Personal Stress Management

Carleton College
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The Stress Equation

\[ \text{STRESS} = \frac{\text{Events} + \text{Thoughts} + \text{Behavior}}{\text{Mindful Response}} \]
Limbic System

- Something unexpected occurs, your limbic system is aroused
- Danger or Reward?
- If the brain perceives threat or danger (and there is no or minimal threat) the amygdala will be hijacked
Stress Hormones Cortisol

Plus

• A quick burst of energy for survival reasons
• Heightened memory functions
• A burst of increased immunity
• Lower sensitivity to pain

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Stress Hormones Cortisol

Minus

• Impaired cognitive performance
• Suppressed thyroid function
• Blood sugar imbalances such as hyperglycemia
• Higher blood pressure
Stress Hormones Epinephrine/Adrenalin 1

During the **fight-or-flight response**, the adrenal gland releases epinephrine into the blood stream, along with other hormones like **cortisol**, signaling the

- heart to pump harder,
- increasing blood pressure,
- opening airways in the lungs,
Stress Hormones Epinephrine/Adrenalin

During the **fight-or-flight response**,

- narrowing blood vessels in the skin and intestine to increase blood flow to major muscle groups
- to enable the body to fight or run when encountering a perceived threat.
Being on a Regular Stress Alert

1. Lowers your immune system making you more at risk for pathogens and becoming ill
2. Reduces quality sleep
3. Reduces the ability to focus and to concentrate
4. Increases mood changes like depression, anxiety, and irritability
5. Increase intake of food and alcohol leading to increase weight and other possible complications

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What You Think Affects How You Feel

Events > Interpret > Thoughts > Beliefs > Emotion > Behavior
When you look at this picture what are your thoughts?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>Automatic Thoughts and Feelings</th>
<th>Reframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person taking two parking spots</td>
<td><em>Jerk; Selfish</em></td>
<td>Perhaps he is selfish or another car was there and his was the only space available; he worked hard for this car and he wants to keep it from dings even though it impacts other people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stressor Identification and Analysis

Three types of stressors:

• Stressors you can avoid
• Stressors you can modify
• Stressors you cannot avoid
# Stressor Identification and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK</th>
<th>HOME</th>
<th>GENERAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Boss</td>
<td>The Children</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadlines</td>
<td>My Spouse</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>Chores</td>
<td>Lack of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Arguments about money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Neighbors Dog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thought Management
Developing A Low Stress Attitude

• Identify your critical tapes
• Examine all expectations
• Accept your strengths and weaknesses
• Recognize your accomplishments
• Keep setbacks in perspective
• Create positive affirmations

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Event Management

Organizational Skills
• Planning
• Organizing
• Delegating

Interpersonal Skills
• Communicating
• Setting Limits
• Establishing Support (Again)
Behavior Management:
Establishing Stress Hardiness

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Support Systems
- Relaxation
Stress Management
Nutrition Guidelines

• Eat a variety of foods
• Avoid fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
• Choose vegetables, fruits, grains
• Sugar in Moderation
Stress Management
Nutrition Guidelines

• Salt and Sodium in Moderation
• Alcohol in Moderation
• Caffeine in Moderation
• Be an Informed Consumer
Stress Management

Exercise Guidelines

• Choose an activity that is enjoyable
• Adopt a program that is realistic for you

• Consider a buddy/group for motivation
• Establish a reward system

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Establish Support Systems

Sources:

- Family
- Friends
- Work Network
- Community
- Professional Counselors/EAP

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Relaxation Techniques

- Breathing
- Stretching
- Progressive Relaxation
- Visualization
- Meditation

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Stopping the Worry Loop

• Quiet the Mind
• Create a “worry period.”
• Postpone your worry.
• Go over your “worry list” during the worry period.
Stopping the Worry Loop

Distinguish between solvable and unsolvable worries

If a worry pops into your head, start by asking yourself whether the problem is something you can actually solve. The following questions can help:

• Is the problem something you’re currently facing, rather than an imaginary what-if?
• If the problem is an imaginary what-if, how likely is it to happen? Is your concern realistic?
• Can you do something about the problem or prepare for it, or is it out of your control?
EAP Benefits Include

- 1-3 confidential counseling and referral visits
- Legal
- Budget Debt
- Financial Planning
- Wellness Coaching
- Work/Life Resources

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Release the Endorphins

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Activity: Pick a Partner

1. Best.....
2. Facial exercise
3. Blessings
Kids Instructions on Life

• Never trust a dog to watch your food. -Patrick, Age 10

• When you want something expensive, ask your grandparents. -Matthew, Age 12

• Never smart off to a teacher whose eyes and ears are twitching. -Andrew, Age 9
Kids Instructions on Life

• Never ask for anything that costs more than five dollars when your parents are doing taxes. -Carol, Age 9

• Never bug a pregnant mom. -Nicholas, Age 11

• When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?" don't answer him. Heather, Age 16
You Can Touch the Dust
But Please
Don’t Write in It
You Can Touch the Dust
But Please
Don’t Write in It
Sometimes I wake up grumpy....

Other times I let him/her sleep
I Cleaned My House Yesterday,
Wish You Could Have Seen It.
I Keep Losing Weight, But It Keeps Finding Me.
If it walks out of the refrigerator, its time to let it go.