

# CAREGIVER SUPPORT

# MANAGING STRESS

# AND

# BUILDING RESILIENCE

Participant Guide  
Family Health Forum



Lions Clubs International  
**FOUNDATION**

***Special Olympics***





# Dear Participant

We are very happy to welcome you to the Family Health Forum on **Caregiver Stress and Building Resilience**.

Family Health Forums provide a space for parents, caregivers, and siblings of people with intellectual disabilities (ID) to engage with health professionals, community leaders, and social service providers. The Forums introduce new families to Special Olympics and services provided through Healthy Athletes®, Young Athletes and other community-based programs for people with intellectual disabilities, while also surfacing challenges that athletes face and how best to overcome them—with a special focus on bettering access to health care, education, and inclusive activities.

**Family Health Forums are for all family members!** We know that relationships matter and the wellbeing of every member of the family is important. Thank you for joining us today on the topic of managing stress and building resilience.

During this Forum we will learn about stress and how we can build resilience against stress through selfcare practices.

This is your personal workbook it contains the agenda, worksheets, handouts, and other helpful resources related to stress and building resilience. During the event, your facilitator will guide you on when to use your workbook.

This Forum and it's supporting materials are works in progress. We invite you to share any feedback or ideas you may have. This will help us to improve these events for future participants.



# Agenda

The following is a general agenda for the Forum. Your facilitator may provide an updated version for you.

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



# Welcome Reflection

1. What are your biggest successes related to managing stress?

1.

2. What are your biggest challenges or areas of concern related to managing stress?

2.

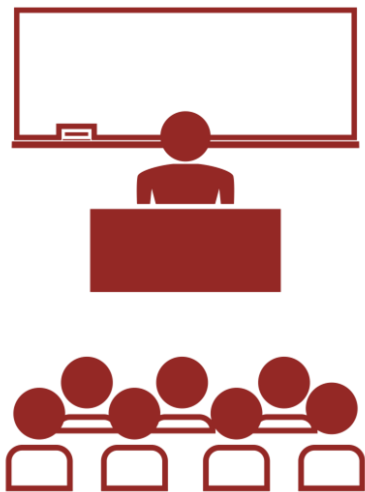


# Activity: The Stress Response Game



## GROUP 1:

While on safari you step out of the vehicle to take a picture. To your surprise you encounter a lioness and her cubs unexpectedly. Fear grips you as the lioness roars. With adrenaline coursing through your body will you run to safety? Freeze? Or try to fight the lioness?



## GROUP 2:

During a routine school day, you settle into class expecting a typical lesson. However, the teacher starts handing out papers for a surprise test. You feel a wave of panic wash over you. Thoughts race through your mind as you try to recall the material for the test.



## GROUP 3:

You work as a manager for a high-pressure company with tight deadlines. You constantly have new projects and dissatisfied clients. You struggle to find a work-life balance. Long hours and work-related worries have taken a toll on your physical and mental health. You feel trapped in a cycle, unable to seek help or make changes.



# Activity: The Stress Response Game

My Group is:

What would  
you do in this  
situation? And  
why?

- Fight?
- Flee?
- Freeze?

What do you  
think is  
happening  
inside of your  
body during  
this situation?

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# My Notes: The Stress Response Game

Group 1: Chased by a lion while on safari.



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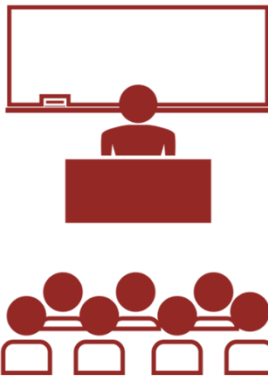
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Group 2: Surprise test in English class.



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Group 3: Work with no life-work balance



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The diagram illustrates the physiological response to stress in three stages:

- Alarm!**: A brain with red lightning bolts, representing the initial perception of stress.
- Stress hormones**: An adrenal gland, representing the release of hormones like cortisol.
- Body-wide changes**: A full-body diagram showing the effects of stress hormones on the entire organism.

Below the diagram, there are five horizontal lines for notes:

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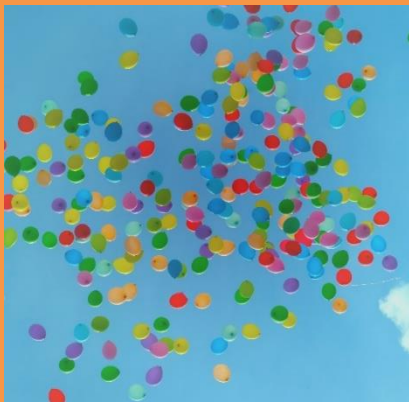
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# Individual Reflection: Finding Joy

What  
nourishes you?

What depletes  
you?



My Daily Activities:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

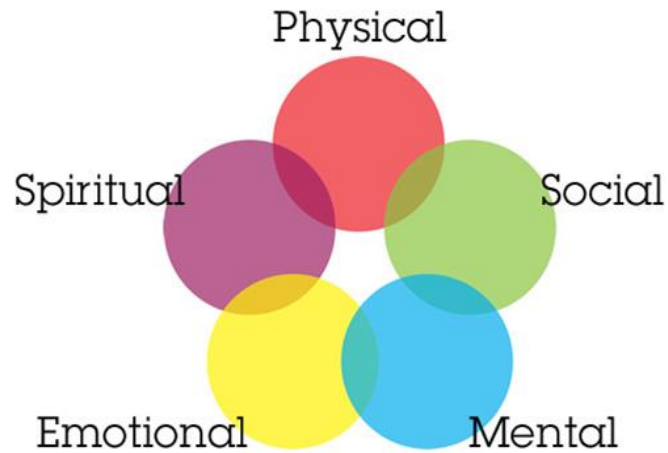
8.

9.

10.



# Activity: Recharging the Self-Care Battery



My Group is focused on the category of:

5 nourishing activities people can do to recharge their self-care batteries:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



# My Notes: Recharging the Self-Care Battery

## Physical Wellbeing



1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

## Spiritual Wellbeing



1.

5.

2.

3.

## Emotional Wellbeing



1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

## Social Wellbeing



1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

## Mental Wellbeing



1.

4.

2.

5.

3.



# Individual Reflection

What is one self-care strategy you will try at home?

For the next month I will try....

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This is how I will carry out this strategy:

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I will tell this person about my goal, and they will help me fulfill it:

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[illegible]

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# Helpful Resources

1. Strong Minds Family Tips
2. Check Your Self Care Battery
3. Strong Minds Tips for Stress
4. Links to Additional Resources from Special Olympics

The following are additional resources to support your learning during and after the Forum.



## Strong Minds Family Tips

### Mindfulness



*Life can be so busy that sometimes we forget to stop and smell the roses! It is important for our physical and mental well-being that we remember to slow down and be present. This practice can help improve our focus, decrease stress, and assist in managing emotions.*

#### BODY SCAN:

- Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes if that feels comfortable to you.
- Slowly move your attention through each part of your body, just noticing how it feels.
- How does your seat feel on the chair? How do the clothes feel touching your skin?
- For a guided body scan, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/bodyscan2021>

#### EXPLORATION WALK:

- Head outside for a walk, but instead of focusing inward, notice the outside world around you!
- Try to find as many bugs, birds, or other animals as you can. See if there are any beautiful flowers beginning to bloom.
- For added fun, bring a camera along and snap a shot of your favorite discovery!

#### GRATITUDE SHARE

- Each member of the group takes a turn to share a few things they are feeling thankful for at that moment.
- Maybe you are thankful for something someone did for you. Maybe you are thankful for the sunshine, or for a pet.
- Whatever it is you are grateful for, big or small, it is important to recognize and reflect!



## Healthy Eating



*Our bodies are powered by the foods that 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 run and play sports.*

### TRY A NEW HEALTHY FOOD

- While shopping for groceries, have a family member pick out one new healthy food that you have never tried before, such as a fruit or vegetable.
- Preparing a new food for the first time can be tricky. It might be helpful to use cookbooks or the internet to search for healthy recipes.
- You can repeat this challenge by having different family members pick a new food during each trip to the grocery store.

### FIND THE HIDDEN SUGAR

- Go to your refrigerator or pantry and pick out three beverages or snacks that your family regularly eat or drinks.
- Have each member of the family guess which of the beverages or snacks has the least amount of sugar and which one has the most.
- Next, help each other read the nutrition labels to figure out which ones have the least and most amount of sugar. Discuss and plan healthy choices.
- Check out this resource for information on finding sugar on your food labels;  
<https://tinyurl.com/sugarnutritionlabel>

### PREPARE A PICNIC

- Prepare a basket of healthy foods as a family and find an outdoor space to enjoy it!
- You can take the food to a nearby park or even just to your backyard.



## Creative Self-Expression



*Art can be good for us; it allows us to share and connect with others. We do not need to have special art talents nor specific materials to produce great artwork. Exploring new materials and making something that is uniquely yours can be both fun and relaxing!*

### FAMILY PORTRAIT

- Think about the people you love and appreciate. What do you love about them? What is their favorite color or something they enjoy doing? Create a portrait with these ideas - of one person or the whole family!
- To do this activity together, people draw names from a cup and then draw or paint a portrait of the person they have chosen.

### VISION BOARD

- We all have dreams and goals for the future. Choosing words/images to showcase achievable goals can keep us accountable and excited for the future.
- Using newspapers, magazines, etc., cut out images and words that best represent your vision and glue them on paper. Include things you want to do, places you'd like to go, or healthy lifestyle choices you would like to incorporate.
- Keep it for your own use, or share it with friends, caregivers, or family members so they can support you in reaching your goals.



## Physical Fitness



*When you take care of your body, you take care of your mind too. Physical exercise helps keep us healthy, decreases stress, and can help improve our mood! Explore different activities that can be done individually, or could be fun for the whole family.*

### TAKE A HIKE/WALK

- Go to your favorite hiking trail, walking area, park, or even your neighborhood. Bring the whole family along and encourage each other to maintain a brisk walking pace.
- Feel your heart beating faster and your breathing rate increase.
- Especially as the weather warms up, remember to drink plenty of water!

### FAMILY SPORTS NIGHT

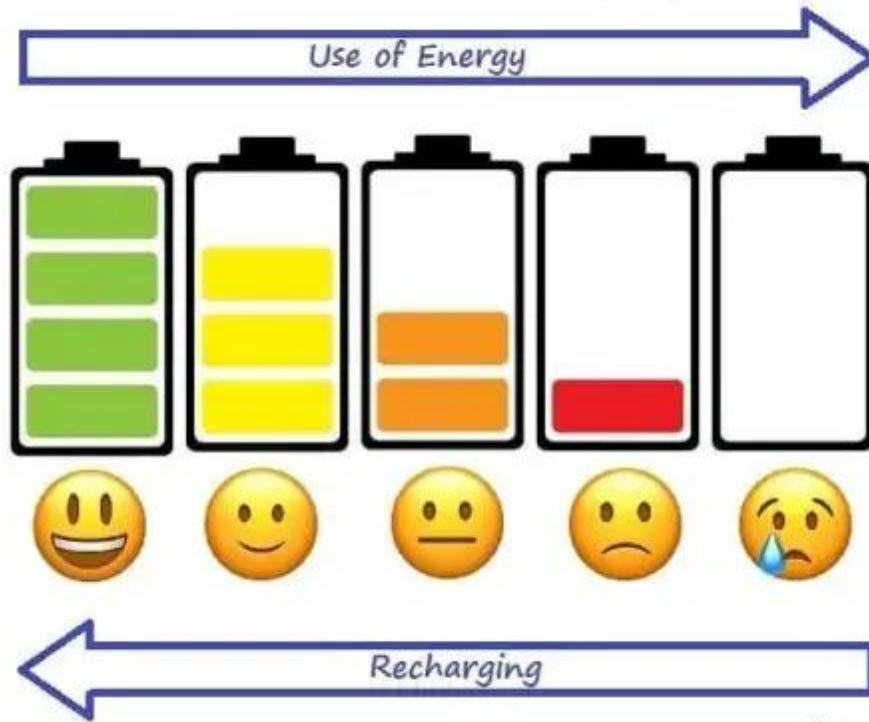
- This idea is fun for the whole family. Compete against each other or just cheer each other on as you engage the family in a sports night.
- Try anything from a dance off in your living room to an obstacle course in your backyard to a basketball game at your local park.
- It may be fun for a different member of the family to come up with a new challenge, competition, or activity every time you have sports night. Have fun and get active!

### NATURE ART

- Take a walk near your home or in a place that is meaningful to you. Find something in nature that you can take home with you (e.g.- a colorful leaf, a pretty flower, a rock, etc.).
  - Get the family together and take a field trip to enjoy some fun physical activity.
  - Use what you have found to create a unique piece of art. You can break apart what you have found to make something new. Or you can glue or draw the items or use the colors and texture to inspire your work.
  - Try something new and stay adventurous to keep physical fitness fun!
- These creations help you keep memories of the places you have been and loved.



## Check Your Self Care Battery



Today I feel?

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I will recharge by:

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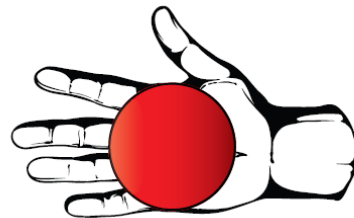
## Strong Minds Tips for Stress

### Station 1

**1** Squeeze the ball for 3 seconds.



**2** Release the ball and any tension.



### Station 2

**1** Think a good thought.



**2**



### Station 3

**1** Smell the flower [pinwheel].



**2** Blow the flower [pinwheel].





## Station 4

1 Try a few stretches



2 How do you feel?



## Station 5

1 Support others



2 Seek support from others



## Station 6

1 Pick the strategies you like



2 Use the strategies in everyday life



This Strong Minds Tips for Stress concept was created by Special Olympics Texas





## Links to Additional Resources

Special Olympics has a lot of existing resources to support mental health for athletes and family members. The following table provides a brief list of some of these resources. Note Links are imbedded.

Title
<a href="#">Special Olympics Strong Minds website</a>
<a href="#">Tips for Keeping a Strong Mind</a>
<a href="#">Strategies for Stress</a>
<a href="#">Strong Minds Tips for Stress</a>
<a href="#">Self-care Tips for Families</a>
<a href="#">Strong Minds Family Tip Sheet and Calendar and Calendar stickers</a>
<a href="#">Strong Minds Activity Guide</a>
<a href="#">Strong Minds Healthy Sleeping Tips</a>
<a href="#">Special Olympics My Health – Healthy Sleep Quiz</a>
<a href="#">Special Olympics My Health – Where do you feel stress interactive poster</a>
<a href="#">Special Olympics My Health – deep breathing exercise</a>
<a href="#">Special Olympics My Health – strong stretching to release stress</a>
<a href="#">Strong Minds Mindfulness Recordings</a> <i>(A series of 14, 5 minute Special Olympics Strong Minds meditations)</i>
<a href="#">Sibling engagement – Fitness video</a>