

## Introduction

Welcome to the Tightrope Risk Management Program and this companion course on **Mental Health**. The peer-to-peer session outlined here is meant to be completed after finishing the Tightrope online module. Using the knowledge gained from the online module, complete this session with your new member class to start a conversation about the importance of mental health.

## Session Overview

Generation Z, the generation currently in college, is more open and vocal about the importance of mental health than any previous generation. They have already significantly reduced the stigma attached to mental illness, but it can still be helpful to have intentional conversations about mental health topics like stress, anxiety, and depression. This session prompts individuals to consider their personal stress levels and other mental and emotional obstacles in order to encourage helpful self-care conversations.

## Session Outline

Total Duration: 60 min.

- I. Review the online module (15 min.)
- II. Personal Stress Test (15 min.)
- III. Elephant in the Room Activity (15 min.)
- IV. Stress Less Buddy System (15 min.)

## Goals of the Session

- Recall the online module
- Evaluate your personal stress
- Practice mental health self-care

## Materials Needed

- This companion guide
- Scrap paper or notecards (for two separate activities)
- Paper/plastic bag or a bowl
- Personal Stress Test (printed for each participant or shared digitally)
- Writing utensils
- Trash can

## Room Setup

- Use a room that will comfortably fit your entire new member class with tables, hard surfaces, or notebooks on which to write.

## Detailed Breakdown & Instructions

Read through the instructions and session details at least a day in advance of your session. This will give you time to obtain materials, rearrange rooms, if needed, and complete any additional preparation.

<p>Duration: 15 min.</p> <p><b>Introduction &amp; Review of Online Module</b></p> <p><i>[With everyone in a large group, introduce what you'll be discussing today. Use the text below as an example.]</i></p> <p>Today we're going to talk about how to manage our mental health. People may feel like they don't want to talk about it, and that's okay, but it's important to practice managing our stress and emotions. We're going to do a couple activities to help us with stress, starting with reviewing the online module.</p> <p><i>[After you've introduced the session, lead a quick activity to review the online module.]</i></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> <i>Pass out scrap paper or notecards to each person, and tell them that they'll be using these to help review the online module. You'll ask them a couple of questions, and they should answer each question on a different piece of paper.</i></p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> <i>Ask them to answer the following question on a piece of scrap paper, and then place it in the bag or bowl.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What was one thing you learned from the module that you didn't know before?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>When everyone has submitted their answer, draw anonymously from the bag or bowl and read some of the answers in front of the group. (You could also allow members to take turns drawing slips of paper.)</i></p> <p><i>After you've read a few answers, empty the bowl, and ask the second question. Repeat the process.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is a point, suggestion, or advice from the module that resonated with you?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>After you've read a few answers, empty the bowl again, and ask the third question. Repeat the process.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is a situation in which you've helped a friend, brother, or loved one with their mental health?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Read a few answers anonymously from the bowl. Then, move on to the next activity.]</i></p>
<p>Duration: 15 min.</p> <p><b>Personal Stress Test</b></p> <p><i>[Pass out printed copies of the Personal Stress Test, or share the .pdf digitally. If you share it digitally, your members may need additional scrap paper to record their stress scores. Introduce the activity by explaining that although we can usually tell when we feel stressed, sometimes we ignore our symptoms or relate them to something else. Explain that today you're taking an informal stress test to do a quick measure of your personal stress. Use the text below as an example.]</i></p>

Sometimes mental health can be difficult or uncomfortable to talk about, so we're going to start with something really easy that most of us have probably felt before: stress. This is an informal stress test that's supposed to get us talking about the topic and practicing positive mental health.

*[Give your members about 10 min. to complete the test. When they're done, play the following guessing game:]*

1. Have the entire group guess who they think scored the highest in stress.
  - a. Was the answer surprising, or were you right?
2. Have the entire group guess who they think scored the lowest in stress.
  - a. Was the answer surprising or were you right?
3. What is the breakdown for your entire member class? Are a lot of you stressed out, or are you handling it pretty well?

Duration: 15 min.

### **Elephant in the Room Activity**

*[After analyzing how much stress you all might be feeling, move into a de-stress activity called the Elephant in the Room. Move a trash can (or multiple trash cans) to the front of the room or into a central place where everyone can see it.]*

*Explain that in this activity you'll each write specific things you're stressed about on individual pieces of paper (these are the elephants) and throw them in the trash. It's supposed to be a physical and mental embodiment of stress release.*

*Instruct your members to take 3-5 pieces of scrap paper and write a different thing they're stressed about on each one. Examples could be:*

- an upcoming test
- a disagreement or argument
- a difficult class
- something that happened at work

*When they're done writing, have them stand up and throw each piece of paper into the trash can separately. If members want to keep shooting they can, but they need to throw out something that stresses them each time—no blank pieces of paper for basketball practice.]*

Duration: 15 min.

### **Stress Less Buddy System**

*[When the elephants in the room have been thrown out, create a buddy system to help one another manage stress. Each member should partner up, or form groups of three, to create a plan to help one another de-stress. Instruct pairs to talk about the following things:]*

1. What are you stressing about lately?
2. How do you react when you're stressed?
3. What do you need in order to feel better when you're stressed? (How can I help?)

*After about 10 min. ask pairs to share what they discussed and how they plan to help one another. When the larger conversation is over, thank your members for participating and end the session.]*