The magazine *Office Pro* had an article in the January/February 2012 issue entitled “Stress Less-How to Relax at Work” by Martha McCarty that I thought tied in with this week’s assignments. In this article, licensed psychological counselor Gayron Haywood gave a one-on-one interview with Office Pro. He offers suggestions on how to manage stress and feel better throughout the day. Haywood is a proponent of relaxation therapy. He stated, “This technique helps the body to tell the mind it’s time to chill out.” There are four core areas that call for stress management. These are: physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual.

Developing a relaxation response turns off the negative effects of stress and helps us to gain control. Haywood said that the first thing he addresses when working with someone new is what kind of self-care they give themselves. “If you take care of the body, the body in turn helps take care of the mind. Your mind will fall right into place.” Eating properly, exercising, getting enough rest, and relaxing are the keys to physical strength and relaxing.

Job stress can negatively affect both professional and personal relationships. Work overload, daily commutes, along with sensory overload from the internet, texts, messages, and phones repeatedly fight for our attention According to Haywood, we can use that technology to our benefit. For instance, check messages when waiting in line. There is a relaxation app called *Relax Lite* available on smart phones that he uses when he is feeling tense.

Haywood said that we have to recognize the thoughts we have and if they are healthy. “We can stop distorted thinking that disqualifies the positive and causes worry about things that never come into place.” Cognitive Distortion is the term Haywood uses to describe this mindset. Getting wisdom and psychological support from your peers can help to keep perspective. Eating with others can give you a needed mental break. Do not eat at your desk. Social interaction is important. Isolating yourself leads to depression. Another tip is to find peace in whatever spiritual activity that means something to you. Take deep breaths. The more you practice deep breathing, the quicker your mind can go to a peaceful place. Reaching out to someone who is less fortunate also improves our mental state. Tap into articles, information, and videos by typing “relaxation therapy” into an internet search.

Replacing old habits with new ones is called shaping. This redefines attitudes so we can move toward positive results. Changing our mindset is the best way to learn how to relax. Let go of excuses that weigh you down. Also, ask for professional help when you suffer from chronic stress. Getting help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness. The bottom line is that you need to take care of yourself every day. The mind and body work together. To perform at your best, you need to focus on the positive and ditch the negative thoughts and behaviors. Following these tips is a great way to start on your new path.