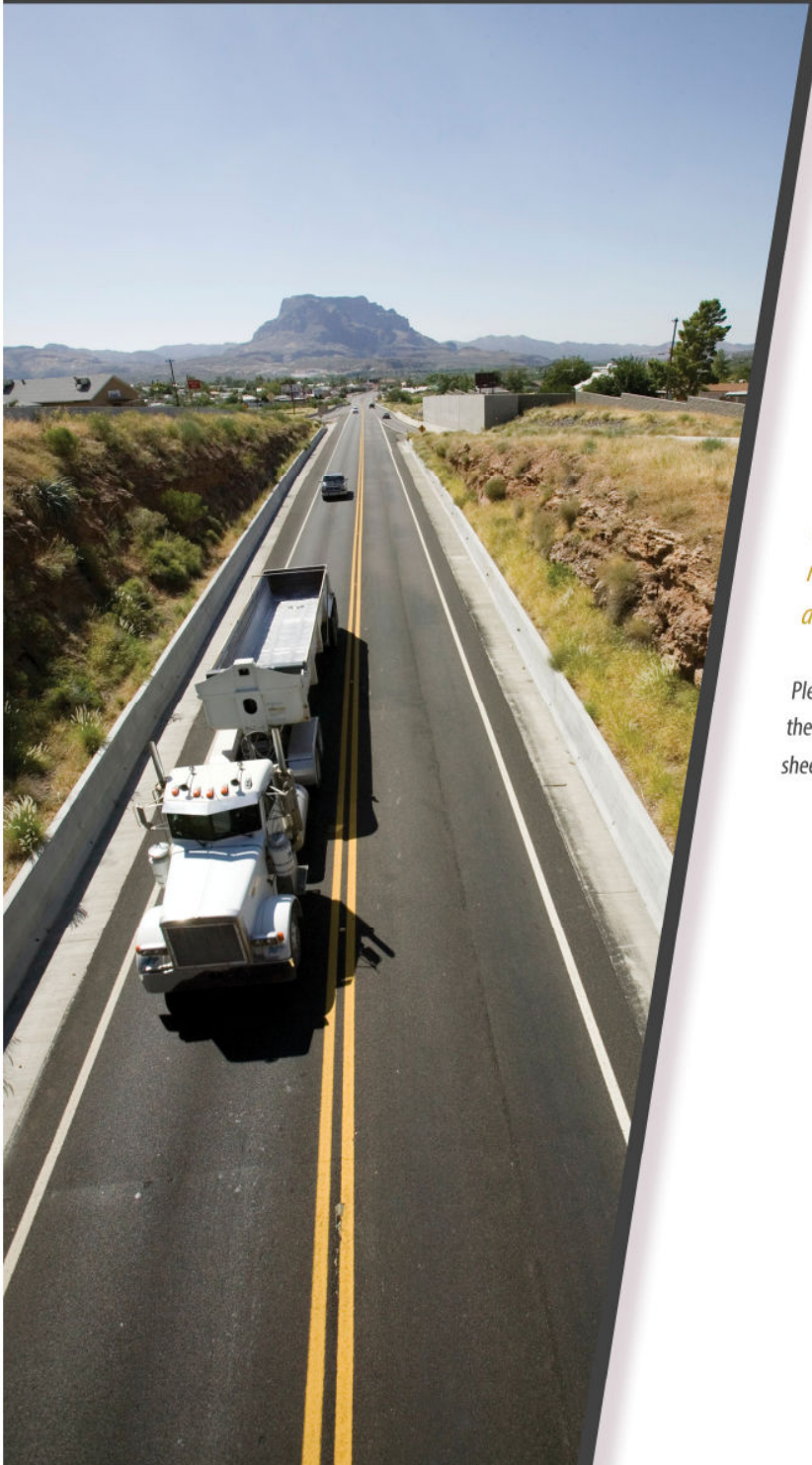


ACCIDENT COUNTERMEASURES



How to Manage Stress on the Road

The Accident Countermeasures program was created to provide a way for our company and our most important asset, the drivers, to cover important safety topics in a meaningful and accessible manner. This program allows you, the driver, to study safety material and learn desirable information at a time most convenient to you.

Please take the time to read through the material, study the pictures, and then answer the questions at the end of this handout. Your completed answer sheet should then be turned in to receive credit for completing this program.

Prepared by:

Safety Management Services Company
A Cottingham & Butler Company



Cottingham & Butler

HOW TO MANAGE STRESS ON THE ROAD

Safety Management Services Company's Accident Countermeasures Program

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HOW TO MANAGE STRESS ON THE ROAD

Driving, especially in heavy traffic, can easily cause you to feel stressed and annoyed with others on the roadway. Stress also stems from factors not on the roadway including dealing with difficult shipping & receiving personnel, meeting deadlines, family, and financial problems, just to name a few. Not only does stress cause impatience and frustration leading to unsafe driving, but it can affect your body and the way it functions!

Physical symptoms of stress can include:

- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth

Fortunately, there are many tips and methods to take to reduce your stress and help you arrive safely to your destination.

Adjust your attitude

You cannot control the vehicles around you, but you can control how you react to them. What makes a difference, and what you need to do to remain safe in today's traffic circus, is to keep a calm, positive, and detached attitude. This is something you can LEARN to do. When your emotions are running high, your judgment can fail you, and you may not notice otherwise apparent, even obvious, dangers. If you find yourself driving while emotionally stressed or upset, it is important that you pull over, take a few deep breaths and calm down, before something happens that would be a cause for further regret.

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Since we all make mistakes in our driving, it goes without saying that at any given moment, other drivers are doing exactly that—making mistakes, not intentional malicious moves. When other drivers do something wrong, shouldn't our reaction be to let it slide, chalk it up to unintentional human error, the same as we hope they'd do for us?

Remember these words: "It doesn't matter." When other drivers make mistakes, or are rude (even intentionally), what do you gain by letting it affect your attitude or behavior? It doesn't matter. In ten minutes, you won't even remember that it happened. Since we are all human, we can't be perfect all the time. Don't let the error, the other driver commits, be the reason you lose control (one way or another) and have a collision, or worse. Many collisions occur when a driver is mad, upset, stressed, or distracted in some way. Try to keep your attitude rational, calm, and positive.

Breathe

When stress overwhelms your nervous system, your body is flooded with chemicals that prepare you for "fight or flight." While the stress response can be lifesaving in emergency situations where you need to act quickly, it wears your body down when constantly activated.

Many experts recommend breathing techniques to reduce stress and increase relaxation. Although there are many different breathing exercises, the following deep breathing exercise is simple to learn and practice.

The key to deep breathing is to breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much fresh air as possible in your lungs. When you take deep breaths from the abdomen, rather than shallow breaths from your upper chest, you inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen you get, the less tense, short of breath, and anxious you feel.

- Sit comfortably with your back straight.
- Breathe in through your nose.
- Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles.
- Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.
- Deep breathing is the cornerstone of many other relaxation practices and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as music.

Music.

Music helps soothe but static, as a radio station fades in and out along a route, can be mighty irritating. The new satellite radio receivers solve this problem, offering access to the same programs all across the country. A CD changer also provides hours of soothing tunes, and sun visor CD organizers keep a change of disks close at hand.

Although music can be soothing and reduce stress levels, the radio and sound in general can elevate your stress without you even noticing it. The fundamental purposes of hearing are to alert and to warn. As a result, sound directly evokes emotions and actions. You will have to determine what kind of music, if any, works best for you.

Allow some extra time.

Running late is one of the primary reasons people speed—and a major cause of increased blood pressure on the road today. Because traffic, car crashes, detours and other surprises can cause any trip to take

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longer than planned, one of the best ways to make driving less stressful is to allow plenty of time to reach a destination.

Stay cool.

Cab temperatures should not be overlooked in your effort to reduce stress. Sitting in a hot vehicle is enough to make any driver miserable. In milder weather, keep windows open for the soothing effects of fresh air.

Make yourself comfortable.

Avoid wearing clothes which are too tight and restrictive. Take the time to adjust your seat and mirrors to further make you more relaxed throughout the day.

Organization.

Keeping organized is also a good way to decrease stress as looking for your sunglasses or favorite CD is one more stress you don't need.

Keep snacks on hand.

Hunger makes many of us irritable. Keeping a few snacks available can keep you from driving with a bad attitude.

Know your route.

To be blunt, don't get lost. Getting bad directions and getting lost are hugely stressful, yet very common experiences. Having a navigation system on-board makes it easy to avoid the stress and locate virtually any destination, and most systems instantly adjust the directions in case of a detour. Regardless, route planning is absolutely necessary.

Deal with other drivers.

Think of them as misinformed drivers. Drivers who are misinformed at: their lack of skill, their lack of understanding, their lack of social grace. They're easy to pick out, which often makes them easy to avoid. If they're in front of you, slowing and changing lanes will give you some breathing room. If they're behind you and you're on a road where it's safe to pass, move right in your lane and slow when you see it's safe for them to pass—make it easy for them to get ahead of you, and let them go. It's not worth it.



Exercise

Any exercise can help you reduce the negative effect stress has on your body.

Here are some ways in which regular physical activity helps reduce the effects of stress:

- It pumps up the production of endorphins, your brain's "feel good" neurotransmitters. This is often referred to as the "runner's high".

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- It gives you a better outlook on managing your circumstances and helps you forget the day's minor frustrations.
- It improves your overall mood, self-confidence, and sense of well-being.
- It helps lower symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety.
- It improves your quality of sleep.

Clearly, the result of adding physical activity into your lifestyle is a plus. Along with helping to relieve and manage stress, you will feel stronger, have more energy, self-confidence, and a more positive attitude.

The next step is putting exercise & stress relief in motion. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

- Always consult your doctor before starting an exercise routine.
- Build up your fitness level gradually. You don't want to overdo it and hurt yourself.
- Do something you enjoy like running, swimming, biking, or weight training. If you like what you're doing, you have a better chance at sticking with it.
- Make the time. This is a hard one, especially in the trucking industry. If you have to break your exercise time into smaller intervals to fit them in, then do it.
- Stick with it. Some tools to help you stick with a routine are: setting goals for yourself, connect with friends to help motivate each other, incorporate using fitness tracking devices or mobile apps for this purpose, and change up your workouts to keep it interesting.



Additional Guidance.

Knowing when you are stressed and what is stressing you is important. Because people handle stress differently, symptoms of stress can vary. The following is a list of symptoms you may be experiencing that could be stress related.

- increased blood pressure
- increased heart rate
- increased muscle tension
- headaches
- increased anxiety
- depression
- aggression
- confusion
- increased smoking
- increased drinking
- irritability
- obsessive concern with trivial issues
- poor work performance
- difficulty sleeping

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Symptoms can be vague and may be the same as those caused by other medical conditions. So it is important to discuss them with your doctor.

There is no single relaxation technique that is best for everyone. With many of the techniques discussed, preparation is vital. Each of us deals with stress in a different way and with a stressful job, the key is to take one moment at a time and make sure to take time to relax. Stay rational, stay calm, and stay positive.

HOW TO MANAGE STRESS ON THE ROAD

1. List a few symptoms to elevated stress.
2. Name two approaches to help reduce stress while driving.
3. Why should you work towards reducing stress?
4. How does exercise help reduce stress?

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2. Name two approaches to help reduce stress while driving.

Adjust attitude, breathing technique, allow extra time, listen to music, make yourself comfortable, keep organized, eating a snack, plan ahead, exercise, etc.

3. Why should you work towards reducing stress?

Elevated stress negatively affects the mind and body.
Stress increase risk of unsafe driving behavior.

4. How does exercise help reduce stress?

- It pumps up the production of endorphins, your brain's "feel good" neurotransmitters. This is often referred to as the "runner's high".
- It gives you a better outlook on managing your circumstances and helps you forget the day's minor frustrations.
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