



**Ready... Set... Plan!**

## Route to Emotional Health and Wellness

How do you start your day?

Do you awake at the last minute or even 10 minutes late everyday? Do you have to run around full speed so you won't be late?

Or do you awake 15 to 30 minutes early so you can take your time getting ready?

A part of preparing for each day should include spending a few minutes quietly to meditate and get organized for the day that is ahead.

### Are You Ready?

### What's Your Plan?

The routes help people make choices about how to have a healthy life and a healthy family.

## Ready, Set, Plan! Routes

Ready, Set, Plan! (RSP) takes three routes to a healthier life and a healthier family.

1. Health and Wellness Route
2. Emotional Health and Wellness Route
3. Planning A Family Route

All of the routes share the same goal of bringing people together to talk about the importance of family health and family planning in community-based conversations.

All of the routes ask the questions “Are You Ready?” and “What’s Your Plan?” The “Are You Ready?” questions focus on choices people make that impact their health and the health of their families. The “What’s Your Plan?” questions prompt people to make decisions on what they can do to be healthier.

The training materials you receive will give you different ideas on how to talk about each of the routes. You can present the routes in any order. You might want to focus on the Emotional Health Route first or only the Planning A Family Route. That’s up to you. Ready, Set, Plan! is your project. We encourage you to use the training materials in your own way.

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## Types Of Activities

- Discussion
- Learn More
- Presentation
- Reflection
- Writing

### Use These Activities

You can use these activities to expand your Routes Flip Chart Presentation and as a way to start discussions. The activities are designed to stand alone and can be used over a period of weeks or months.

### Writing Activity

#### Materials Needed

- RSP Action Plan handout or paper

## Have A Plan

Stressed out? Think about the purpose/plan for your life. Using your RSP Action Plan handout, write down your plan/goals.

### Keeping A Written Plan

Keeping a written plan can be extremely effective in managing stress. Using your RSP Action Plan handout will allow you the opportunity to actually see your growth and identify your successes and challenges.

Ask the group to:

1. Find time to reflect on your written plan/goals daily, weekly and/or monthly.
2. Write about whatever comes to mind. Something that is causing you to be stressed. For example, if your weight is causing you to become stressed, use your RSP Action Plan handout to keep track of the steps you take toward reaching your new weight goals.
3. Keep a record of quotes or advice that sustains you during the day.
4. Take the time to review your RSP Action Plan handout and the goals you have set for yourself.

### Stress Less Tips

Stress affects everyone differently. How do you react to stress? Does your heart race? Do you have muscle pain? Headaches? Trouble sleeping, an upset stomach or skin breakouts?

When you're feeling stressed, what can you do about it? Reducing or controlling stress usually requires some lifestyle changes. Try to lower your stress in a positive way using things that can help you relax and regain control.

Here are some ways to make some positive changes:

- Get physical – go for a walk, run or play a game of basketball.
- Connect with friends and/or family.
- Eat balanced meals that include fruits and vegetables and cut down on caffeine and sugar.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Meditate, dance or do yoga.
- Do something that makes you laugh – tell a joke, watch a funny movie.
- Take a warm bath.
- Learn to say NO!
- Read a magazine or book.
- Keep a calendar, keep up with deadlines.
- Don't start things at the last minute.
- Keep a journal.

### Discussion

Think about and identify how you react to stress.

When you're feeling stressed, what can you do about it?

### Discussion

Which of these things will work for you? What else can you do?

### Materials Needed

- RSP Action Plan handout or paper

### Reflection

## Relaxation Response

Reducing stress will not only make you feel better, it can actually make you healthier.

Reducing stress can:

- prevent headaches.
- reduce back pain.
- lessen your chances of a heart attack.
- lower your blood pressure.

Try the Relaxation Response:

1. Pick a focus word, short phrase, or inspiring message.
2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Relax your muscles, progressing from your feet to your calves, thighs, abdomen, shoulders, neck and head.
5. Breathe slowly and naturally. As you do, say your focus word, sound or phrase silently to yourself as you exhale.
6. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh well," and gently return to your repetition.
7. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes.
8. Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Then open your eyes and sit for another minute before rising.

### Feeling Down?

Feeling overwhelmed and stressed is common. But usual stress lasts only for a short period of time. If these feelings don't go away after two weeks or aren't caused by any specific reason or event, you could be depressed. Some people don't get help for their depression because they are embarrassed, feel guilty or don't realize they are depressed. They may be ashamed. But you shouldn't suffer in silence. If you're feeling depressed or know someone who is, talk to your healthcare provider right away. When is it time to seek help? Is this depression?

### Baby Blues

Another type of depression is postpartum depression, sometimes referred to as "baby blues." Many mothers feel "blue" after giving birth. Some women start to feel down, overwhelmed and confused. This happens because their bodies and their lives are going through a lot of changes. Their hormones are changing, they might not get much sleep and they could be worried about not doing a good job of taking care of the baby. These feelings are normal and usually last only a little while. There are things they can do to help.

### 5 Tips To Make The Baby Blues Look A Little More Rosy:

1. Don't try to be "Super Mom". Take time to care for yourself.
2. Rest and sleep when your baby sleeps.
3. Talk to other moms about their experiences and what helped them.
4. Ask friends and family to help with chores and taking care of the baby.
5. Practice ways to reduce stress.

### Discussion

Note: If your feelings are so strong that you cannot do your normal daily tasks or if you feel you might hurt yourself or your baby or children it's time to get help. Talk to your healthcare provider, minister or good friend and tell them you need help.

Note: Try to be especially supportive of mothers after they give birth. Many women may not realize they are depressed and they may not be able to care for their baby or themselves. Be sure to talk to a healthcare provider if you or someone you know is depressed.

Learn More

### What About You ?

#### **Some Signs Of A Healthy Relationship**

You:

- feel safe, respected and secure.
- are comfortable being yourself.
- listen to each other's feelings and support each other.
- enjoy time together and apart.
- make sexual decisions together.
- trust and are honest with each other.

#### **Some Signs Of An Unhealthy Relationship**

One person:

- scares, pressures or is jealous and possessive of the other person.
- makes all the decisions without listening to what the other one thinks, wants or needs.
- criticizes and makes the other person feel bad.
- keeps the other person from seeing other people.
- expects to know where the other one is and what she or he is doing at all times.
- forces the other person to have sex.
- hurts or threatens to hurt the other person, her or his family members, pets or favorite things.

### A Serious Matter

In today's society, there are many pressures and stressors that can cause unhealthy relationships and create an environment that could cause domestic violence.

Domestic violence is described as one partner controlling the other in a marital relationship, while dating or in a live-in relationship. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional or mental. It happens to people in all cultures, age groups, religious backgrounds and it happens in heterosexual and same-sex relationships. Often times when a person is being abused they develop a feeling of shame and isolation.

Domestic violence can lead to depression, isolation, anxiety, panic disorders, substance abuse, physical harm or death. Children who live in homes where domestic violence occurs are at extremely high risk of having problems in school, aggressive behavior and low self-esteem.

### Discussion

How do you know if your relationships are healthy?

Encourage participants if they know someone who is being abused to have them seek help.

Call the CARE-LINE at 1-800-662-7030. They will help you find resources in your community.

### Discussion

When there is a problem, who can someone call in your community?

If someone is in an abusive relationship, encourage him/her to keep important phone numbers nearby for him/her to use in a crisis. Children should also know who to call for help.

Do they have a plan to seek safety if needed?

## Take A Second Look

### What is abuse?

Here are some questions that help define abuse.

- Are you ever afraid of your partner?
- Has your partner ever hurt or threatened to hurt you physically or someone that you care about?
- Does your partner ever force you to engage in sexual activities that make you uncomfortable?
- Do you constantly worry about your partner's moods and change your behavior to deal with your partner?
- Has a partner tried to control where you go, what you do and who you see?
- Does your partner constantly accuse you of having affairs?
- Have you stopped seeing family or friends to avoid your partner's jealousy or anger?
- Does your partner control your finances?
- Does your partner threaten to kill him/herself if you leave?
- Does your partner claim his/her temper is out of control due to alcohol, drugs or because he or she had an abusive childhood?

Adapted from the American Psychiatric Association

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you should think about your relationship. You could be suffering abuse. There is help. You can call the CARE-LINE at 1-800-662-7030.