



SELLSTATE

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

Introduction: Stress Reduction

Component 1: Facilitator Talking Points

Component 2: Agenda

Component 3: Activity 1: How Stressed Are You? Quiz

Component 4: Activity 1: How Stressed Are You? Quiz Answers

Component 5: Handout 1: A Dozen Ways to Reduce Stress

Component 6: Activity 2: Exercises to Relieve Stress

Component 7: Handout 2: Reduce Your Time Related Stress

Component 8: Activity 3: Identifying Your Stress Producers

Component 9: Activity 4: Behaviors to Lower Stress

Component 10: Activity 4: Behaviors to Lower Stress, Explanation Sheet

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

Stress is serious. Although a little stress may help you feel energized, long-term intense stress can increase the risk of heart disease, cause back pain, and lead to clinical depression requiring psychiatric care. Health care expenditures are nearly 50 percent greater for workers who report high levels of stress, reports the December 2001 issue of *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, published by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers who must take time off work due to stress, anxiety, or a related disorder will be off the job for about 20 days.

Use this tool kit—including ready-to-go agenda, activities, and talking points—to help your salespeople learn techniques for reducing stress in their daily real estate activities.

Each element in this tool kit (worksheets, notes) is numbered at the top of the page so you can easily move through the content.

# SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

## Component 1: Facilitator Talking Points

These notes will guide you and your salespeople through a discussion and activities on better ways to manage stress in your business lives.

### **Pre-meeting preparation:**

- Review all the meeting documents in this kit.
- Ask participants to bring in descriptions of one or two stressful business situations they experienced during the last week and how they reacted to them.

Print the following:

1. These facilitator talking points—Component 1
2. The Reducing Stress Agenda—Component 2
3. Activity 1: Quiz: How Stressed Are You?—Component 3
4. Activity 1: Quiz Answers: How Stressed Are You?—Component 4
5. Handout 1: A Dozen Ways to Reduce Stress—Component 5
6. Activity 2: Three Exercises to Relieve Stress—Component 6
7. Handout 2: Reduce Your Time-Related Stress—Component 7
8. Activity 3: Identifying Your Stress Producers—Component 8
9. Activity 4: Behaviors to Lower Stress—Component 9
10. Activity 4: Behaviors to Lower Stress Explanation Sheet—Component 10

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

### **Component 1: continued**

#### **Welcome (1 minute)**

#### **True stories (1-2 min.)**

1. Relate a personal story about a stress-inducing situation you experienced at work in the last week. (Be sure not to select a story that would put any salesperson in an uncomfortable situation.)

To segue from the true stories to the discussion, tell participants that real estate sales is among the 25 most stressful occupations, according to the Jobs Rated Almanac, published by National Business Employment Weekly. The almanac says real estate professionals fall in the same stress category as air traffic controllers, police officers, and NCAA basketball coaches.

#### **Background, Objectives, and Goals (2 min.)**

In this business, you can't completely eliminate stress, but by learning to keep it under control, you can make your professional and business lives more productive and happier and avoid the burnout that could seriously damage your career.

In this meeting, we'll:

- Discuss some ways to counteract stress.
- Review some time management tips to help reduce stress.
- Identify what factors are the most significant contributors to your stress.
- Help you learn responses to diffuse some typically stressful real estate sales situations.

#### **Activity 1: Quiz: Are You Stressed? (5 min.)**

Have participants take this quick quiz to evaluate their stress levels. Then use the quiz answer sheet to rate the stress of your salespeople.

#### **Handout 1: A Dozen Ways to Reduce Stress (5 min.)**

Read through the suggestions for reducing stress. After you read each one, ask for a show of hands to learn if participants have used a particular suggestion. Ask those who have tried the technique how well or badly the technique worked. Ask participants to share any other stress-reducing ideas they have found effective.

#### **Activity 2: Three Exercises to Relieve Stress (10 min.)**

Get participants to try each of the three exercises. After each one, explain what the stress buster trick of the exercise is.

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

### **Component 1: continued**

#### **Handout 2: Reduce Your Time-Related Stress (5 min.)**

Remind the participants that poor time management is a major cause of stress in the real estate business. Read the five time management tips; then ask participants if they have any others they can share with the group. If the group wants to learn more about how time management can be used to reduce stress, present a separate session using the Better Time Management Sales Meeting Tool Kit.

#### **Activity 3: Identifying Your Stress Producers (15 min.)**

Use this exercise to help salespeople pinpoint their principal causes of stress in their daily real estate activities. Ask each salesperson to describe a recent stressful moment. Then use the Identifying Your Stress Producers Explanation sheet (Component 8) for suggestions on responses that might reduce stress. Ask participants for other suggestions on how stress could be reduced in each situation.

#### **Activity 4: Behaviors to Lower Stress (10 min.)**

Use this exercise to help salespeople train themselves to respond in ways that will reduce their stress. Have a participant read each scenario, then ask participants to write down how they would respond to the situation in one or two sentences. Then call on various participants to share their responses with the group. Use the Behaviors to Lower Stress Explanation Sheet (Component 10) to suggest ways that participants' stress level could be reduced in each scenario.

#### **Adjourn.**

Thank participants for their time.

**Running Time:** 54 min.

# SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

## Component 2: Agenda

**Welcome (1 min.)**

**True story (1-2 min.)**

**Background and goals (2 min.)**

**In this meeting, we'll:**

- Discuss some ways to counteract stress.
- Review some time management tips to help reduce stress.
- Identify what factors are the most significant contributors to your stress.
- Help you learn responses to diffuse some typically stressful real estate sales situations.

**Activity 1: How Stressed Are You? Quiz (5 min.)**

Rate your stress level.

**Handout 1: A Dozen Ways to Reduce Stress (5 min.)**

Review some ideas that might help you make your stress more manageable.

**Activity 2: Three Exercises to Relieve Stress (10 min.)**

Try these simple exercises to get a temporary relief from stress.

**Handout 2: Reduce Your Time-Related Stress (5 min.)**

Get a handle on how to use your time more effectively.

**Activity 3: Identifying Your Stress Producers (15 min.)**

Identify your major causes of work-related stress and consider some suggestions for how to counteract them.

**Activity 4: Behaviors to Lower Stress (10 min.)**

Learn to react differently in stress-inducing situations.

**Adjourn**

**Running Time:** 54 min.

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

### **Component 3: Activity 1, How Stressed Are You? Quiz**

Put a check next to each year of these descriptions that applies to you.

1. You frequently complete the sentences of someone you're talking to.
2. You wake up the middle of the night and start trying to solve a work related problem.
3. You jump when someone suddenly comes up behind you.
4. You regularly feel overwhelmed with the amount of work you have to complete.
5. You run late all the time.
6. You often find it hard to concentrate, especially on more complicated tasks.
7. You feel so exhausted at the end of the day you barely have the energy to eat dinner.
8. You get angry easily, often over minor things.
9. You have experienced a noticeable change in eating habits, either eating much more or  
much less.
10. You put off returning calls even to nice clients because you're "not up to" talking to them.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 4: Activity 1, How Stressed Are You? Quiz Answers

**2 or fewer check marks:** You're so unstressed you probably don't belong in real estate. Keep up the good work and let the rest of us know how you do it.

**3 to 5 check marks:** You're stressed, but have it under control. Consider adding some physical exercise or recreational activity to your schedule to help you keep in balance.

**6 to 8 check marks:** You're a prime candidate for Valium. Try practicing anxiety control exercises, such as visualizing yourself solving the problems that worry you. Learn to say "no" when you don't have time for anything else.

**9 or 10 check marks:** You're practically vibrating. Take a vacation and consider finding a friend to talk to about your fears and frustrations. Use positive talk to yourself to help you keep calm.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 5: Handout 1, A Dozen Ways to Reduce Stress

Real estate sales are among the 25 most stressful occupations, according to the *Jobs Rated Almanac*, published by Barricade Books, Ft. Lee, N.J. The 1998 Almanac says the real estate professional falls in the same stress category as an air traffic controller, police officer, and NCAA basketball coach. Try these options for reducing stress.

1. Make peace with imperfections; always strive to do your best, but accept the limitations of being a human being.
2. Learn to live in the present; don't be controlled by past problems or future concerns.
3. Spend a moment every day thinking of someone to thank: a higher being for the beauty of the day or the person who let you change lanes without honking at you. It's a great way to combat negativity.
4. Get out. Walk around the block, take the long way through the park and admire the view. Take a break to exercise or pamper yourself with a new tie or a manicure.
5. Smile at strangers and look them in the eye; the sense of opening up and connecting is a great stress reducer.
6. Remember to be grateful for what you have, not frustrated by what you don't have.
7. Choose your battles wisely; disagreements are stressful. Don't use your energy trying to convince someone else unless it's important. Don't make winning a must do for every issue.
8. Create a stress-reduction box, suggests Jan Morris, Morris VIP Realty, Montgomery, Ala. Include pictures of your children or pets, a silly cartoon, letters of appreciation from past clients, and a goofy toy. (I personally find that one or two blasts on a duck call cheers me up tremendously.)
9. Remember you can't please all people, all of the time. Real estate is a service business, but not every prospect will recognize you for the great salesperson you are, and not every buyer will like the great listing you're so proud of. Get over it.
10. Breathe before you speak. It will often help you avoid ill-considered statements that can increase everyone's stress level and give you a chance to really listen to what has been said.

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

### **Component 5: continued**

11. Talk to yourself positively; positive affirmations will help counter the feels of negativity, anger and the sense of failure that often accompany stress.

12. Concentrate on doing one thing at a time. Trying to eat lunch, talk to a client, and put the finishing touches on a property ad that has to be in today is a surefire recipe for stress and possibly mistakes.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 6: Activity 2, Exercises to Relieve Stress

**Stress Buster #1:** Turn off those negative inner thoughts. Ask participants to begin thinking about a recent business problem that they wished they had handled better. During this period, most people will begin thinking negatively about themselves and about what they did wrong in that situation. After 1-2 minutes, suddenly shout, "Stop." Immediately ask participants to start humming or whistling "America the Beautiful" (or any other song you like).

**Stress Buster Trick:** It's almost impossible to think seriously while whistling or humming. Tell participants that if their inner voices start sounding negative, they should shout, "Stop" and begin humming to break the pattern of negativity.

**Stress Buster #2:** Instant yoga. Ask participants to stand up. Have them let their arms hang loosely at their sides and their eyes closed. Have participants raise their arms toward their ears. Hold this pose and breath in an out slowly. Lower arms. Repeat five times.

**Stress Buster Trick:** Relaxing the tension in your shoulder and neck muscles—where many people experience tension when under stress—will help you lower your stress level.

**Stress Buster #3:** Go on a minivacation. Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine that they are on vacation at a spot they've always dreamed of (or their favorite spot). Participants should imagine themselves in the picture—if they're at the beach, they should feel the sand under their feet, feel the breeze in their palms, etc. At the end of 2-3 minutes, ask each participant to briefly describe their favorite spot and what it felt like.

**Stress Buster Trick:** Visualizing a pleasant, restful place, even for five minutes will help break the pattern of stress, lower your metabolism, and help you relax.

## **SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS**

### **Component 7: Handout 2, Reduce Your Time-Related Stress**

Using time productively is a great stress reducer. Try these time management ideas.

1. Have a plan of action for each day, week, and month. Knowing what you want to achieve will help you focus your time and reduce the stress of feeling that you're not accomplishing your goals.
2. Avoid indecision. If you try to put off making a decision after carefully weighing the facts, you waste time that could be spent implementing the choice and create needless tension for yourself.
3. Know your limits. Not knowing when to say "no" will push you beyond your capacities and lead to poor performance and mental fatigue.
4. Don't procrastinate. Try to determine which tasks you regularly put off and do them first. Then give yourself a reward for completing the job. Overcoming procrastination reduces the nagging tension of having an incomplete job hanging over your head.
5. Avoid interruptions. Losing concentration, especially when performing complex tasks, means you need to start your thought process over, losing still more time and adding to your stress. Try to block out a period of at least one to two hours of uninterrupted time when you are working on a listing presentation or a new marketing program that requires creative thought. Very few things really are so urgent that they can't wait for an hour or two.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 8: Activity 3, Identifying Your Stress Producers

Use this sheet to help salespeople analyze some of the situations they may encounter during their real estate activities.

#### **Stressful Situations: Prospecting**

*Fear of rejection:* Stop listening to that "tape in your head" that tells you the prospect won't like you and you will not get an appointment. Not everyone will need your services and not everyone will like you.

*Procrastination:* To motivate yourself to prospect, choose a reward for yourself if you successfully make a certain number of new prospecting appointments a week.

#### **Stressful Situations: Listing**

*Fear of not being prepared for the listing:* Make the preparation a priority. Schedule a two-to-three hour period the day before the presentation to prepare your materials and review your presentation. Listings are major sources of income and should be given ample space in your time management schedule.

*Fear of failure to get the listing:* Work on developing positive statements about your skills and professionalism. "I'm a skilled real estate professional. Any seller would be lucky to have me working to sell their home." Repeat these positive statements to yourself several times a day, especially when you start to have feelings of doubt. Take a class on improving your listing presentation to gain self-confidence.

#### **Stressful Situations: Showing**

*The buyers don't like any of the homes you show them:* Recognize that you'll never please everyone and that some people have unrealistic expectations. Instead of privately berating yourself (or the sellers), cut the showing session short or suggest a break to let everyone relax. Use the break time to re-interview the sellers about their home needs.

*The house is a mess when you arrive for the open house:* Stress often comes from expectations not meeting realities. Stop and take a few deep breaths to calm down. Then, call for help—see if someone in your office or your family could pitch in for an hour to help clean up. Plan on being at all open houses at least 45 minutes ahead so you'll have time to straighten up the next time this happens.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 8: continued

#### **Stressful Situations: Closing**

*Offer is below what the seller "needs":* Don't accept someone else's problems as your own. While you certainly want to do everything necessary to make the sale, don't feel like you have to make up the difference by cutting your commission and then feeling angry and resentful about it.

*Buyers have problems obtaining financing:* Recognize that you can't control every situation or solve every problem. Offer to call the lender to determine the cause of the problem and then offer suggestions for financing alternatives. If necessary, suggest a credit counselor

*Sellers make a very problematic counteroffer:* Don't always feel that you have to prove your point or show that you are right; provide advice to the sellers on how to respond. Don't be frustrated if they don't follow it. Stop blaming others if things don't work out; it makes you feel powerless. Instead, look for a way you can solve the problem.

*The closing slows down because the paperwork isn't getting done:* Don't let poor time management skills give you an excuse to neglect the details needed to close. Designate a time every day to follow up on transactions. If you can afford it, hire a part-time assistant to do the calling for you. Keep a time log to determine how long each task takes and then allocate time for follow-through.

#### **Stressful Situations in General**

*Time is wasted trying to find paperwork:* Taking 10 percent of your week to get organized will pay off in greater productivity and less stress during the other 90 percent of the day. Create—or have your assistant create—a comprehensive paper and electronic filing system, then devote 10 minutes at the end of each day to putting paperwork in its proper place.

*Technology use:* Don't berate yourself because you can just open the box and use the technology. Be patient and take the time to read the instructions. Don't have unrealistic expectations. Instead, sign up for a class or ask a friend for instructions.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 9: Activity 4, Behaviors to Lower Stress

Read each scenario below and then *honestly* explain in one or two sentences what you would do in this situation.

**Scenario 1:** You have a listing presentation in 45 minutes and the new salesperson in the office comes in to ask for your advice.

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario 2:** You've had a very frustrating day. You got up at 5 a.m. to finish a listing presentation for a prospect, only to be told that the seller's brother in law is going to sell the house. You rushed to the airport and spent the afternoon showing out-of-town customers four houses they hated. Now, in one hour, you have to present a very low offer to a client whose house has been on the market for 90 days.

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario 3:** Following the principles of good time management, you've carefully plotted out your day—prospecting from 9 to 11 a.m., house showings from noon to 4 p.m., sending out your monthly e-mail newsletter from 4 to 5 p.m., then your son's 5:30 hockey game. Unfortunately, the buyers arrive late, insist on stopping for a bite to eat as well as an open house you just happen to drive by. You finally drop them off at 5:25.

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 10: Activity 4, Behaviors to Lower Stress Explanation Sheet

Read each scenario below and then call on participants for their responses until one participant offers a strategy similar to the one listed for that exercise. If no one offers this option, share the solution with the group. Then explain the long-term strategy that will help participants successfully implement this stress-busting behavior in the future.

**Scenario 1:** You have a listing presentation in 45 minutes and the new salesperson in the office comes in to ask for your advice.

***The Stress Buster:*** Practice being patient. Remember why this person is at your door. Not to make you late, not to screw up your presentation so you don't get the listing, but because he considers you a great salesperson and hopes to learn how to succeed from you.

***Long-Term Strategy:*** Dr. Richard Carlson, author of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* suggests holding "patience practice periods" of as little as five minutes and then build from there. Not only will you lower your stress by being patient, but you'll keep everyone in the situation calmer.

**Scenario 2:** You've had a very frustrating day. You got up at 5 a.m. to finish a listing presentation for a prospect, only to be told that the seller's brother-in-law was a real estate salesperson and would be listing the home. You rushed to the airport and spent the afternoon showing out-of-town customers four houses they hated. Now, in one hour, you have to present a very low offer to a client whose house has been on the market for 90 days.

***The Stress Buster:*** Get some quiet time to calm down. Before you plan your strategy for presenting the offer, take 15 minutes of quiet time. Don't let yourself worry about the day or the presentation ahead. Instead, focus on pleasant topics—the beauty of the landscape, the great round of golf you had last weekend, the adorable drawing your child brought home from school. In no time, you'll feel refreshed and ready to calmly and professionally discuss the pros and cons of the offer with your clients.

## SALES MEETING TOOL KIT: REDUCING STRESS

### Component 10: continued

**Long-Term Strategy:** Get some perspective. Most day-to-day irritations—the unresponsive buyers, the slow traffic—are just that, problems of the moment that you won't remember a year, or even a month from now. Thinking about a minor problem in terms of the "time warp" of a year from now shows you just how unimportant most things that stress you out really are.

**Scenario 3:** Following the principles of good time management, you've carefully plotted out your day—prospecting from 9 to 11 a.m., house showings from noon to 4 p.m., sending out your monthly e-mail newsletter from 4 to 5 p.m., then your son's 5:30 hockey game. Unfortunately, the buyers arrive late, insist on stopping for a bite to eat as well as an open house you just happen to drive by. You finally drop them off at 5:25.

**The Stress Buster:** Be flexible. Planning is important, but so is the realization that you can't control every situation. Will the prospects that receive your newsletter really care if they get it one or two days later? Of course not. So slot your newsletter later in the week and cheer on your kid. In addition, accepting that something won't get done will keep you from seeming rushed and edgy to the buyers you work with.

**Long-Term Strategy:** Build in a certain amount of flextime every day to so that you can get critical things done. This flextime can be used to do non-time sensitive tasks, such as entering prospects into your contact management system, filing paperwork, or reviewing new listings on the MLS. By building in this time that can be used for a variety of purposes, you can lose or gain an hour in your schedule without feeling the stress of falling behind in your work.