

Stress and Pain Activities: Menu and Due Dates Fall 2025

Those activities that take more than a single day to complete are marked with an asterisk * Those in purple font are done at home.

27 activities	Start date & due date	Choose at least 15	Start date & due date
Top three stressors	Aug 28-31	Stress or Pain App Exploration*	Oct 21-31
Spider web	Sept 9-12	Bracing	Oct 23-26
Into the Wild	Sept 9-19	Walk-Walk *	Oct 28 – Nov 2
Hassles & Uplifts *	Sept 11-21	Mindful Meditation	Oct 30 – Nov 2
FOMO 24	Sept 11-18	Diaphragmatic breathing	Nov 4-7
Soothing forces of nature	Sept 16-19	Finger prick pain	Nov 6-9
Spirituality Booster *	Sept 16-26	Autogenic training	Nov 11-14
Peer review of slides	Sept 18-21	7-minute workout*	Nov 11-21
Environmental connect & protect *	Sept 18-28	Progressive Muscle Relaxation	Nov 13-16
SC biofeedback demo	Sept 23-26	Mountain Lake Meditation	Nov 18-21
Vagus nerve stimulation	Sept 25-28	Rainbow Meditation	Nov 20-23
Stress: Portrait of a Killer	Sept 30-Oct 3	Binder clip pain	Dec 2-5
A day in the life of stress	Oct 7-10	TENS activity	Dec 4-7
Self-esteem booster*	Oct 7-17		

You can use this sheet to track which ones you've done and the score you earned. You only need to complete 15. However, if you do more, I will count your best 15.



Top three stressors

You must be physically present for this one.

You will be asked to write down your top three stressors – things that are stressing you out. Don't get "too" personal because you will share this in class. Once we learn what everyone's stressors are, we will learn an important fact about our stressors.



Spiderweb of Social Networks

You must be physically present for this one.

You will be given a sheet of paper on which two spiderwebs have been printed. On the one marked "actual", you will enter the names of people, groups, and institutions that are having the most impact (positive or negative) on you right now. These are arranged such that the most impactful go in the center of the web. Those with the least impact go out along the outer edge. Those with moderate impact go in between.

You will then do the same thing for the "ideal" spiderweb, only this time you will arrange the location of all the individuals, groups, and institutions where you would LIKE them to be. Finally, we will brainstorm ways of converting your actual web to your ideal web.



Into the Wild

This is an at-home activity

[Into the wild](#) (long movie but impactful -must rent for about \$3).

As you watch the movie, pay attention to any evidence of the important role social connections play in our well-being. You will be asked to tell us what the message of the story was as it relates to Social Support.



Peer review of slides

You must be physically present for this one.

Before class time, save your SARA slides as a pdf and upload this to a shared folder. The link to a shared folder is on the Canvas homepage.

If you haven't started your SARA, that's ok. At this point, we just want to see your title slide, the template you've chosen (have at least 3 slides beyond your title slide) and one slide with some of the answers/evidence for your SARA response. Haven't read anything yet? No worries. Make stuff up – just be sure to replace it with the real thing later.

In class, you will review at least two other students' slides. Take notes: what did you really like? What advice might you give them to make their slides even better? Look at their color scheme (are their colors vivid or drab), fonts (size, type, and color), do the fonts contrast well against the background, is there too much text on a slide, have they made good use of pictures/clipart, are the photos/clipart well positioned on the slide etc...

Take a picture of the notes/comments you made on the slides and then share the hardcopy with the student. This means you will need to upload at least two photos (one for each student you review) into the Canvas "quiz" for this activity.

Be kind and respectful. When you receive feedback on your slides, please consider their suggestions. We all want to help each other 😊



Hassles & Uplifts: 5-day tracker

This is an at-home activity

Can focusing on uplifts vs. hassles affect your wellbeing?

To find out, you will write down your uplifts and hassles according to the schedule below. You only need one short sentence to describe each hassle or uplift. We will not ask you to share these with us. At the end of the day before going to bed, rate your overall wellbeing for the day using a 1 to 10 scale (1 = absolutely terrible and could not get worse, 10 = super! Could not have been better)

If you do not have severe anxiety or depression, follow the instructions below:

day 1: *consciously* look for **uplifts** and write them down. Ignore any hassles you might experience

day 2: write down all your **hassles**. Ignore any uplifts you might experience

day 3: this is an **uplifts** day - follow day 1 instructions

day 4: this is a **hassles** day – follow day 2 instructions

day 5: this is an **uplifts** day – follow day 1 instructions

If you have severe anxiety or depression, follow the instructions below:

Follow the same instructions as above EXCEPT do not write down your hassles on days 2 and 4. You still need to record your wellbeing, but these will just be considered "neutral" days.

Record your data in a table like the one below.

	wellbeing (1-10)
UPLIFT day	
HASSLE day	
UPLIFT day	
HASSLE day	
UPLIFT day	
mean (average) for the HASSLE days	
mean (average) for the UPLIFT days	



FOMO 24

This is an at-home activity

Are you in control of your social media or is your social media in control of you? Is social media contributing to your wellbeing - or is it compromising it? Watch this [short video](#) Have your answers to the question above changed?

For this activity, you will need to put social media aside for a CONTINUOUS 24 hours. No cheating! After the 24 hours, assess how you feel. Was it easy, or did you experience "fear of missing out" (FOMO)? Were you more productive? Or did you obsess over not checking your feed? Do you feel like anything needs to change? These are some of the things you should be asking yourself. p.s. If you did not make the full 24 hours, what does this tell you?



The soothing forces of nature

You must be physically present for this one.

Can you connect with nature? What effect does nature have on your HR and BP? You will need to bring a leaf or flower to class. I will have you draw this leaf or flower – but it's not about accuracy. It's about connecting yourself to the plant on a spiritual level and drawing your "feelings" that this connection creates. You will do this twice – under different environmental conditions that I will create.

	Condition 1	Condition 2
HR before		
HR after		
HR difference		
systolic before		
systolic after		
systolic difference		



Spirituality booster

This is an at-home activity

Go online and look for suggestions (preferably credible ones) that suggest activities to boost spirituality. Pick one you like - and one that will not take weeks to execute. Be sure to note the URL where you found the suggestion.

IMPORTANT: before you try to boost your spirituality - take [this quiz](#) and note your score. After you execute the activity, re-take the quiz and note your score again.

Describe the activity you did to try and boost spirituality. Include sufficient details so that someone else could try to replicate what you did. Include the URL where you found the activity. Did your spiritual wellbeing increase, decrease, or stay the same from pre-test to post- test? Explain why you believe you got these results.



Environmental connect & protect

This is an at-home activity

Go online and look for suggestions (preferably credible ones) that suggest activities to enhance environmental wellness. Pick one you like - and one that will not take weeks to execute. Be sure to note the URL where you found the suggestion.

IMPORTANT: before you try to enhance your environmental wellness - take [this quiz](#) and note your score. After you execute the activity, re-take the quiz and note your score again.

Describe the activity you did to try and connect with nature and enhance environmental wellbeing. Include sufficient details so that someone else could try to replicate what you did. Include the URL where you found the activity. Did your environmental wellness increase, decrease, or stay the same from pre-test to post-test? Explain why you believe you got these results



SC biofeedback demo

You must be physically present for this one.

I will bring in some biofeedback equipment to class. At least two of you will be connected to the equipment. Two others will be technical assistants. We will see how well they can control their autonomic activity by exposing them to various stimuli – mostly harmless 😊

While we do this, you will record your own heart rate: before and after. We will see if you are affected – just by watching.



Vagus Nerve Stimulation

You must be physically present for this one.

We will perform a series of fun activities that are designed to stimulate the vagus nerve and activate the parasympathetic nervous system. I dare you not to laugh!



Stress: Portrait of a Killer

You must be physically present for this one.

By the time this activity rolls around, you will have learned about the physiological stress response. Prior to this, you learned about the importance of supportive social networks. We will watch a video on the human and animal research linking these two topics. Pay attention to things like social status (rank), cortisol, blood pressure, and health outcomes. We will see how well you do.



A day in the life of stress

You must be physically present for this one.

You will watch a movie that portrays different people (some real, others fictitious) as they go about their stressful day. Write down these names: Tom, Lianne, Joy, Elizabeth, Fares, and Prema. As you are introduced to each, write down which personality type (module 5) you think best describes that person. We will discuss your choices. You will also need to answer: What specific topic was discussed in the video that reinforced Yerkes-Dodson Law? In the video, what did they say contributes most to work stress?



Self-esteem booster

This is an at-home activity

Go online and look for suggestions (preferably credible ones) that suggest activities to boost self-esteem. Pick one you like - and one that will not take weeks to execute. Be sure to note the URL where you found the suggestion.

IMPORTANT: before you try to boost your self-esteem - take [this quiz](#) and note your score. After you execute the activity, re-take the quiz and note your score again.

Describe the activity you did to try and boost self-esteem. Include sufficient details so that someone else could try to replicate what you did. Include the URL where you found the activity. Did your self-esteem increase, decrease, or stay the same from pre-test to post-test? Explain why you believe you got these results.



Stress or Pain App Exploration & Experimentation

This is an at-home activity

Go to wherever you normally go to get apps for your phone. Find an app that interests you, one that you have never tried before, and one that is intended to reduce stress and/or pain. Try it for at least 3 days. Provide a detailed summary of 1. what the app is supposed to do and 2. how it goes about doing this. Did the app work? Explain how and/or why you know it worked or that it did not work.



Bracing

You must be physically present for this one.

I will guide you through a series of activities designed to show you a common source of mostly avoidable pain. All you need to do is listen and breathe.

HR BEFORE	HR AFTER	HR DIFFERENCE	SYSTOLIC BEFORE	SYSTOLIC AFTER	SYSTOLIC DIFFERENCE



Walk 1 and 2

You must be physically present for both walks.

Walk 1: You will go on a 5-minute walk at the beginning of class. You can do anything you want on this walk, except you may not talk to each other. You will answer a series of short questions when you return. Record your answers on a piece of paper and upload this to the Walk #1 “quiz” on Canvas. (see next page)

Walk 2: You will again go on a 5-minute walk at the beginning of class. You can do anything you want on this walk, except you may not talk to each other. You will answer a series of short questions when you return. I am betting your answers will change – you will need to do both walks to discover why.



Mindful Meditation

You must be physically present this one

By the time this activity rolls around, you will have learned about mindfulness. We will now take it to the next level by practicing mindful meditation. You will take an HR and BP rating right before and right after we do this. Afterwards, we will share some observations. For example, which sense(s) did you focus on and why? Were you able to stay in the present? If not, did you think about the past or the future? Did this help or get in the way of you relaxing? Were you able to be non-judgmental? If not, were your judgments positive or negative? Did this help or get in the way of you relaxing? Record your HR and BP data using a table like the one below. You will use this information and your subjective feelings of arousal vs. relaxation to see whether this technique works for you.

HR BEFORE	HR AFTER	HR DIFFERENCE	SYSTOLIC BEFORE	SYSTOLIC AFTER	SYSTOLIC DIFFERENCE



Diaphragmatic (Belly) Breathing

You must be physically present for this one.

After learning how to breathe this way, we will practice it together. You might find it harder than you think. 😊



Finger Prick Pain

You must be physically present for this one.

You will be asked to prick your finger using a sterile, one-time use lancing device. You do not have to prick your finger - but it's more fun if you do 😊

You will be asked to compare how much pain you expected to feel and how much you actually felt. We will talk about individual differences in pain perception and the many variables that can affect our perceptions.



Autogenic Training

You must be physically present for this one.

We will breathe diaphragmatically as we listen to an audio file that walks us through a guided session of self-hypnosis. We will record HR and BP before and after this meditation session. These numbers will be recorded in a table like the one below. You will use this information and your subjective feelings to see if this technique to reduce stress might work for you.

HR BEFORE	HR AFTER	HR DIFFERENCE	SYSTOLIC BEFORE	SYSTOLIC AFTER	SYSTOLIC DIFFERENCE



7-minute workout challenge

This is an at-home activity

The 7-minute workout (many different ones are on YouTube) is getting a lot of hype. Pick one that is appropriate for your sex, age, and level of physical fitness. Then, watch and do the workout 5 out of 7 consecutive days. (see next page)

Before you start and on 3 consecutive days - record two things at the end of each day: 1. your overall perceived stress levels on a scale of 1-10 (1= low stress, 10 = high stress) and 2. your overall mood on a scale of 1-10 (1 = extremely poor, 10 = extremely good). Be sure to record the URL for the 7-minute workout you followed. You will be asked to include this on the activity form.

Important: do not do this activity unless you are in good physical health. Do not over-exert yourself either. "No pain, no gain" is a myth!



Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

You must be physically present for this one.

We will listen to an audio file that walks us through a session of PMR. We will record HR and BP before and after. The numbers will be entered into a table like the one below. You will use this information and your subjective feelings of arousal vs. relaxation to see whether this technique works for you.

HR BEFORE	HR AFTER	HR DIFFERENCE	SYSTOLIC BEFORE	SYSTOLIC AFTER	SYSTOLIC DIFFERENCE



Guided Imagery: Mountain Lake

You must be physically present for this one.

We will listen to an audio file that walks us through a session of Mountain Lake Meditation. We will record HR and BP before and after. The numbers will be entered into a table like the one above. You will use this information and your subjective feelings of arousal vs. relaxation to see whether this technique works for you.



Guided Imagery: Rainbow Meditation

You must be physically present for this one.

We will listen to an audio file that walks us through a session of Rainbow Meditation. We will record HR and BP before and after. The numbers will be entered into a table like the one below. You will use this information and your subjective feelings of arousal vs. relaxation to see whether this technique works for you.

HR BEFORE	HR AFTER	HR DIFFERENCE	SYSTOLIC BEFORE	SYSTOLIC AFTER	SYSTOLIC DIFFERENCE



Binder Clip Pain

You must be physically present for this one.

Which variables influence the expectation and perception of pain? What is your own pain tolerance like? How does pain affect your heart rate and blood pressure? You will find out by placing a 1" binder clip on your finger. You will record your data in a table like the one below. Implications for pain research will be discussed.

HR BEFORE	HR AFTER	HR DIFFERENCE	SYSTOLIC BEFORE	SYSTOLIC AFTER	SYSTOLIC DIFFERENCE





TENS Demo

You must be physically present for this one.

With the help of a pod mate, your hand will be connected to a TENS machine. The goal here is to see whether TENS can increase pain tolerance and if proximity to the noxious stimulus matters.

Your data will be recorded into a table like the one below. Note: half of you will do the proximal condition first. The other half will do the distal condition first. Any guesses as to why?

Warning: do not do this activity if you have any neuropathies or muscular pain.

BASELINE: How long did you keep the binder clip on your finger (sec)_____

	time to binder clip removal (sec)	TENS (sec) minus baseline (sec)
proximal TENS (same hand as binder clip)		
distal TENS (opposite hand from clip)		