

# STRESS MANAGEMENT



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# What is Stress?

- ◆ **Stress can be defined as our mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions to any perceived demands or threats.**



# The “Fight or Flight” Response



- ◆ When situations seem threatening to us, our bodies react quickly to supply protection by preparing to take action. This physiological reaction is known as the “fight or flight” response.
  - The physiological response to a stressor is known as reactivity
  - Physiological responses can accumulate and result in long-term wear on the body

# What Makes Something Stressful?

- ◆ Situations that have strong demands
- ◆ Situations that are imminent
- ◆ Life transitions
- ◆ Timing (e.g., deviation from the “norm”)
- ◆ Ambiguity
- ◆ Desirability
- ◆ Controllability



# Not All Stress is Bad...

- ◆ **Distress** is a continuous experience of feeling overwhelmed, oppressed, and behind in our responsibilities. It is the all encompassing sense of being imposed upon by difficulties with no light at the end of the tunnel.
  - Examples of distress include financial difficulties, conflicts in relationships, excessive obligations, managing a chronic illness, or experiencing a trauma.
- ◆ **Eustress** is the other form of stress that is positive and beneficial. We may feel challenged, but the sources of the stress are opportunities that are meaningful to us. Eustress helps provide us with energy and motivation to meet our responsibilities and achieve our goals.
  - Examples of eustress include graduating from college, getting married, receiving a promotion, or changing jobs.

# Stress Response: Example

- ◆ A good example of a stressful situation for many people is taking a test. If you find testing to be stressful, you might notice certain physical, behavioral, mental, and emotional responses.
  - Physical Response?
  - Behavioral Response?
  - Mental Response?
  - Emotional Response?



# What is Stressful to You?

|  |                                |                                       |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Work</b>                                  | <b>Roommate</b>                | <b>Legal matters</b>                  |
| <b>Classes</b>                               | <b>Childcare</b>               | <b>Mental health</b>                  |
| <b>Studying</b>                              | <b>Finances</b>                | <b>Law violation</b>                  |
| <b>Relationship with partner</b>             | <b>Appearance</b>              | <b>Spiritual/Religious issues</b>     |
| <b>Relationship with family</b>              | <b>Physical Health</b>         | <b>Major/Career decisions</b>         |
| <b>Relationship with friends</b>             | <b>Not "fitting in"</b>        | <b>Attitudes/thoughts</b>             |
| <b>Trauma</b>                                | <b>Getting married</b>         | <b>Buying a house</b>                 |
| <b>Change in residence</b>                   | <b>Change to a new school</b>  | <b>Change in amount of recreation</b> |
| <b>Change in amount of social activities</b> | <b>Change in eating habits</b> | <b>Death of friend/family member</b>  |



# Why Do We "Stress Out"?

- ◆ For two major reasons:
  - We *perceive* a situation as dangerous, difficult, or painful.
  - We don't believe we have the *resources* to cope.





# Stress Warning Signals

- ◆ What are your "red flags," or warning signs, that stress is creeping into your life? If we keep pushing ourselves, eventually something inside of us will send "red flags," or warning signs that stress is becoming a problem.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **1. Find a support system.** Find someone to talk to about your feelings and experiences.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **2. Change your attitude.** Find other ways to think about stressful situations.
  - "Life is 10% what happens to us, and 90% how we react to it."



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress



- ◆ **3. Be realistic.**  
Set practical goals for dealing with situations and solving problems.
  - Develop realistic expectations of yourself and others.

# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

## ◆ 4. Get organized and take charge.

Being unorganized or engaging in poor planning often leads to frustration or crisis situations, which most always leads to feeling stressed.

- Plan your time, make a schedule, establish your priorities.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **5. Take breaks, give yourself "me time."** Learn that taking time to yourself for rejuvenation and relaxation is just as important as giving time to other activities.
  - At minimum, take short breaks during your busy day.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **6. Take good care of yourself.** Eat properly, get regular rest, keep a routine. Allow yourself to do something you enjoy each day.
  - Paradoxically, the time we need to take care of ourselves the most, when we are stressed, is the time we do it the least.





# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

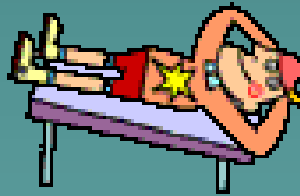
- ◆ **7. Learn to say "no."** Learn to pick and choose which things you will say "yes" to and which things you will not.
  - Protect yourself by not allowing yourself to take on every request or opportunity that comes your way.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress



- ◆ **8. Get regular exercise.** Exercising regularly can help relieve some symptoms of depression and stress, and help us to maintain our health.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **9. Get a hobby, do something different.** For a balanced lifestyle, play is as important as work.



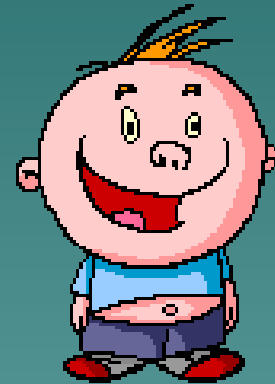
# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **10. Slow down.** Know your limits and cut down on the number of things you try to do each day, particularly if you do not have enough time for them or for yourself.
  - Be realistic about what you can accomplish effectively each day.
  - Monitor your pace. Rushing through things can lead to mistakes or poor performance. Take the time you need to do a good job.
    - ◆ Poorly done tasks can lead to added stress.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **11. Laugh, use humor.** Do something fun and enjoyable such as seeing a funny movie, laughing with friends, reading a humorous book, or going to a comedy show.



# Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- ◆ **12. Learn to relax.** Develop a regular relaxation routine.
  - Try yoga, meditation, or some simple quiet time.



# Relaxation Exercises

- ◆ Many different kinds, but some are:
  - **Deep Breathing**
  - **Visualization:** Visualization is a nice way of giving our minds and bodies a "mini vacation."
  - **Muscle Relaxation**






# Relaxation Exercises

- ◆ Complete one of the relaxation exercises:
  - Visualization and Relaxation Techniques



# Stress Management: Next Steps

- ◆ Try to change the way you appraise a situation to make it less stressful
  - ◆ Remember stress is normal but watch out for symptoms of stress
  - ◆ Use coping skills/ways to reduce stress
  - ◆ Practice relaxation techniques
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- A decorative graphic at the bottom of the slide showing a silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal and blue.

THANK YOU!

