



**Manual to hold**

# **Stress-free in Church of Denmark**

**- a free space in the church with  
nature, meditation and fellowship.  
For stress sufferers or other people  
who need a calm space and peace  
the of soul.**



**Menighedsplejen  
i Danmark**

Together in faith, hope and action

- Concrete guidance on how you can build up a Stress-free activity
- Introduction to the target group and the method in the project
- Research in the field
- On Menighedspejen in Denmark website under "Knowledge Bank" you can find the document "Inspiration and guidance in making activities in Stress Free" such as pre-sprouting, raised beds, Japanese moss balls, beeswax candles, wreaths and other creative activities.

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# 1. Introduction

The church space is perceived by many as a place for reflection and contemplation. The church itself has a calming effect on many, even if you are not a believer. Nature has the same - "the great cathedral" and creation. In the project Stress-free, we wanted to combine this and create a free space in the church and by the church's green surroundings with activities that have evidence of being calming, stress-reducing and uplifting for the soul.

Stress-free is a weekly offer at the Apostelkirken on Vesterbro in Copenhagen. It is a free space for people with stress, stress-related anxiety, depression or other psychological vulnerability and has the name "Stress-free in the courtyard".

## The story of Stress-free in the courtyard

"When I was on sick leave with stress, I missed being with other people and signed up for a kitchen garden project at a local cultural center. 20 people turned up and made raised beds and sprouted, but when we got to the summer and the garden had to be looked after, I was the only one left! I felt how good nature was to me – I could completely forget myself when I worked with the earth and the plants; it was healing and edifying for both body and mind. But it was also hard to be responsible for all the practical aspects of a larger vegetable garden - as sick. Hence the idea to create a garden project, where those affected by stress can come and enjoy the joys of gardening without having to be responsible for the practical preparation."  
Deaconess consultant Eva Green Meinel

It is an offer that is explicitly aimed at people with mental vulnerability in order to create a spacious community where participants can share experiences with each other. The activities in "Stress-free i Gårdhaven" are gardening in the church's yard in spring, summer and autumn and creative nature projects in winter. Afterwards, there is an offer for guided meditation in the church.

This is precisely what is needed in our society, where – for better or for worse – there is a high speed, many impressions that constantly draw our attention outwards. Away from an experience of presence and a deeper contact with ourselves. This is unfortunately reflected in the statistics for people suffering from mental illnesses.

According to The National Board of Health's professional presentation for a 10-year plan for "Better mental health and a strengthened effort for people with mental disorders", January 2022, 25% of all cases of illness today are due to mental disorders. This is a significant increase compared to previously.

Stress-free in Church of Denmark was started by deacon consultant Eva Green Meinel, when she had experienced the beneficial effect of nature during a stress-related illness. Eva chose to do the project in a church, as the church's view of people and values reflected precisely the inclusiveness that people in crisis need. A spaciousness borne by the message of charity and God's unconditional love for us. At the same time, the church has priests and staff who are used to dealing with people in crisis. The project has subsequently spread to Frederiksberg Church and Holy Cross Church in Nørrebro (see more information on the back page).

### Meditation and contemplation

In Stressfree, after gardening, we offer guided meditation in the form of presence exercises, which are good for calming the mind and creating contact with the present moment. After a short break, there is Christian meditation. We have structured the offer in such a way that the participants can opt in and out of the Christian part, as Stressfree is for everyone regardless of religious belief.

Contemplation and meditation are not alien to the Christian tradition. Right back from the desert fathers who lived a secluded and simple life in the desert of Egypt and later in the monastic tradition, Christian contemplation and meditation have unfolded as a religious practice. In the last century, monks from various monastic traditions in England and the USA developed methods of Christian meditation that can be practiced by "ordinary people" who do not live a secluded life in the monastery. And just in recent years there has been a search towards the church's offer for immersion.

### 1.1 Who can use this manual and contemplation

We are writing to you who are employees or volunteers in a church and who would like to create activities for those affected by stress or others who may benefit from the activities for other target groups. It could also be that you work in a different field, but can be inspired. We have tried to make the manual as easily accessible as possible with a focus on sharing concrete experiences with keeping Stressfree, so it is easy to get started.

430,000 people have serious symptoms of stress in Denmark every day.

There's about 2,400 folk churches scattered across the country.

The manual is structured with a description of the target group of mentally vulnerable people and how Stressfri is structured methodically. In fact boxes and theme boxes, we supplement with information about stress and statements from participants in Stressfree.

### 1.2 Values in "Stress-free" - Equality

In a therapist situation, there is an inequality of power between the therapist and the person being treated. The person being treated may be struggling with stress, anxiety, depression or the like, and the other is treating and not necessarily fighting the same battle.

#### Find more information:

 @MDK.psykisk.saarbarhed

 @stressfri\_have

But keeping the balance in life and avoiding dangerous stress is a task for everyone in modern society. To hold on to one's core and sense-being alone challenges us all when the outside world with text messages, calls, Facebook, Instagram and endless possibilities fragments our minds. So when you work with Stressfree, your participants may be more affected than you, but there is an equality in the work of seeking presence in life.

You do not need to be a therapist or psychologist to do Stressfree, because Stressfree is not a treatment or a treatment offer. You also don't have to have had stress yourself. The most important thing is, that you create a free space with care and love - and preferably with immersive activities with nature that can calm the mind and create quality of life.



### 1.3 Get started

This manual contains questions and tips on how to get started, and if you are looking for practical exercises, you can find them in an appendix on our website. In the appendix, there are a lot of ideas for what you can do in Stressfri, and where we refer to videos or other instructions from the Internet, so that it will be easier for you to get started. There will also be examples of meditations that you can guide.

Think this through before starting the project:

- o Who will be responsible for holding Stressfri?
- o How often should it be – once a week, once a month?
- o Which activities should be focused on? Gardening? Do you have green areas? Is there room for a high bed? What about winter - do you have the courage to do nature-creative activities?
- o If you have a garden - who will water the garden between holding Stressfree? And during the summer holidays?
- o Will you offer meditation? Do you have experience guiding meditation? Can you obtain knowledge about it?
- o Do employees have time to be responsible for the activity, or are there volunteers? Are there resources to employ an employee in flexi-jobs to be responsible for some of the tasks?
- o Is there an operating budget to hold Stressfree, see Appendix 2 with an overview of expenses.
- o How will you recruit participants?

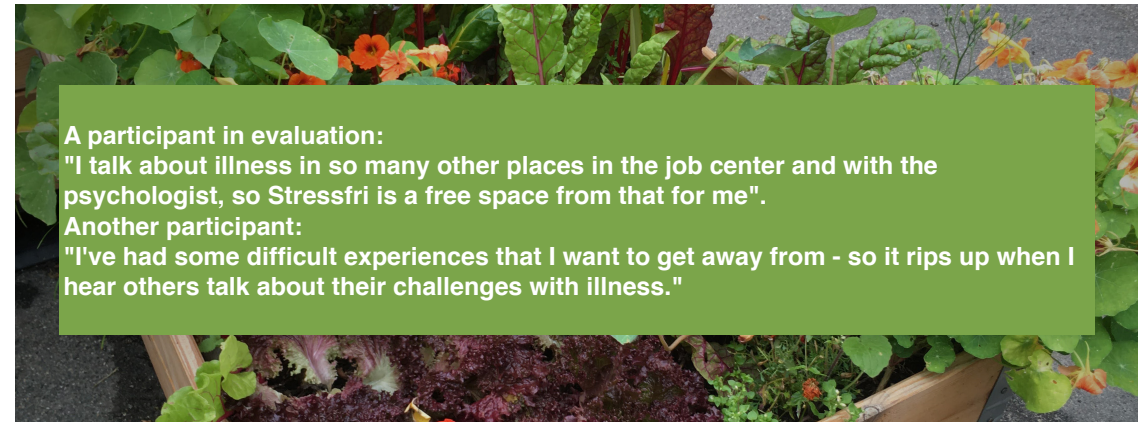
## 2. The target group for Stressfree

The target group for "Stress-free in the Folkekirken" is stressed and mentally vulnerable, but it has been shown when expanding to other churches that it may be relevant to adjust the target group in relation to the needs of the congregation and the parish of the specific church. And at the same time, there are different needs within the target group. In this chapter we describe these problems and what it is like to have stress.

We also share our experiences with recruitment for the project and how we see this free space as the church's response to a busy culture in late modern society.

### 2.1 The target group – and the different needs

"Stressfree in The People's Church " has stress sufferers and people with stress-related anxiety and depression as the target group. This means that these are people with stress and mild to moderate anxiety and depression or other mental disorders. It is also possible to participate if you know about stress and would like to participate to prevent stress. The diagnosis is not so decisive, but the important thing is that the participants must be able to be part of a – otherwise very inclusive – community.



**A participant in evaluation:**

"I talk about illness in so many other places in the job center and with the psychologist, so Stressfri is a free space from that for me".

**Another participant:**

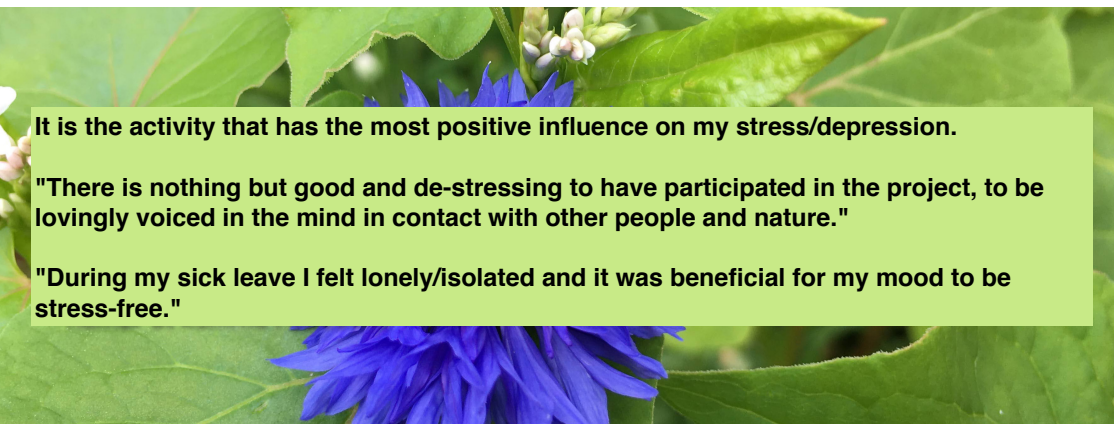
"I've had some difficult experiences that I want to get away from - so it rips up when I hear others talk about their challenges with illness."

The method and activities can also be used for other target groups, and through the experiences at Frederiksberg, we have experienced that the offer is for everyone who wants to find calm and peace of mind with nature and meditation. This means, among other things, that older people who have lost a loved one and are grieving can see themselves as part of the project. This manual will describe the method for the original project, but can therefore be adjusted according to the needs of your local congregation. The decisive factor in relation to recruitment is that it is not garden enthusiasts, but people who know about and understand psychological vulnerability, who become part of the community. It is necessary for it to be an equal and spacious community.

Within the target group, we have learned over time that there are different needs. Some participants come to experience the immersion in nature and others to "forget" or move away from experiences with sick leave, symptoms and experiences in the job center system.

Other participants are precisely in need of sparring in relation to the course of their illness. It is edifying to be able to talk to others in the same situation, to get good advice from others in the same situation and not to feel alone. It's nice to be in a place where it's not taboo to talk about mental health difficulties.

To avoid splitting the group in two, we have developed a process where there are more "rooms" in the community if there are more than 4-5 participants. The three rooms will be reviewed in chapter 3, and it concerns three types of rooms – quiet table, conversation table and immersion room. The participants can circulate between the three "rooms". Maybe they participate a little in the garden and then sits down and has a chat with others - or needs to rest his ears for a bit by himself at the "quiet table". (See section 4.2 The stress-free method)



## 2.2 A little about stress

What is it like to have stress?

- o Difficulty sleeping
- o Fatigue
- o Exhaustion

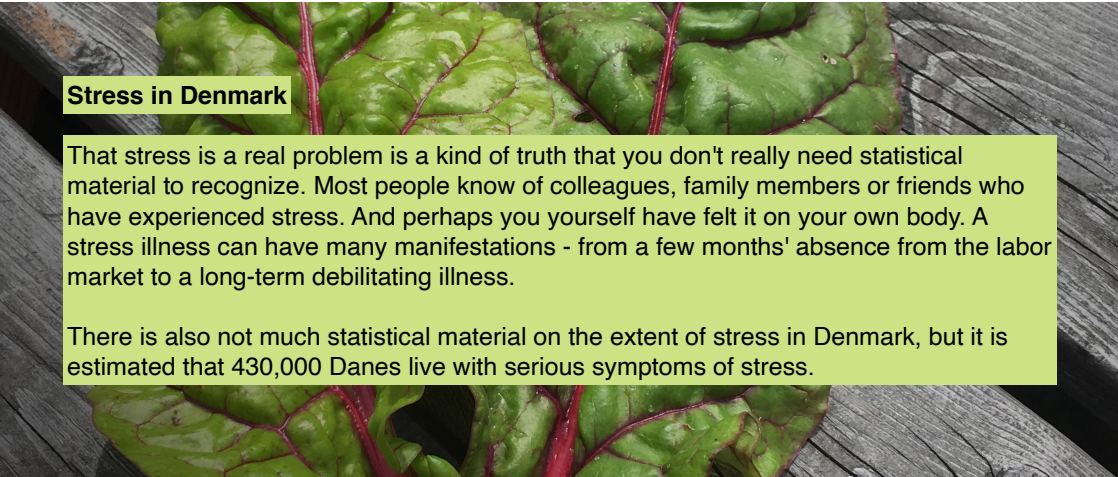
- o Headache
- o Difficulty concentrating
- o Overthinking/overthinking
- o Low self-esteem
- o Sensitivity to noise
- o Sensitivity to light
- o Stomach pain
- o Sensory disturbances
- o Depressive feelings
- o Anxiety
- o Feelings of loneliness

These symptoms mean that it can be difficult to stay in public spaces due to noise from cars, music in shops, and the espresso machine in cafes. It is therefore also important that you ensure that there is no background music or, as far as possible, that there is no noise from craftsmen or others. Avoid using music for meditation unless the participants say they want to.

It can be difficult as a stressed person to have social contact, as you can suddenly become tired. It is difficult to go home fifteen minutes into an appointment. Here it is also important that Stressfri becomes an "open house", where you can come and go as you see fit. Mention to the participants that you don't mind if they walk along the way. You can even encourage them to use Stressfree to practice "stopping while the play is good". Responding to even small signs that now is a good time to get home, before the resources are completely used up.

## 2.3 Stress-free in the People's Church as a response to a busy culture?

Almost all of us feel on our bodies and not least our minds that we live in a time with a fast pace, with great demands on mental activity and preferably with technology in the form of telephones and computers. At the same time, there is a need to "be on" and a performance culture both at workplaces and also in private life. A culture with great activity and speed, but which also creates stress and psychological vulnerability.



**Stress in Denmark**

That stress is a real problem is a kind of truth that you don't really need statistical material to recognize. Most people know of colleagues, family members or friends who have experienced stress. And perhaps you yourself have felt it on your own body. A stress illness can have many manifestations - from a few months' absence from the labor market to a long-term debilitating illness.

There is also not much statistical material on the extent of stress in Denmark, but it is estimated that 430,000 Danes live with serious symptoms of stress.

We lose touch with our bodies and inner sense of ourselves. At the same time, a sick leave and perhaps prolonged absence from the labor market often leads to isolation from the surrounding society – to feelings of inferiority and shame. We no longer have a job or an education to hang our identity on. It suddenly becomes difficult to go to family parties and, according to psychologists, there can be a sense of shame and a very intense feeling of not having value as a person and exclusion from the community. It can be an action-paralyzing feeling to be ashamed of your own illness (cf. Psychologist Krista Korsholm Bojesen's book "Shame").

Stress-free in Church of Denmark is an attempt to be a response to the busyness and performance culture in society. In Stressfri, slowness is cultivated, being immersed in the simple and conversations about meaning in life. Stressfree is, above all, a free space where the individual can meet like-minded people in an appreciative and spacious community. You have value just the way you are! At the same time, we make use of activities – gardening and meditation. These activities have evidence of being stress-reducing, creating concentration and positive emotions.

We find that participants who fit into the target group come regularly and want to become part of the community. That bonds are formed and Stressfree creates quality of life in a difficult time. At the same time, we see progression in the health of several participants. Some can do more, some come back to job hunting or work.

**2.4 Recruitment for Stressfree**

It is a challenge to recruit people for "Stress-free in Church of Denmark", who have limited resources and may not be on social media. We have chosen the church's regular marketing platforms such as the website, Facebook and Instagram. In addition, we have prepared a leaflet which we have distributed to the local doctors and psychologists. Finally, we have contacted the local job center and other actors, but it can be experienced as a challenge for the job center that it is a church that wants a cooperative relationship. In the projects, we have had interns who have been screened for flexible jobs, and have acted as volunteers in one of the projects around Stressfree.

**3. The stress-free method**

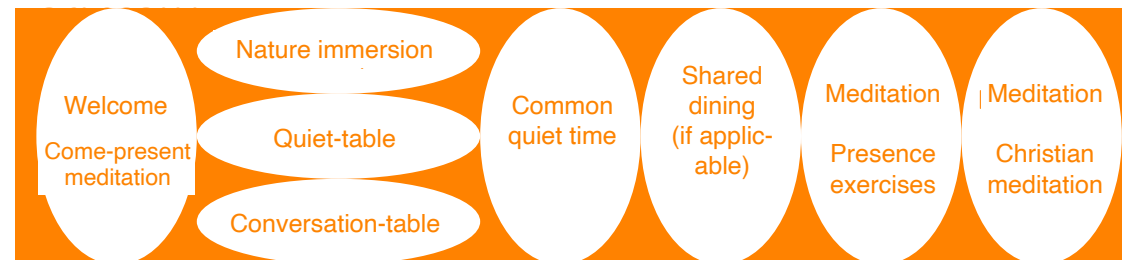
To describe what we do in "Stress-free i Church of Denmark", a normal workshop day in Stressfri is reviewed here. It can of course develop differently locally, but we have developed a reasonably predictable structure that the participants are familiar with and can therefore more easily opt in and out of activities. Furthermore, the participants have different needs, so along the way it is possible to be part of the different "rooms" in the community depending on one's needs on the day in question. Do you want to talk or do immersive gardening?

Stress-free consists of working with nature, meditation and community. Both working in nature and meditation are immersive and calming activities that can calm the mind.

During the activities, a performance-free community is built, where it is also possible for the participants to get a network among others in the same life situation.

Stress-free consists of a "welcome" and then approx. 1.5 hours of gardening (creative activities in winter) and then 1 hour of meditation.

**Stress-free**



### 3.1. Welcome, fun and a short "come present" meditation (1pm – approx. 1.30pm)

Informal fun the first approx. 20 minutes.

Here the participants get coffee/tea, hear how things are going, look at the plants from the last time, etc. Any new participants are introduced to the area, the project, etc. Some just sit by themselves with a cup, but most know each other and are happy to see each other again.

As Stress-free is a free space - open house - participants can come and go as they please during the first two hours. During the guided meditation, however, you can only take a break after the first half hour. It is important to have the broad framework, so that the participants can adapt according to what their body and mind are capable of on the day in question. It is also a place where they can practice going home before all resources are used up.

We prioritize buying delicious organic tea and serve healthy snacks. After approx. 20 minutes we do a "come present" meditation - a short meditation of 5-10 minutes, where we immerse ourselves in the presence around us, in the body, the breath, and we state that Stress-free is a place where everyone knows stress with room to retreat a little.

### 3.2. The three rooms: Conversation table, quiet table and immersive gardening/creative work (1.30pm – approx. 2.30pm)

After the meditation, we present the day's tasks, and for the next hour it is possible to be in three different "rooms" in the community.

#### 3.2.1 Conversation table

At the "conversation table" you can sit with your cup of coffee and tea and have a chat with other participants. It can just be a pleasant chat, but there is now also the opportunity to bring up topics such as symptoms of illness, contact with the job centre, etc. The talks are about how to deal with stress/anxiety/depression - and how it can be done to start, for example in a flexible job/voluntary work/an internship. For participants with early retirement, there are also many considerations about how a meaningful everyday life can be built up with structure and e.g. Volunteering.

It means a lot to the participants to get sparring from the others or simply to have the opportunity to share experiences. Participants who do not have time to listen to these topics can choose the other "rooms" in the community.

#### **"Come present" - meditation**

Sit comfortably and feel the surface - the bench (or chair).  
If necessary, straighten up a little more. Maybe close your eyes.  
Maybe you would like to move your shoulders a little to loosen up a bit. Notice your weight downwards.  
Your rear down against the bench – arms resting against your thighs.  
Take a deep breath and sink even deeper into the bench.  
Now feel your feet. Imagine being able to put down roots.  
Now notice the surroundings - we are in the Apostelkirkens yard.  
Notice the sounds...  
The wind in your face...  
The sun's warmth and light...  
Immerse yourself in the presence around you – the other participants, the birds.

In a little while we will be working with nature – digging in the ground, touching the plants. Try to use all your senses - really see the plants. Look deep.  
Fragrance of nature, taste of what can be eaten.  
And once in a while direct your attention to your body.  
Remember that this moment is your life.  
Not thoughts of the past or imaginings of the future.  
This living moment is your life.  
We have to finish the meditation.  
Remember that here we all know about psychological vulnerability.  
For the need to withdraw a little and be quiet.  
Now direct your attention outwards – and open your eyes when you are ready.  
You can possibly stretch the body a little.

### 3.2.2 Quiet table

At the opposite end of the yard/garden is the "quiet table", where there are books, painting utensils and yarn for knitting and crocheting. Here, participants can sit down and be "quiet with others". Maybe do something creative or just sit with a cup of hot tea and coffee. Some participants come even if they feel quite badly and cannot fathom being in dialogue with others. But at the same time, it is nourishing to be met and to be part of a community.

#### A participant in evaluation:

"It's nice and nice to be together on the activities, where there is room to make contact and have my own time if I need it."

#### Other participants write:

"I have been very happy with the activities, especially the focus on not having to perform/be skilled but feel and feel while doing each activity."

"Working community is SUCH a good way to be together."

### 3.2.3 Immersive gardening/creative projects

And finally, there is the contemplative gardening, which takes place at the garden bed or in a small garden next to it. In winter, we do creative activities – we tie wreaths, roll beeswax candles, etc. (see more in the appendix at [www.menighedsplejen.dk](http://www.menighedsplejen.dk)).

When you are stressed, your nervous system is on alert. The thoughts race away, and it can be difficult to be present in the present. Here it can be good to do something practical, focused on pleasure, to "disengage" the mind and create more mental calm. Here, working with plants and nature is a good remedy.

#### Performance-free space about a common third

It is very important to create an atmosphere of not having to perform. That there are always some tasks that do not require anything special, e.g. to have to water or sweep the yard.

Many participants have been stressed by excessively high performance requirements, and their self-esteem can be affected by illness and absence from the labor market. In fact, we sometimes use the activities to draw attention to how quickly we put performance into the things that we do.

Working community without performance is a good way to be together. We have a common third, which forms the framework for being together.

#### Nature immersion and learning

When we work with nature in Stressfri, we have two approaches – nature immersion and learning.

Immersion in nature means that when we work with the plants and the earth, we have a presence-oriented approach. We guide the participants in how to immerse themselves in the natural materials – have slow movements, smell, feel, look "deeply", taste herbs, etc.

This means that we mostly work in silence, or that the conversations are about what we are actually working on. Focusing on the work alone gives a greater presence in the present. We do not mess up the prayers and at the same time as we talk about children, illness, etc. And when everyone knows what they have to do, we often take a 10-minute speaking break. It is SO wonderful to work with other people in silence. A nice immersion and sense of community can arise.

It requires a lot of management to stick to the presence-oriented approach. People quickly feel like talking - and that can also be perfectly fine. But we find that the project managers constantly have to make a choice about how much space there should be for the meditative and immersive presence with nature, and how much space there should be for small talk and coziness. We try to read the needs of the participants, and sometimes we divide the garden activities into two, where there is a focus on calmness and presence in one part and small talk in the other.

We use learning, as many participants would like to learn about gardening. We just want to emphasize that we are not garden experts! We say this openly and encourage the participants to contribute their knowledge - and there is often a lot of it. It creates a good atmosphere that we create learning together. One of the participants knows a lot about the names of flowers and plants, so she is always asked when we find a new flower. Another participant has made bonfires all her childhood, so she is a bonfire master.

It gives energy, inspiration and strengthens self-esteem to have a smaller area of responsibility and contribute to new learning.



Video: "Nature heals us, and then we take care of it."



#### Ecology, recycling and biodiversity

We work based on principles of organic gardening without the use of pesticides, with composting and homemade fertiliser. We also work with biodiversity, and many flowers in the farm are insect and bee flowers, so we enjoy seeing the farm's number of butterflies, bees and insects grow. And recycling is an important value – all pre-sprouting trays are recycled plastic from food waste, old pots or made from newspapers. It is a way of conveying values about a sustainable lifestyle, and at the same time it is nice for many to work with sustainability.

#### Involvement of participants' resources

Stressfree is a performance-free space where no demands are made. It is important that it is a refuge from everyday life, where you can express yourself to the extent that you can manage it. At the same time we try to call the resources that the participants clearly have - or promote volunteerism for those who want it. A participant who is good at knitting and crocheting has been responsible for getting the group started on some knitting projects. One participant brought moss for everyone so we could make Japanese moss balls. One participant has experience in making collages and has helped hold collage workshops in Stressfri.

We have had interns from the job center who have been screened for flexible jobs, who have learned the method and are trying to create their own Stressfri project.

#### 3.3 End of activities and possible communal dining (at 2.30 – 3.00 p.m.)

During this period we finish activities, and from mid-summer we eat crops from the garden. Green hot dogs or campfire food, which is enjoyed with great enthusiasm.



Video about the meditation in Stress-free



The group gathers here, and in order for everyone to participate, there is an understanding that we are not talking about difficult or "serious" topics here.

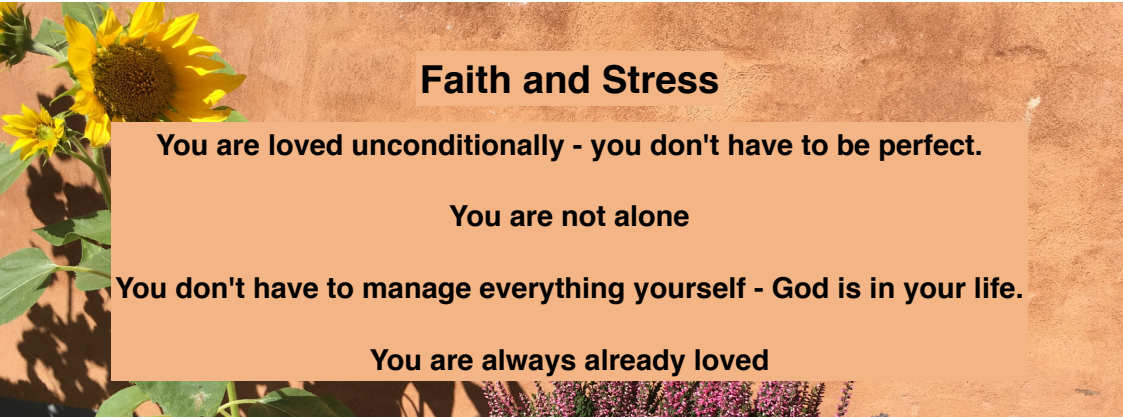
#### 3.4 Meditation (3 - 4 p.m.)

The meditation in Stressfri is built around two components: approx. half an hour of guided presence exercises and, after a short break, Christian meditation.

This structure is because Stressfri is for everyone regardless of belief. It must therefore be possible to come to the gardening and the first half hour of presence practice without having to hear about and relate to Christianity. There is a natural break, and we emphasize that it is possible to opt in and out of the meditation that you want.

At the same time, we in the church would like to be able to offer Christian meditation/centering prayer for the participants who want it in the last half hour. We would like to stand by our values, and we find that precisely the experience-based experience of God's presence and love can be very healing especially for those affected by stress. It is also supported by research on the healing power of faith, which is described in Chapter 4.

The Christian faith can be a great help to people who have experienced not being able to strike out and carry a feeling of inadequacy and shame. Stress sufferers have often used themselves too much, and surrendering to God can make it easier to let go of too much responsibility and a need to be perfect.



## Faith and Stress

**You are loved unconditionally - you don't have to be perfect.**

**You are not alone**

**You don't have to manage everything yourself - God is in your life.**

**You are always already loved**

### 3.4.1 Guided presence exercise

The presence exercise is inspired by forms of meditation used for people with stress, anxiety or depression. The most influential in this area is the work of the American psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn.

The participants are guided to consciously direct their attention to an area, for example the body, breathing, sounds, etc. in a non-judgmental way. This means that the participants must immerse themselves in this moment, what they experience from sensory impressions, for example in the body, without evaluating or judging what they experience. This also applies to distractions, when thoughts come to them and create disturbance - then these are registered with acceptance - and then you let go of the thought and return to the exercise. It's simple, but not always easy!

#### Break

Between the two meditations there is a 5 minute break in silence. Participants can take a glass of water and we say goodbye quietly to those who want to go home. It is our experience that most participants stay for the Christian meditation, and that those who go do so because of fatigue or other tasks. Several participants who say that they do not have a Christian background choose to join the Christian meditation, as it is very inclusive.

### 3.4.2 Christian meditation – Centering Prayer

There are different methods of Christian meditation. In Stressfree we use the Centering Prayer, which was developed by the American monk Thomas Keating.

The method is based on an understanding that God and Jesus are not far from us. It is the mystical understanding that God is in everything and everything rests in God. And that God is concretely present inside every human being. The indwelling God. It is the idea that God is invisible and beyond the description of language, but that it is possible to rest in God's presence and that it is healing.

So the Centering Prayer method is, in its essence, about directing one's attention towards God's presence in us - to center one's self. And when the thoughts appear – which is a condition of life for all people – then according to the method you have a holy word. A word one chooses to remind one to return and seek God within us. A holy word can be Jesus, God, Presence, Silence - or whatever you want.

You can read more about Centering Prayer in Thomas Keating's book "Open mind, open heart", in Cynthia Bourgeault's book "The waking heart" and David Frenette's book "Let go". About centering prayer and rest in God."



#### **A participant writes during evaluation:**

"Faith is important to me personally, and with the centering prayer I have shared a faith-related space with others."

#### **Another participant writes:**

"The presence meditation together with others has given rest, tranquility which has reduced my mental/psychic unrest."



During the evaluation, participants expressed that it had an effect on their recovery:

"I come both for the socializing, the green work and the meditations. It gives me joy and peace to come to Stressfri and has helped me to improve my health."

## 4. Research supports the activities

Nature can be healing. We all feel it when we walk in the woods or dig in the ground. But there is gradually also research that supports this.

There is scientific evidence that a natural environment reduces stress, increases concentration and creates positive emotions. (See more at Copenhagen University's Therapy Garden). At the same time, presence meditation is gradually becoming a recognized treatment method for stress sufferers. And finally, recent research shows that being part of a community is important for people's health, and as sick people from the labor market, you need communities.

### 4.1 Nature therapy as inspiration

Nature therapy is a source of inspiration for Stressfree – but Stressfri is not nature therapy. We are not therapists or psychologists and do not do therapeutic interventions. But we are inspired by the presence-oriented approach to nature. Stressfree is a free space without treatment, where we and others share our experiences of dealing with stress and psychological vulnerability. Stressfree is more like the peer-to-peer method, where people who have had mental health difficulties and recovery can be a resource for other people with mental health challenges.

## 4.2 Faith and nature as a healing force

The research clearly shows that there is a positive effect of staying in a natural environment. But why this is the case, no clear answers have been given. It is difficult to describe why nature can do something special. But as a Christian, you can have the experience that God is especially present in nature, or that God finds it easier to reach us humans in nature. In the video below, Kierkegaard is quoted as saying that nature can be a "Divine Distraction", which is "uninterrupted silence, no one is present, and yet everything is constantly speaking to you".

Niels Christian Hvidt, who is a theologian and professor of existential and spiritual care at the University of Southern Denmark, has researched whether believing in itself can have a positive effect on illness and health. In his research, there is evidence that believing in God, believing in something spiritual has a positive effect on a person - and especially during illness. There is an improvement in people's health, an increased ability to find meaning in life and a better ability to handle crises. He sums it up with the title of his book "Faith can move mountains". But at the same time, the research also shows that "Mountains can move faith", in a figurative sense. This means that when people encounter "mountains" on their way - it can be illness, death, but also positive experiences such as becoming a parent - then new existential thoughts arise and a search and an opening which can develop into a faith. It can be described as a surrender into something bigger, which you experience as real and true.

Video about  
Kierkegaard and Nature:



## 5. Evaluation of the activities

It is a good idea to evaluate your activities approx. once a year. This means that you can adjust the activities so that they are adapted to the needs of the target group. You can do both a written and an oral evaluation. The written evaluation has the advantage that it can be anonymous, and the participants can therefore speak more freely. The oral has the advantage that the participants can hear each other's points of view, and this can help to create understanding and strengthen the community. When evaluating, you can ask the following questions:

Evaluation of the activities:

- o How relevant do you think the summer activities have been? Answer with 1-5 (where 5 is most positive)
- o How relevant do you think the winter activities have been? Answer with 1-5 (where 5 is most positive)
- o Have you enjoyed the presence meditation? (Answer with ..... ) Have you enjoyed the Christian centering prayer?

Evaluation of the effect of the activities:

- o Has participation in the project had a positive impact on your level of stress/anxiety/depression?
- o Has participation in the project had a positive influence on your mood?
- o Has participation in the project had a positive impact on your sense of community/network?
- o Has participation in the project given you tools to deal with stress?

Evaluation of the framework of the project:

- o Is there enough calm and immersion for you in Stressfree?
- o Is there sufficient opportunity for you to share experiences with others?
- o How do you think the catering is?
- o How do you think the manager leads Stressfree?
- o Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

## 6. Different ambition levels of Stress-free

It can be a challenge to maintain 3 hours of activity each week - and maybe it is not relevant for you. Here are some suggestions for how you can be inspired by the project in a customized form that is adjusted to your needs and time and professional resources.

### Version 1

#### Stress-free Café

Invite people suffering from stress or the mentally vulnerable to get together, possibly once a month. It can be good to have an activity that creates a common third - as it creates a good framework for the community. For example "Stressfree Knitting Café".

### Version 2

#### Stress-free Meditation

Invite to meditation once a month or more often, possibly with shared coffee/tea before the meditation.

### Version 3

#### Stress-free garden

Let yourself be inspired by the garden part of Stressfree and create a free space with the nature part once a week or once a month.

If necessary, combine some of these suggestions.

## 7. Closure

It is very rewarding to hold Stress-free, socializing with people who share their challenges - and at the same time their shared joy of nature, creation. It is not important to be an expert on stress or nature, but the most important thing is to be present and to show the participants respect and love, no matter how difficult they are.

Remember that one of the most important values in the project is community, and that means you don't have to carry everything yourself. The participants are resourceful people who are often very happy to meet like-minded people and therefore contribute a lot to creating networks and community. You must be responsible for the framework and of course also lead the process in a good way. But everyone helps to create the community.

If you choose to make greenery around the church, there are many who benefit from Stressfri. The congregation enjoys the green surroundings of Vesterbro and Frederiksberg, and this creates recognition and increased self-esteem for everyone in the project.

## 8. Find more guidance and inspiration

On Menighedsplejen in Denmark's website under "Knowledge bank" you can find the document "Inspiration and guidance in doing activities in Stressfree". Here you are guided to make pre-sprouting, raised beds, Japanese moss balls, beeswax candles, wreaths and other creative activities. Here is also guidance on guiding meditations.

Find more information:

 [menighedsplejen.dk/medlemsservice](https://menighedsplejen.dk/medlemsservice)



– and follow us



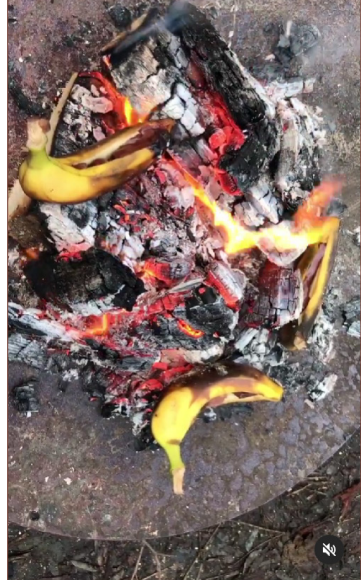


stressfri\_have • Følg

8 Synes godt om  
OKTOBER 6, 2022



10 Synes godt om  
OKTOBER 10, 2022



7 Synes godt om  
FOR 12 TIMER SIDEN



5 Synes godt om  
MAJ 17, 2022



Synes godt om fra mette.m.madsen.7 og 9 andre  
AUGUST 10, 2022



Synes godt om fra mette.m.madsen.7 og 8 andre  
JUNI 24, 2022



stressfri\_have • Følg

Synes godt om fra mette.m.madsen.7 og 7 andre  
OKTOBER 6, 2022

**Menighedsplejen i Danmark**  
10. september 2021  
"Den Stressfrie Have" på Frederiksberg.  
I denne uge har vi åbnet vores tilbud med et frirum for mennesker med stress eller anden psykisk sårbarhed i haven ved Frederiksberg Sogns Menighedshus.  
Her er den smukkeste oase med græsplæne, drivhus og gamle træer, hvor vi kan fordybe os i naturen og finde stilhed i storbyen. Naturen er en vigtig kilde til helbredelse. Til at få hold på tankemylder og finde mening. Det er sundt at lade sig omslutte af Guds skaberværk.... [Se mere](#)



24  
3 kommentarer 4 delinger  
Synes godt om Kommenter Del

**Menighedsplejen i Danmark**  
25. maj 2022  
Vores projekt "Stressfri" får en spændende gæst: Workshop med retreatleder og sognepræst Lene Skovmark i Apostelkirken på Vesterbro, København onsdag den 1/6 kl. 14-16.  
\*Har du tankemylder og svært ved at have kontakt til dit inderste? [Se mere](#)



11  
5 delinger  
Synes godt om Kommenter Del

**Menighedsplejen i Danmark - Psykisk sårbarhed**  
3. januar kl. 11.46  
"Nytårs-reflektion" fra Stressfri - og Godt Nytår!  
SKABE LIGEVERD, GUIDE IND I NUET OG OVERGIVE MIG - SÅDAN ER JEG MEDVANDRER I STRESSFRI ... [Se mere](#)



5  
Synes godt om Kommenter Del



Synes godt om

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Synes godt om fra mette.m.madsen.7 og 10 andre  
DECEMBER 22, 2022

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10 Synes godt om  
AUGUST 10, 2022

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13 Synes godt om  
JUNI 17, 2022

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**Stress-free in Church of Denmark  
in Copenhagen 2023:**

Den Stressfrie Have ved  
Frederiksberg Sogns Menighedshus  
Mandag kl. 13 – 16  
Projektleder Pernille Guldstøv

Stressfri Have i Hellig Kors Kirke  
på Nørrebro  
Onsdag kl. 10 – 13  
Projektleder  
Dorete Besenbacher Thomassen

Stressfri Gårdhave i Apostelkirken  
på Vesterbro  
Onsdag kl. 13 – 16  
Projektleder Eva Green Meinel



**Menighedsplejen  
i Danmark**

Together in faith, hope and action

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