



Being Present

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With most of winter's weather in the rear-view mirror, it would seem stress should also be melting away. Too often we replace the anxious stress of winter with the overscheduling of spring. Yard work, projects, school programs, graduations, sporting events and field work all take time and planning.

Eat

This month is stress reduction month. You will find a quick slow cooker meal and some ways to reduce stress. Make your own stress-reducing family poster.

Use Your Time-saving Kitchen Appliances

Do you have a slow cooker, microwave oven, multifunction cooker (such as an Instant Pot) or an air-fryer? Many households have at least a couple of these appliances. Put them to good use to reduce time for meal preparation.

Don't let meal preparation promote stress. Enlist help from family members with planning, preparation and clean up. A little planning can help you get dinner on the table quickly. NDSU Extension has a variety of meal preparation handouts to help you prepare healthful meals in a flash.

- The **Now You're Cookin'** series provides time-saving tips, recipes, menus and more (www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/extension-topics/food-and-nutrition/food-preparation/cooking-basics/now-youre-cookin').

— Example: **Now You're Cookin': Slow Cooker Meals** provides food safety tips and recipes for slow cookers.

- See the **Pinchin' Pennies in the Kitchen** series to learn how to use the ingredients you have on hand to make soups, casseroles, stir-fry and other menu items (www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/extension-topics/food-and-nutrition/food-preparation/pinching-pennies-kitchen).

This month's recipe can be made in a slow cooker or on the stove top.



5-Ingredient Chicken Curry

- 2¾ pounds chicken breasts, without skin
- 1 (16-ounce) jar salsa (mild or medium)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons curry powder (or to taste)
- 1 cup sour cream, low-fat or fat-free

Place chicken in slow cooker. Combine salsa, onions and curry powder and pour over chicken. Cover with lid. Cook on low for eight hours (or high for four hours). Remove chicken to serving platter; cover and keep warm. Add sour cream to salsa mixture in the slow cooker. Blend and pour over the chicken. Serve with rice.

If desired, you can make this on the stovetop. Dice chicken, brown in a small amount of oil. Add remaining ingredients, except for sour cream. Simmer for 30 minutes, then add sour cream.

Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 190 calories, 3.5 grams (g) fat, 9 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 350 milligrams sodium.

Menu Idea: Chicken Curry, brown or white rice, sugar snap peas, orange slices, naan (bread), low-fat milk

CONNECT

Today at the family table, ask each person to talk about healthy ways to reduce their stress. Write down all of the answers. Go around as many times as needed to collect ideas. Allow people to say pass if they are out of ideas.

- Make these answers into a **poster with fun illustrations** so even young pre-readers can recall ways to reduce stress.
- Leave extra spaces for people to add more ideas as they think of them.
- Here are a few to get your family started; play an instrument, walk outside, sing a song, dance, cry, shower, pet your pet, roll up in a soft blanket, read, nap, brush your hair, breathe, meditate, do yoga, write out your thoughts, talk to someone, create art, sew, plan a vacation, watch a funny movie, play a board game, laugh, ride a bike, do something nice and unexpected for another person.

Make a calming jar.

- Use a clean unbreakable plastic bottle with a tight-fitting lid.
- Fill with water, a few drops of glycerin and four drops of colorless liquid soap.
- Put on the cover, tighten and shake to mix all of the liquids.
- Next add several colors of glitter.
- Tighten the lid, and run a bead of glue around the cover to keep it secure. Let the glue dry.

- When the jar is ready, and someone needs calming, shake it up. Then, settle as you watch the spinning glitter gradually become more peaceful. Try this again. Count slowly until the glitter is all settled.

- Even without the jar, you can count slowly, breathe and settle yourself.

Try finding some “awe” for stress relief. When you witness something that gives you awe, snap a photo. Use these moments of awe to share your day with your family. Did you laugh out loud with someone at the office? Did the frost make a smile out of your vehicle’s tailgate? Maybe you spotted a bird building a nest or a sprig of a flower poking out of the earth. Moments of awe lift moods. See them and share them.

Do you know if you are taking on too much stress? Try the Mental Health America stress screener at <https://mhanational.org/get-involved/stress-screener>. It contains 16 multiple-choice questions. There are screeners for many other mental health issues on the same site at <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/>.

For questions about parenting and child development, go to www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/parent-education for classes and events. Use the left navigation to contact the Parent and Family Resource Center nearest you.



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Savor (the Savings)

Eating at home often is more economical than eating in restaurants. Try these tips to streamline meal preparation.

- Focus preparation efforts on one portion of the meal. If the main course is time-consuming, fix a simple vegetable or salad.
- Assemble equipment, cooking utensils and ingredients before you start meal preparation.
- Use time-saving equipment such as crockpots and microwave ovens.
- Use the one-pot method. For instance, cut time by adding vegetables to pasta that is cooking.
- Consider quick-cooking menu items. For example, steam fish, which cooks in minutes, with couscous or pasta and microwaved fresh vegetables.
- If you are in a rush, shop the salad bar vegetables for presliced mushrooms, broccoli and cauliflower florets or chopped onions to be used in stir-fry or soup.

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