

Stress and Pain Activities: Menu and Due Dates Summer 2026

Those activities that take more than a single day to complete are marked with an asterisk *

There are 25 activities. Choose at least 15.

ACTIVITY	start & due date	ACTIVITY	start & due date
Top three stressors	May 14-17	Self-esteem booster *	June 18-28
Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS)	May 14-17	Stress or Pain App. Exploration & Experimentation *	June 30-July 9
Spider web	May 21-24	Walk-Walk *	July 7-12
Into the Wild	May 21-28	Diaphragmatic breathing	July 9-14
Hassles & Uplifts *	May 26-June 4	Autogenic training	July 9-16
Healthy SM feeds *	May 26-June 7	Mindful meditation	July 9-18
Soothing forces of nature	May 28-June 8	Bracing	July 14-20
Spirituality Booster *	June 2-12	Progressive Muscle Relaxation	July 14-20
Environmental connect & protect *	June 4-13	Mountain Lake Meditation	July 16-22
Vagus nerve stimulation	June 9-14	Rainbow Meditation	July 21-24
Stress: Portrait of as killer	June 11-14	Ice Bucket Challenge	July 23-28
A day in the life of stress	June 16-19	7-minute workout challenge*	July 30-Aug.10
		Binder clip pain	Aug. 6-9

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

Write down your top three stressors – things that are stressing you out right now. What type of stressors are these? Use the categories I talked about in module 1. Specifically, the categories that relate to modern day vs. ancient humans. Notice a trend in the type of stressors you wrote down?



Social Readjustment Rating Scale

Take the [SRRS online](#) to assess your risk of becoming seriously ill in the near future. But is it truly accurate? Identify the flaws associated with this “infamous” scale – as presented in module 1.



Spiderweb of Social Networks

Click here for a sheet of paper on which [two spiderwebs](#) have been printed. Imagine you are in the center of each web. 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 on the center rings of the web. Those with the least impact go on the rings on 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, brainstorm ways of converting your actual web to your ideal web. Some ways might be “physical” while others may be more “psychological” (e.g. modifying perceptions)



Into the Wild

[Into the wild](#) (long movie - must rent for about \$3) Google where to stream it.

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.



Hassles & Uplifts: 5-day tracker

Can focusing on uplifts vs. hassles have an effect on 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	



Making your SM feed healthier

So much of what we see on social media is negative and this can affect our well-being. But can we change what pops up on our video feed? YES! Watch this entire (but short) [video](#) that shows you how to change what you see. If you would like to complete this activity, you will first need to complete a [short mood questionnaire](#). Then follow the steps in the video. After 3 days of following the instructions, take the mood survey again. Do this one more time at the end of day 7. Refer to these three objective measurements as well as your opinion of whether these changes effectively improved your well-being. If they did, keep this up!!



The soothing forces of nature

What effect does nature have on your pulse and blood oxygen levels

Step 1. Take your pulse and blood oxygen. Step 2. Go outside and pluck a flower or piece of a plant (nothing endangered) and bring it inside. Draw this plant for 5-10 minutes. Note: draw using your emotions and the connection you feel to the plant. The actual drawing does not have to be “realistic”. This is not what’s important. Step 3. Record your pulse and blood oxygen. Step 4. Go outside with your plant – ideally, go to a place where you cannot see any human made structures. If your flower/plant has wilted, go get another one. Step 5. Record your pulse and blood oxygen. Step 6. Draw for 5=1- minutes. Step 7. Re-record your pulse and blood oxygen.

Did your pulse and blood oxygen change? If so, how? What about the drawings themselves? Were you more relaxed and “spiritual” in one environment over the other?

	human-made environment	nature environment
pulse before		
pulse after		
pulse difference		
blood oxygen before		
blood oxygen after		
blood oxygen difference		



Spirituality booster

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

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



Vagus Nerve Stimulation

Do you know how to stimulate your vagus nerve and activate your parasympathetic nervous system? I do. First, go to your bathroom and gargle with a sip of water. Gargle gently off and on for 30 seconds. Second, find a friend. As goofy as this sounds – look at each other in the eyes and laugh. It will be “fake” at first but I bet this will soon turn into real laughter – cause it is pretty silly after all 😊 Laugh for a good minute – longer if you want. Third, hum for a good solid minute. Finally, complete the activity quiz.



Stress: Portrait of a Killer

By the time this activity rolls around, you will have learned about the physiological stress response. Previous to this, you learned about the importance of supportive social networks. Watch this 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. NOTE: Question 1 has been modified for this activity.

[Stress: Portrait of a Killer \(movie\)](#)



A day in the life of stress

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. What specific topic was discussed in the video "A Day in the Life of Stress" that reinforced Yerkes-Dodson Law? In the video, which of the following was said to contribute most to work stress?

[A day in the life of stress \(movie\)](#)



Self-esteem booster

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

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.



Walk 1 and 2

Walk 1: Go on a 5-minute walk, preferably outside. You can do anything you want on this walk. When you return, write down what you do, see, hear, smell, taste, and feel (physical sensations). Just a short sentence for each is fine. Upload this to the Walk #1 “quiz” on Canvas.

Watch module 8 segment 2-4 – this MUST be done before walk 2

Walk 2: You will again go on a 5-minute walk. Just like the first, you can do anything you want on this walk, but try and use the principles learned in the video lecture. Answer the same questions: what you do, see, hear, smell, taste, and feel (physical sensations). Was one walk more fulfilling/enriching than the other?



Diaphragmatic (Belly) Breathing

Watch module 8 seg 1 to learn how to belly breathe properly. Now find a quiet place free of distractions. Practice the technique for 3-5 minutes. Next for one minute, try belly breathing where you inhale slowly for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly for 10 seconds. You can just count 10 “Mississippi” in your head. Set a timer to know when the 1 minute is up. You may find this harder than you think. BTW, if you start to hyperventilate, just return to your normal breathing pattern. Note: you will need to record your pulse and blood oxygen before and after belly breathing.



Autogenic Training

After you watch module 8 segment 3, listen to this audio file that walks you through a ~ 15 min session of [autogenic training](#) (self-hypnosis). Make sure to breathe diaphragmatically throughout. You need to record pulse and blood oxygen 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.

pulse BEFORE	Pulse AFTER	pulse DIFFERENCE	blood oxygen BEFORE	blood oxygen AFTER	blood oxygen DIFFERENCE



Mindful Meditation

Only do this activity after you watch module 8 segment 4.

Take an pulse and blood oxygen rating right before and right after you do this meditation. Ideally, this activity should be performed somewhere outside in a natural (not human-made) setting. Find a place to lie down. For the next 15 minutes, close your eyes and look at the inside of your eyelids (it's amazing what you will "see"). Open up all your other senses. Stay in the present and be non-judgmental. Breathe diaphragmatically. At the end of the 15 minutes (set a "gentle" alarm so you do not have to keep checking) think about the following: Did I open up all my senses? If yes, what did I see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? If no, which sense(s) did I focus on and why? Was I able to stay in the present? If not, did I think about the past or the future? Did this help or get in the way of my relaxing? Was I able to be non-judgmental? If not, were my judgments positive or negative? Did this help or get in the way of my relaxing? Record your pulse and blood oxygen 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.

pulse BEFORE	Pulse AFTER	pulse DIFFERENCE	blood oxygen BEFORE	blood oxygen AFTER	blood oxygen DIFFERENCE



Bracing

You must watch module 8 segment 7 before completing this activity

You will need about 10 minutes and a distraction free space to complete this activity. Sit on a wooden or metal chair - NOT on a sofa on a comfy recliner. Take an pulse and blood oxygen reading right before and right after you listen to this [audio recording](#). Record the data in a table like the one below. This will allow you to see how the session affected you. Also record how this technique made you feel, subjectively (i.e. more relaxed, less relaxed, warmer, colder etc).

pulse BEFORE	Pulse AFTER	pulse DIFFERENCE	blood oxygen BEFORE	blood oxygen AFTER	blood oxygen DIFFERENCE



Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Listen to this audio file that walks you through a ~ 17 min [session of PMR](#). Make sure to breath diaphragmatically throughout. You need to record pulse and blood oxygen 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.

pulse BEFORE	Pulse AFTER	pulse DIFFERENCE	blood oxygen BEFORE	blood oxygen AFTER	blood oxygen DIFFERENCE



Guided Imagery: Mountain Lake

Listen to this audio file that walks you through a ~ 17 min session of [guided imagery](#). Make sure to breath diaphragmatically throughout. You need to record pulse and blood oxygen 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

Listen to this audio file that walks you through a ~ 17 min session of [rainbow meditation](#). Make sure to breath diaphragmatically throughout. You need to record pulse and blood oxygen 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.

pulse BEFORE	Pulse AFTER	pulse DIFFERENCE	blood oxygen BEFORE	blood oxygen AFTER	blood oxygen DIFFERENCE



Ice Bucket Challenge

Complete this activity BEFORE you start watching the video for module 9 segment 16

Watch [this video](#) to see what you are in for!



7-minute workout challenge

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.

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!



Binder Clip Pain

You must do this activity BEFORE watching module 10, segment 16

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. More details are [here](#).

pulse BEFORE	Pulse AFTER	pulse DIFFERENCE	blood oxygen BEFORE	blood oxygen AFTER	blood oxygen DIFFERENCE

