. Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress
4. Recognize aspects of stress that you can control
5. Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

## 4. Sort Your Spheres Cont. - Recognize aspects of stress that you can control

It may be difficult to recognize what is and what is not within your control or influence. If needed, reference the guiding questions below to help push your thinking and see if there is an aspect of a trigger or situation you can control or influence in a way you might not have noticed before.

Could I have greater control or influence if I . . .

- gained additional information?
- developed a new skill?
- developed, changed, or broke a habit?
- changed something in my environment?
- reached out to someone else?
- shifted my priorities or mindset?

# CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Note: This reflection activity is based on current research and therapeutic practices, but is not meant to replace the care or advice given from medical professionals.

This reflection activity is a tool to help you:



1. Identify and label your stress levels
2. Observe where you feel stress in your body
3. Discover the triggers that activate or increase your stress
4. Recognize aspects of stress that you can control
5. Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

5. **Take Action** - Create a meaningful action plan to prevent and lower stress

What could I do to **prevent** my stress levels from rising?

What could I do to **lower** my stress levels as needed?

# ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND RESOURCES

To Help Improve and Maintain Caregiver Mental & Emotional Health

**Physical Health & Activity:** A strong mind-body connection exists such that physical activity and health can directly impact mental and emotional health.

- Practicing yoga
- Visiting with medical doctors
- Psychiatrists/psychologists
- Chiropractors
- Acupuncture and other non-Western medicine providers

**Social Activity:** A strong connection exists between your mental and emotional health and your social health. Too many caregivers find themselves feeling alone and isolated.

- Join a caregiver support group
  - Local/in-person
  - Online - Be sure to join the Community for Caregivers Facebook Group
- Time with (a) good friend(s)
- Join a fitness club or interest group

**Self-Reflection and Self-Care:** It is crucial to make yourself a priority and make time for yourself.

- Get rest and respite
- Keep a journal
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Perform breathing exercises
- Spend time in nature
- Make time for yourself. What fills your tank? Make a list and do something on it. Show yourself you are important to you.

**Spiritual Practice:** Connecting with a higher power can strengthen you.

- Connect with a faith community or spiritual group
- Recognize a higher power
- Practice principles of grace, forgiveness, and peaceful problem solving
- Personal devotional/worship habits (scripture, inspirational reading, prayer, spiritual meditation)

# ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND RESOURCES

Continued

**Service:** Research shows that when we help others, we feel better.

- Volunteer for a higher cause
- There are many places you can volunteer: Community centers, libraries, hospitals, faith organizations, animal shelters, food banks, etc.
- Or informally serve people around you (neighbors, family, friends)

**Therapy & Counseling:** There are wonderful tools to help guard and improve our mental and emotional health. There is power in sharing.

- One-on-one therapy (e.g., CBT, DBT, EMDR)
- Support groups
- Many providers have both in-person and online options

**Tapping Into Your Creativity:** Being creative improves your health.

- Visual arts (e.g., draw, color, sculpt, paint)
- Knit, sew, crochet
- Write
- Musical arts (e.g., sing, dance, play an instrument)
- Create in whatever way brings you joy and helps you feel “in the flow”

## **Emergency Contacts**

- Emergency Medical Services: 911
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline: 1-877-SAMHSA7 (1-877-726-4727)

*\*This is not a comprehensive list, and as with all that is taught in this course, you are encouraged to seek help from qualified medical and mental-health professionals to obtain appropriate assessments and corresponding treatment plans.*

