

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

MANAGING STRESS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

Topic Guide

Family Health Forum



Lions Clubs International
FOUNDATION

Special Olympics





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Learning Objectives

The aim of this Family Health Forum is to support families in understanding stress, identifying strategies for building resilience against stress and selecting strategies that can support them at home.

This Forum is divided into the following three topic areas:

1. Understanding stress and wellbeing.
2. Strategies for managing stress and regulating emotions.
3. Action planning for a regular self-care routine



Agenda

The following is a general agenda for the Forum and the topics covered.

Topic/Activity
Welcome and introduction
Overview of Family Health Forums
Welcome reflection
Activity: What would you do? Stress Response Game
Discussion: What is stress? Understanding the Stress Response System
Individual Reflection: Finding Joy
Presentation: Managing stress with self-care
Presentation: Self-care activities from Strong Minds
Individual Reflection: Selecting a self-care strategy to practice
Presentation: Finding the Balance
Question and Answer
Closing: Key takeaways
Gratitude Sharing
Sharing community resources



Overview

The following pages provide an overview of the Forum in order from beginning to end as it aligns with the Managing Stress and Building Resilience PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint presentation and this document include notes, draft script, materials, and other commentary for facilitators.

Remember to adapt the slides, language, and images to better suit your context.

This FHF is divided into four parts.

- Part 1: Welcome and Introduction.
- Part 2: Understanding stress and wellbeing.
- Part 3: Strategies for managing stress and regulating emotions.
- Part 4: Action planning and closing.

The overview uses the following symbols to highlight key information for each presentation slide.



SAY- Contains the information and concepts the facilitator will share with participants.



ASK – Cues facilitator to engage the audience with a question.



NOTE – Directional/informational note to the facilitator about the content or activity.



MATERIALS – Details on what tools/items will be used during the activity.



Part 1: Welcome and Introduction

The first five slides of the presentation are focused on welcome and introductions.

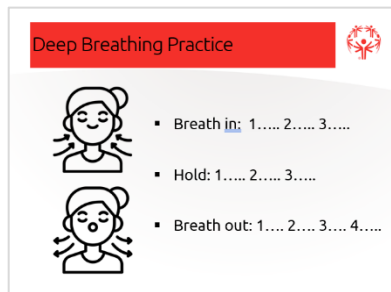
Slide 1: Opening



Say:

- Before we get started a few housekeeping needs:
 - Location of toilets/washrooms
 - Snacks or drinks
 - Other logistics

Slide 2: Deep breathing practice



Notes:

- The goal of this opening activity is to help participants have a sense of calm.
- Please adapt the activity as is best for your context and participants.
- Some alternative opening activities can be (See links on slide XX for sample):
 - A guided meditation
 - Guided body scan
 - Prayer
 - Song
 - Guided relaxation tense and release muscles



Say:

- Welcome to today's Family Health Forum.
- Before we begin, let's take a moment to come together and calm our bodies and minds so that we can be fully present.
- We are going to do a deep breathing exercise. This is a simple strategy that you can utilize at any time.
- Sit in comfortable position, relax your arms, lower your eye gaze or close your eyes if you are comfortable.
 - Take a deep breath in for a count of 3, (1, 2, 3)
 - Hold your breath for a count of 3 (1, 2, 3)
 - Now exhale slowly for a count of 4 (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Let's repeat that two more times.



Slide 3: Introductions



Notes:

- Repeat the game until all participants themselves.
- Other adaptations are to ask participants to go around and share their name and what brings them joy, without having them remember the activities of the previous speakers.

Say:

- As you know, our topic today is managing stress and building resilience.
- We are going to spend the hour together, learning about stress and its impact on the body and exploring strategies on how we can manage stress.
- Let's take a moment to get to know each other and set some ground rules for our time together.
- Let's get to know each other a little bit and play a memory game where we introduce ourselves.
- For this game we will pass around this ball and each person must say something that brings them joy.
- The person speaking throws the ball to someone else and this person must say their name and something that brings them joy as well as the previous speakers' names and activity that brings them joy.



Materials:

- Item to be passed around (i.e., ball) for introduction game.
- Name cards or paper for participants to write down their name/decorate.

Slide 4: Overview of the Forum




Say:

- This session will take about 1 hour, and we are going to cover the following topics.
- During our time together, we will focus on the following 3 topics:
 - Understanding stress and wellbeing.
 - Strategies for managing stress and regulating emotions.
 - Action planning for a regular self-care routine.
- We will have a mix of activities, discussion, and presentations.
- We all have something valuable to share and we are here to learn from each other experiences as well.
- Feel free to share any questions or comments you may have as we go along.



Slide 5: About Family Health Forums




About Family Health Forums

FHFs are spaces for:

- Connection with other families
- Connection with service providers


Our ways of working:

1. Respect
2. Active listening
3. Judgement- free zone
4. Confidentiality



Materials:

- Writing/drawing utensils
- Loose paper/cards
- Basket or other container to collect questions

 **Say:**

- Family health Forums are occasions to bring families together to share their experiences with each other, and to connect with service providers in the community.
- We strive to use these sessions to support your care and wellbeing for yourselves, your family members including athletes, siblings, athletes, and others in the home.
- As with all Family Health Forums – this is a welcoming space, and we have 4 principles to guide our time together:
 - We RESPECT each other's opinions and recognize that we may all be at different stages of caring for ourselves and all members of the family.
 - We use ACTIVE LISTENING to be fully present with each other and give each other our undivided attention. We also provide feedback that aims to enhance our mutual understanding of an issue.
 - We are a JUDGEMENT-FREE zone – we recognize that we each bring our own unique experiences to this event. We observe our own judgmental thoughts and replace them with non-judgmental ones.
 - We believe in CONFIDENTIALITY – we agree to keep what is shared and discussed here.
- We are here to learn from and with each other – feel free to ask questions at any time. You can, ask your question to the group, or you can write down your questions and place them in the question box.



Part 2: Understanding Stress and Well-being


Slides six to eleven are focused on understanding stress and the stress response system.

Slide 6: Welcome Reflection




Welcome Reflection

- What are your successes relating to healthy eating?
- What are your challenges or areas of concern relating to healthy eating?




Notes:

- Remind participants it is not mandatory to share.



Say:

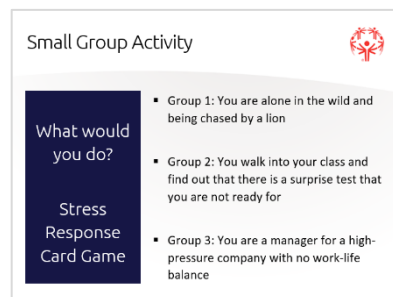
- We know that the journey of caring for a child with ID has its ups and downs and our care for ourselves, other family members can be impacted.
- Before we begin, please take a moment to write down your successes and challenges, areas of concern or questions you have in regards to managing stress.
- Turn to page __ in your participant workbook and record your thoughts there.



Ask:

- After a few minutes, ask participants if there any volunteers who would like to share their responses.

Slide 7: Activity – What Would You Do? Stress Response Game




Small Group Activity

What would you do?


Stress Response Card Game

- Group 1: You are alone in the wild and being chased by a lion
- Group 2: You walk into your class and find out that there is a surprise test that you are not ready for
- Group 3: You are a manager for a high-pressure company with no work-life balance



Notes:

- The scenarios can be adapted for your context and group.
- Ensure that the scenarios are unrealistic, fun and relatable.
- The scenarios should be situations that can show the fight, flight, freeze response.




Say:

- We are going to play a game to learn about the stress response system.
- Let's divide into 3 groups and each group will respond to the following scenarios.
- The full description of each scenario is in your participant workbook starting on page__
- In your groups you will respond to the following questions. These questions are also in your workbooks.
- What would you do if you were in this situation? And why? Try and fight? Try and run away? Freeze in place?
- What do you think would be happening with your body?
- When completed each group will share their responses to the larger group.
- You will have 7 minutes for this activity.



Slide 8: What is Stress?

What is stress?



Stress is normal

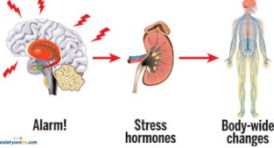
- A natural human response to address perceived challenges and threats
- Hormonal changes and physiological responses that help us:
 - To fight a threat
 - To flee to safety
 - To freeze if we think danger is imminent

Say:

- Thank you for sharing your group responses.
- Our bodies are incredible machines with many different parts that work together to keep us alive. Stress is part of this machinery.
- Stress can be defined as our bodies response to things that happen that we perceive as stressful.
- It is important to remember that stress is normal – it is a normal human response to a threat or challenge.
- When we think about why humans have developed a stress response system it was to keep us safe and alive
- The hormonal changes that happen in our bodies happen immediately and often without our awareness.
- They help to focus our attention, give us the energy and motivation to respond quickly and effectively to the threat to fight, to flee or to freeze all so that we can stay alive.

Slide 9: The Stress Response System

The Stress Response System



1. Distress signal sent across the body

2. Rest and digest

Alarm! Stress hormones Body-wide changes

Say:

- The stress response happens when we perceive situation as stressful.
- Our brain sends messages to other parts of the brain to alert an alarm, and this releases the stress hormone called cortisol.
- Some of the body wide changes include breathing and heart rate increase, also blood pressure goes up, and our body releases more sugar into the blood. These increases in blood sugar level provide more energy for the body.
- This increase in energy helps us to escape from or deal with a stressful situation – critical for fight or flight.
- This response happens so fast, sometimes before the brain's visual centers have had a chance to fully process what is happening.
- This is why people are able to jump out of the path of an oncoming car even before they think about what they are doing.
- After our brains recognize the threat has passed – our bodies calm down.
- The body-wide changes go back to their neutral state and balance is restored again in the body.

Ask:

- What are some, body-wide changes you experience when you feel stress?

Notes:

- Ask for 1 or 2 volunteers to share, facilitator can also share their own body-wide changes when they feel stress.



Slides 10: Chronic Stress is Harmful

Chronic Stress is harmful



- Repeated and prolonged activation of stress response system
- Stress response system does not restore to balanced
- Results in a range of health problems

Say:

- The stress response is helpful in short periods to address a perceived threat and where the body returns to a balanced state.
- Repeated and prolonged activation of the stress response is unhelpful.
- In this situation the body does not return to a balanced state.
- It means that the hormone levels in the body stay high.
- Over an extended period, high levels of these stress hormones can impact the brain and body systems and result in a range of health concerns such as:
 - High blood pressure
 - Heart disease
 - Depression and anxiety
 - Memory loss
 - Poor sleep
- Remember some stress can be good for you, too much stress overtime, can be harmful.

Slide 11: Chronic Stress Can Look Like

Chronic stress can look like...



Say:

- While chronic stress can be harmful, it is never too late for us to learn how to manage stress and reduce its impact on our health.
- The first step is for us to recognize what stress feels like for us.
- It can be different for everybody.
- Some examples include.
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Changes in our appetite
 - Increased alcohol consumption or smoking
 - Trouble sleeping
 - Feeling sad, angry, or unwell
- Take a moment to think about what stress looks like for you in your body.





Part 3: Strategies for Managing Stress and Regulating Emotions

Slides twelve to sixteen are focused on strategies for managing stress.

Slide 12: Individual Reflection

Individual Reflection

Say:

- When we think about managing our stress a first step is to think about the things that bring us joy or that nourish us
- Sometimes it can be difficult for us to make time for the things that nourish us and bring us joy.
- It can be difficult to balance everything as a parent, working or not, being a teacher, therapist, friend, confidante and so much more.
- It is not possible to be all things and there needs to be a pause, stop sign, boundary, or limit even in our own family.
- Let's take 7 minutes to explore this on our own.
- Please make a list of 10 things you do in a typical day.
- Write an 'N' next to activities that nourish you or uplift you.
- Write a 'D' next to activities that are depleting or take away your energy or enjoyment.
- You might say 'it depends' for some activities and in that case, it is interesting to think about/break down what it depends on

After 7 minutes:


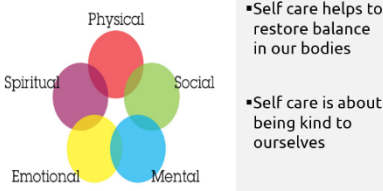
- Have a look at your list of N's and D's.
- Are they balanced? Are there more D's or more N's.
- Making time for activities that bring us joy is an important part of self-care.

Materials:

- Timer/stopwatch
- Participant guidebook

Slide 13: Managing Stress with Self-Care

Managing Stress with Self Care

Say:

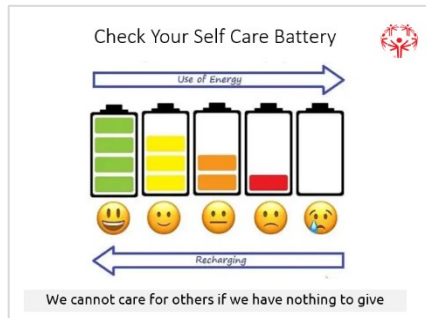
- When we think about making time for joy or nourishing activities in our lives it is a form of self-care.
- Self-care is anything we do with the intention of being kind to ourselves.
- Self-care helps to restore balance in our bodies.
- It is not a treat; it is an investment in our well-being.
- We can have self-care activities related to our physical, spiritual, social, emotional and or mental well-being.
- We can try to enhance our activities in all these areas, or we can focus on 1 category, there is no one way for everyone.
- The goal is to bring awareness to at least one category and be kind to ourselves by intentionally identify an activity to practice.

Ask:

- Can you take this time as an opportunity to deepen your love with yourself?



Slide 14: Check Your Self-Care Battery



Ask:

- Have you heard the sayings *'You can't pour from an empty cup.'* or *'Put your own oxygen mask on first before helping others'?*
- What do these sayings mean to you?



Say:

- Often as caregivers, we give and give of ourselves to others or to other things.
- These activities can be depleting of our energy.
- When we have given everything or had too many depleting activities our self-care battery is empty and at this point, we are unable to give to others either.
- We are of no use to anyone else if we don't care for ourselves and refill our energy batteries.
- There will always be stressors or things that deplete our energy.
- We cannot always control these depleting activities, sometimes they are surprised, such as a sick child.
- Too many depleting activities without counteracting these with joyful activities leaves little time for us to recharge.
- Only when we can recharge our energy batteries through self-care practices can we then be at a healthy place to give to others.
- Fortunately, there are simple actions we can take to recharge.
- Taking short bursts of time out of our day to recharge is not likely to have too much of a negative impact on the rest of our time.
- Rather it will make us happier, more energetic, more productive, and more useful to others.



Slide 15: Activity – Recharging our Self-Care Batteries

Small group activity



Note:

- Split participants into 5 groups
- Assign each group a category to focus on
- Remind each group to select 1 activity from their list to demonstrate/facilitate with the larger group.
- When the groups are sharing their activities, record them on a flip chart/large paper and hang the paper on the wall for all participants to be able to see.
- If you are short on time, consider asking the groups to read out their list of 5 and skip the demonstration/facilitation.

Say:

- Let's look again at the well-being categories- physical, spiritual, social, emotional, and mental.
- These are all areas where we can practice self-care and engaging in nourishing activities that bring us joy.
- We will split into 5 groups; each group will focus on one of the well-being categories.

Ask:

- Thinking about your community, what are 5 nourishing activities people can do to recharge their self-care batteries in each of these categories?
- Take into consideration your community, its environment, your religious practices.
- Think of realistic and accessible actions that could be available to most individuals.

Say:

- Please write down all your suggested activities so we can share them with each other.
- After your 5 minutes of discussion each group will share their list of 5 activities and then select 1 brief activity to demonstrate with the larger group
- For example, if deep breathing is one of your activities, you can guide our larger group in a short deep breathing activity.



Slide 16: Self-Care Activities from Strong Minds

Self-care Activities from Strong Minds



Mindfulness



Creative Self-expression



Physical fitness



Healthy Eating



Sleep

Say:

- Thank you for sharing your list of nourishing activities that can help us recharge.
- Here are additional tips from Strong Minds Family Tip Sheet – a copy of which is attached to your materials.
 - Practice mindfulness: taking time to slow down and be present. This practice can help to improve our focus decrease stress and assist in managing emotion. Examples include doing a body scan, going for an exploration walk or a gratitude share.
 - Healthy eating – our bodies are powered by what we eat. Certain foods have more nutrients and are better for our bodies. By eating healthy foods, we can make sure that our brain has the power to help us focus and learn and that our muscles have the fuel to help us move.
 - Sleep – giving our bodies to time rest and recharge is important. Routines for bedtime and relaxation can be helpful to build regular rest
 - Creative self-expression: Art allows us to share and connect with others. We do not need to have special talents nor specific materials to produce great artwork. Exploring new materials and/or making something that is uniquely yours can be fun and relaxing.
 - Physical fitness: When we take care of our bodies, we are also taking care of minds. Physical exercise helps keeps us healthy, decreases stress and can help to improve our mood. Explore different activities that can be done individually or as a whole family.
- In addition to these activities, connecting with other families going through similar experiences can be very helpful.




Part 4: Action Planning and Closing

Slides seventeen to twenty are focused on creating action plans to integrate self-care into participants' routines and to close the Forum.


Slide 17: Individual Reflection

Individual Reflection



What self-care strategies will you try at home

- What self care strategies are resonating with you? Is there something new you would like to try?
- Select 1 strategy to try the next month that will be a specific self care strategy JUST FOR YOU and fill out the Commitment Cards



Say:

- Now that we have explored different strategies for recharging and managing our stress.
- Please take the next 7 minutes to think about 1 strategy that you can realistically do to recharge.
- Select one strategy that you can try for the next month and commit to doing.
- Think about what works best for you and your family.
- It does not have to be something very big, what is important is that it is realistic and doable.
- Once you have thought about a strategy to commit to for the first month, you can complete the commitment cards in your materials pack.
- Add anything from the slides that was not said by the group.
- Remember to keep trying and explore new ways to support integration of healthy foods.

Ask:



- Would anyone like to share their self-care strategy they are going to try?

Note:

- Facilitator can start off by sharing their strategy.

Slide 18: Questions and Open Discussion

Questions

Note:

- This is the time to address any outstanding questions or concerns from participants.
- Start off by responding to the challenges and questions that participants shared at the beginning of the session.
- Remember to answer as thoroughly as possible.
- If relevant you can also ask other participants if they have suggestions to share.
- Leverage your community partners to help you respond to questions.
- If there are questions you are not able to respond to, be honest and if feasible do the following:
 - Refer individuals with that concern to community mental health partners – have names and contacts for these referral partners.
 - Take note of the question and tell the participants you will inquire about the answer and get back to them (be sure you have the capacity to do this follow up).

Say:


- Before we close, let's have some time for questions and discussion.

Ask:


- Does anyone have any questions or outstanding challenges?



Slide 19: Gratitude Share and Closing

Closing 


Gratitude Share



- Note:**
- Allow time for all the participants who chose so, to share.
 - Facilitators can go first and share what they are grateful for.

- Say:**
- Thank you all for your participation today.
 - Before we close, let's take a moment to share one thing we are grateful for.
 - If you prefer not to share as a group, feel free to record your response in your workbook.
 - Maybe you are thankful for something someone did for you.
 - Maybe you are thankful for the weather, or for a pet.
 - Whatever it is you are grateful for, big or small, let's take a moment to recognize it.
 - Remember this is a practice that you can also build into your daily routine.
 - Let us begin who would like to go first?

Slide 20: Gratitude Share and Closing

Thank you! 

SQ Program Team	Other
Contact Us:	Contact Us:
Name:	Name:
Tel:	Tel:
Email:	Email:
Other	Other
Contact Us:	Contact Us:
Name:	Name:
Tel:	Tel:
Email:	Email:

- Note:**
- To close the meeting, thank participants for their participation and attendance.
 - Share contact information for participants to ask further questions or to learn more.
 - Include contacts for the Special Olympics program staff as well as for community partners.
 - This may be a good time to invite community partners to share a bit about their services and how attendees can access them.