



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Recognize some of the factors which cause stress, including stigma
- Develop skills and strategies for dealing with stress



## TIME

1 hour

## ACTIVITIES

### *Story-Discussion*

### **WHAT IS STRESS?**

Ask a participant to read the following story.

Penina's husband is away in the city. Penina has been having lots of diarrhea lately and thinks she may have AIDS. It is the farming season and Penina has to work alone in the fields, because all of her children are young and in school. The weeds are growing fast and she cannot keep up with them.

The maize stored from last year is almost finished, the price of food is going up and the children are often hungry. Normally Penina would discuss this with her neighbors but recently they have not been speaking to her. The rains have brought malaria and her youngest daughter has a fever—Penina worries she may get it too. She has not paid the school fees and the head teacher shouts at her whenever he sees her in the village. Her friend told her that the head teacher was spreading rumors about her illness.

Penina has problems sleeping. She wakes up each night and sits for hours thinking about her problems. Her heart beats fast and she shakes and she sometimes has nightmares. She finds herself shouting at the children and slapping them. They are shocked. Why is their mother behaving like this?



### Discuss

- What is happening to Penina?
- Why is she behaving this way?  
Stress because she cannot see how she can cope with all her problems.

### Group Discussion in Trios

## **HOW TO DEAL WITH STRESS**

Divide into trios to discuss:

- What are the things that cause you stress? Write each point on a card. Then put the cards into two piles:
  1. what you can change
  2. what you are stuck with
- Select a few of the most important causes of stress and discuss what you might be able to do to reduce these causes?
- Some of these causes you cannot change, but you might be able to reduce the stress produced by these causes? What can you do to reduce stress?

## **WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS**

- Don't carry all your problems on your shoulders. Try to see how others can help you in your home and outside. Maybe other family members can help you with some of your problems.
- Pray to God to share your load so you don't worry too much about your problems.
- Talk about your problems with someone you trust.
- Have a good cry—it can relieve stress and sadness.
- If your friends and neighbors have similar problems, meet together and share worries and feelings. Look for solutions which you can do together.
- Put your problems in order and set goals to solve one or two of the most important problems.
- Relaxation helps to reduce stress. Close your eyes and breathe slowly, focusing on the breath going in and out of your body. Now start from your left foot and relax all the bones and muscles in it. Move up your calf muscle and so on until you have relaxed your whole body.
- Play some music that makes you feel relaxed.
- Do something that you enjoy—singing or reading—at least once a day.