

Stress Intervention Plan – Stefanie

The following information was recorded by you during the initial contact meeting:

Stefanie is a 19 year-old, full-time undergraduate freshman. Although she works 15 hours a week, education is expensive and she really wants to earn more money. She decides to start donating at the local plasma center because they pay well and she can study while she donates. However, she quickly discovered that as soon as she enters the building, her temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure increase dramatically. In fact, all three are too high and as such she is unable to donate. Stefanie is coming to you for help.

Through careful and skilled examination, you discover that Stefanie is a very reactive person. Strong emotions are easily triggered, as is her sympathetic nervous system. Although Stefanie is exceptionally bright, she has a tendency to worry about things that may or may not come to pass and she frequently imagines the worst. Her levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy appear to depend on the situation. Similarly, she often believes that her experiences, thoughts and feelings are beyond her control. Stefanie has not had any formal education in stress or stress management training.

Stefanie is from a middle class family and has a sister who is two years older. The family is very close knit. Stefanie does not have many friends, but those she has are very close and supportive. Though she considers herself to be spiritual, Stefanie does not practice any formalized religion. Stefanie appears to be in good physical condition – but she rarely exercises and her diet is heavy on sweets and low whole grains, fruits and vegetables. She suffers from frequent colds, headaches, and stomach issues.

You ask Stefanie to explain the donation process. This is what she said.

When you go into the cold, brightly lit building (which looks and smells like a hospital), you first check in at one of the kiosks. After answering a bunch of highly personal medical and behavioral questions (which are mostly about sex and drug use), you take a seat beside other people waiting to be screened for eligibility. Depending on how busy they are, 5-15 minutes later you are called up to a screening booth. There, the person takes your weight, blood pressure, and body temperature (using an oral thermometer). The person then pricks one of your fingers and presses really hard to squeeze out enough blood to measure your protein and hematocrit levels. Some of the screeners are pleasant, but others are cold and never smile. If any of your measurements are too high or if you are not hydrated enough, they send you back to a designated section of the waiting area. 15 minutes later, you get to do this all over again. If you still don't "pass", you are sent home – and you have just wasted 45-60 minutes of your very busy day. If by some miracle you do make it through to the donation room (which is even colder than the reception area), you get to wait some more. Typically, within 5 minutes you are

escorted to a donor chair in a large room with about 10-20 or more other donors. Here, you hope to get an experienced “sticker”, because if they miss, the huge needle will get moved around in and between your veins in an attempt to find the right spot. And if they have to do this, then this will likely leave you severely bruised. You cannot donate again until the bruise disappears in about a week or so. And if that isn't bad enough, if they screw up one arm, they will then try to get you in your other arm. If they don't mess up your first stick (which hurts like hell no matter what), you get to sit there and pump your fist while your blood is sucked out of you. Your arm and hand do get a rest while your blood is being returned, but then you have to deal with a gross taste in your mouth and unpleasant feeling in your stomach. This is the result of a chemical they give you to prevent your blood from coagulating. There are TVs you can watch, but there is no sound. Donating can take anywhere from 35 min to 2 hours, depending on how relaxed you are. If you are stressed, donating can take forever. When you are done, someone comes to remove the needle and bandage up your arm so freaking tight, it feels like a tunicate. You have to keep this on for the next 2-4 hours. But, at least you get paid right away.

Stefanie has come to you for help. She hopes to be able to successfully start and complete regular donations within a month's time. Use what you are learning about wellness, stress and stress management to create, implement, and monitor a plan for Stefanie.