Busting Stress:
A Positive Approach to Stress Management

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Goals

UNDERSTAND THE SCIENCE OF STRESS

EXPLORE DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS

DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN FOR STRESS REDUCTION
What is Stress?

Is giving a talk stressful?
Is working outside the home stressful?
Is being a stay-at-home parent stressful?
Stress

When demands exceed resources needed to meet those demands.
Stress is Cumulative

- Relationships
- Finances
- Attitudes
- Environment
- Work
- Volunteering
- Chores
- Media
- Etc...
The Mind & Body Are Connected

Scary movies
Blushing
Near misses
Sexual response
The Science Of Stress
The Players

- **Autonomic Nervous System**
  - Parasympathetic - REST
  - Sympathetic – FIGHT OR FLIGHT

- **Hypothalamus** – the brain’s “master gland”

- **Pituitary**

- **Adrenal glands**

- **Cortisol**
  - A steroid

- **Epinephrine & Norepinephrine**
  - “Adrenaline”
“Fight-or-Flight” Response

Stress and the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis
The Stress Response

Hypothalamus

CRF

Cortisol

Sympathetic Nervous System ->
Epinephrine, Norepinephrine

Limbic System
EMOTION

↑ Blood Glucose

↑ Insulin

↓ GH
↓ Growth

LH, ↓ FSH
↓ Reproductive Function

Decreased Immune function

↑ pulse
↑ BP

↓ upper GI
↑ lower GI
↑ Sweat

↑ muscle tension

↑ Resp

Adrenals

Pituitary

ACTH

LH, ↓ FSH
↓ Reproductive Function

↓ GH
↓ Growth

↓ Immune function

↑ Insulin

↑ Blood Glucose
Chronic Stress
Health Consequences of Stress

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
  - Including heart attacks
- Stroke
- Anxiety/Depression
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome/GI distress
- Sleep dysfunction

- Flares of autoimmune conditions (RA, lupus)
- Chronic fatigue
- Impaired libido
- Chronic pain
- Headaches
- Neck/back pain
- Decreased immune function
  - Natural Killer cells
  - Secretory IgA
## Physiology: Stress & Relaxation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Response</th>
<th>Relaxation Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased BP</td>
<td>• Lowered BP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased pulse</td>
<td>• Slower pulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased RR</td>
<td>• Decreased RR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased muscular contraction</td>
<td>• Muscle relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased cortisol</td>
<td>• Decreased cortisol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased epinephrine &amp; norepinephrine</td>
<td>• Decreased epinephrine and norepinephrine</td>
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</table>
Types of Stress

OUTSIDE STRESS

VS.

INSIDE STRESS

***

CHANGEABLE

VS.

UNCHANGEABLE
Stress is Cumulative

Outside + Inside Stress

Unchangeable Outside Stress Only
Outside Stress: stress that is thrust upon us

Financial Problems
Medical illness
Child having trouble in school
Relationship issues
Traffic
Snow storms
Dog with diarrhea
Etc., etc., etc.
Outside Stress - Strategies

- Is it changeable?
  - If YES → make a plan
    - E.g. take dog to the vet
  - If NO → strengthen your coping resources
    - “Fill up your cup”
      - More on that later
“Things will never get better for me”

“All the people I work with are jerks”

“My pain has ruined my life”

“Nothing good ever happens to me”

“My life will never be the same”

“I have to host the event – everyone expects me to”

**Inside Stress: stress that we create**
Inside Stress: An Example

- A snowy night. Seven pm. Your loved one was supposed to be home at 6:00. Didn’t call. Not answering phone.

What do you feel?

Worried/Anxious?
Annoyed/Angry
Sad/Hurt?
Neutral/Compassionate?
**Event → Thought → Feeling**

- **Event: Loved one is late**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THOUGHT</th>
<th>FEELING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“He’s been in a car accident”</td>
<td>Anxiety, Worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She is so uncaring – she knows I hate it when she doesn’t call”</td>
<td>Anger, Annoyance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think he might be having an affair”</td>
<td>Sadness, Hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She is probably caught in traffic”</td>
<td>Neutral, Compassion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Restoring Rational Thinking

- **Label** the irrational thought
  - Event --> Thought --> Feeling
  - Instead of: “I’m sure he’s been in an accident. Oh my God – what if he’s dead?!?!?”
  - Try: “I’m feeling anxious because I’m worried that he’s dead”

- **Refute** the irrational thoughts
  - “I have no evidence that he’s dead. He’s probably stuck in traffic”

- **Detach** from the thought
  - “I am just having an anxious thought”

- **Distract** yourself
  - Turn on music, watch a movie, play with your kids, meditate

*Can be learned
Must be practiced!*
Avoid The 3 Ms

- **Magnifying** the problem
  - Seeing things as permanent & pervasive
    - “I can’t believe I said that. Everyone probably thinks I’m an idiot now”

- **Minimizing** the positive
  - “I guess the company picnic was fun, but did you see that nobody ate what I brought. They must not like my cooking?”

- **Making up** stuff
  - “they didn’t invite me because they don’t like me”
When You Have A Strong Negative Feeling...

IDENTIFY THE HIDDEN THOUGHT
THEN ASK YOURSELF
Two Important Questions

1. “IS IT TRUE?”
2. “IS IT HELPFUL?”
• “...everyone probably thinks I’m an idiot now”
• “...No one ate what I brought. They must not like my cooking”
• “They didn’t invite me because they don’t like me”

• “I totally bombed that test. I’m so stupid”
• “I totally bombed that test. Now I’ll never get into graduate school”
• “I totally bombed that test. Next time I should study more”
Why Are Some People More Stressed Than Others?
Your “Cup”

YOUR ABILITY TO HANDLE STRESS DEPENDS ON THE ‘FULLNESS OF YOUR CUP’
Filling Your Cup

Empty Cup  Full Cup
Create A Gratitude Ritual

- Strongly correlated with well-being

- **Gratitude Rituals**
  - While falling asleep
  - At dinner table
  - When tucking kids in bed
  - Gratitude journal

- **Make it different each time**

- **Study:**
  - Once a week: wrote 5 things for which they were grateful
  - Increased happiness scores 25%

*(Emmons & McCullough 2003)*
A Story...

Fault Finder

- From a broken home
- Didn’t graduate college with my peers
- Don’t make as much money as other doctors
- Husband works too much
- Child with medical problems
- Overwhelmed with work & family responsibilities
## Become a Benefit Finder

### Fault Finder
- From a broken home
- Didn’t graduate college with my peers
- Don’t make as much money as other doctors
- Husband works too much
- Child with medical problems
- Overwhelmed with work & family responsibilities

### Benefit Finder
- Great relationships with both parents
- Studied abroad
- Get to work part time
- Husband works hard to support the family
- Try to help my child learn from her challenges
- Blessed to be a “full time” mom AND have fulfilling career
Make Sleep A Priority

- Sleep MORE during stressful times
  - Helps increase resilience
  - Tendency is to sleep LESS
- If trouble falling asleep
  - “Dumping journal”
  - No caffeine after 12:00pm
  - Sleep hygiene
## Food As Medicine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Encourage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple carbs</td>
<td>Complex carbohydrates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple carbs</td>
<td>Fruits/veggies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple carbs</td>
<td>Protein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High fructose corn syrup</td>
<td>Dark chocolate!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caffeine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td></td>
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Move Your Body

- Walk
- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Aerobics
- Etc...
Live A Life That Matches Your Values

- Honesty
- Friendship
- Family
- Mastery/Excellence
- Financial Security
- Power
- Making a difference
- Travel
- Relationship with God
- Excitement
- Learning new things

- Inner Peace
- Improving yourself
- Humor
- Life Balance
- Personal growth
- Love of nature
- Being the best
- Helping others
- Making a difference
- Having fun/pleasure
- Achievement
Elicit The Relaxation Response

- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Qi gong
- Breathing Techniques

- Meditation
- Guided Imagery
- Biofeedback
- Prayer
- Warm bath
- Music
- Pets
Cultivate Mindfulness

Playing with your kids
Doing dishes
Walking the dog

“Wherever you are, just be there”

Become An Observer
The Relaxation Response: practical strategies

Breathing

- Breathe into your belly
  - Breathe in for 4
  - Hold for a moment
  - Breathe out for 5

Meditation/Imagery

- World’s easiest meditation:
  - Breathe in... think “one”
  - Breathe out... think “and”
  - Breathe in... think “two”
  - ... continue to “ten”
  - If thoughts come to mind, just notice them & bring attention back to your breath
Does It Actually Work?

USING THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION FOR
HEALTH
MBSR for Stress Reduction

- Meta-analysis of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for stress reduction
  - 10 studies identified prior to 2008
- MBSR found to
  - Decrease stress
  - Decrease anxiety
  - Increase empathy
  - Increase self-compassion

Benefits of Imagery

Cardiac Surgery Patients

Mindfulness For Anxiety

Mindfulness intervention (8 week) in patients with anxiety → improved sleep and decreased worry


Mindfulness intervention (8 weeks) in patients with OCD vs wait list control → reduced OCD symptoms. Improvements associated with increased “letting go” capacity

Hanstede et al J Ment Nerv Dis. 2008 Oct;196(10)776-9
Creating A Practical Stress Reduction Plan

A REVIEW
Identify Stress-Related Symptoms

- Stress may be contributing to:
  - Chronic pain
  - Fatigue
  - Vague abdominal/GI complaints
  - Headache
  - Insomnia
  - Chest discomfort/palpitations
  - Neck/shoulder pain
  - Anxiety/Depression
Identify the Stress: Outside vs. Inside

- **Outside stress**
  - **Changeable** → make a plan to change it
  - **Unchangeable** → work on “filling your cup” to increase resilience

- **Inside Stress**
  - **Learn to avoid the 3 Ms**
    - Magnifying the problem
    - Minimizing the positive
    - Making up stuff
  - **Ask the 2 questions**
    - “is it true?”
    - “is it helpful?”
Filling Your Cup

- Gratitude Ritual
  - Nightly list, gratitude journal
- Practice being a benefit finder
  - Write situations as fault/benefit finder
- Sleep enough
- Minimize refined sugars
- Choose a movement plan
  - Yoga, tai chi, walking, aerobics
- Elicit the Relaxation Response
  - Guided imagery, meditation, yoga, tai chi
  - www.healthjourneys.com
- Practice Mindfulness
  - “Wherever you are, just be there”
  - Become an observer of your thoughts: “that was just an anxious thought”
Seek Connection

Friends
Family
Relationships
Pets
Faith Community
Etc...
Help Someone
Explore Your Creative Side
Take The Long View
Will this really matter in:
6 months?
A year?
5 years?
Thank You

FOR YOUR ATTENTION
“But I only have 5 minutes with a patient”

• Counseling:
  • “you must sleep 7 hours every night”
  • “Try to minimize sugar, bread, white rice and white pasta”
  • Buy a journal and every night write down 3 things that you are grateful for that day. Try to make them different each day”
  • “Consider trying yoga or tai chi”
  • Go to [www.healthjourneys.com](http://www.healthjourneys.com) and buy one guided imagery CD. Listen to it 3-5 times a week if you can”