

# **Coping with Stressful Times**



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# Welcome!



## Is today like this?

*That's the secret to life ... replace  
one worry with another.*

– Charlie Brown

## Or this?

*Happiness is a warm puppy.*

- Charlie Brown



# Today



- What is stress?
- What are common signs of stress?
- How do we cope, both well and not so well?
- Helping a friend/colleague
- Sources of additional help



# Stress - Definitions



- **The response to a demand**
- **When the perceived pressure on an individual exceeds his/her ability to cope**
- **Stressors: Events or conditions that precipitate stress – change, fear, overload/underload, uncertainty, a perceived lack of control**
- **Negative or positive**
- **“Daily hassles”**
- **Stress-prone and stress-hardy personalities**
  - **Strong commitment to self**
  - **Sense of meaningfulness**
  - **Internal locus of control**

# Sources of Stress



- **Environmental**  
weather, noise, traffic, pollution, pollen, etc.
- **Social**  
loss of loved one, no time, \$\$\$, relationships, family, etc.
- **Physical**  
illness, aging, injuries, poor nutrition/sleep, lack of exercise
- **Cognitive**  
worry, pessimism, catastrophizing, self-critical thoughts, etc.

# About Stress



- **Fight or flight response**
- **“Relaxation response” (Benson, 1975)**
- **Apathy – eustress – distress (Selye)**
- **“Daily hassles”**
- **Chronic stress and disease – examples?**
  - **Stress hypertension, cardiovascular disease**
  - **Increased symptoms in respiratory illnesses**
  - **Adult diabetes?**
  - **Osteoporosis, susceptibility to fractures**
  - **Inhibition of immune and inflammatory systems**
  - **Depression and other mental health disorders**
  - **Etc.**

# 2007 APA National Survey on Stress



- **One-third of Americans report living with extreme amounts of stress**
- **Nearly half: believe that their stress has increased over past 5 years**
- **Nearly half : stress has a negative impact on both their personal and professional lives**
- **Biggest reported stressors?**
- **31% - trouble managing work and family**
- **54% say stress causes them to fight with people close to them**

# 2007 APA National Survey on Stress



- 77% report physical symptoms of stress –

## Most common?

**Fatigue, insomnia, headache, upset stomach, muscle tension, appetite changes, teeth grinding, libido, feeling dizzy**

- 73% reported psychological symptoms –

## Most common?

**Irritability/anger, nervousness, lack of energy, on edge of tears**

- 43% report overeating to deal with stress; 36% skip meals
- 39% increase alcohol use; 19% increase cigarette smoking



# Stress Symptoms – like warning lights in your car



- **Physical**

Headache, fatigue, insomnia, neck/back ache, hypertension, rapid heart beat, allergies, over/undereating, nausea, ulcers, GI problems, lowered immune function

- **Emotional**

Depression, apathy, feelings of powerlessness, feelings of foreboding, worrying, anxiety, angry feelings, irritability, outbursts, defensiveness, chronic complaining, cynicism, withdrawal, alienation, paranoia, strained relationships, sexual problems

- **Thinking/behaviors**

Lack of concentration, poor judgment, increased errors, lapses in routine procedures, inability to complete tasks, crisis-orientation, indecisiveness, withdrawal, negative attitude, blaming, work harder and longer just to stay on top of things, substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, caffeine, nicotine, sugar)

# Stressful Job Conditions



- Unrealistic work deadlines
- Heavy workloads or not enough work
- Frequently on-call after regular business hours
- A gap between what you *must* do and what you want to do
- Role ambiguity (confusion about roles in hierarchies or in certain situations)
- Having a lot of responsibility, but very little authority
- Having responsibility for people versus tasks or things
- Personality conflicts and communication difficulties among staff
- Lack of feedback regarding job performance
- A tense (or apathetic) atmosphere within the organization

# How do you cope with stress?



- **Complete Handout from Healthwise**

# Coping with Stress



- **Maladaptive**
  - **Self Medicating (alcohol, prescription drugs, illegal drugs)**
  - **Become Aggressive**
  - **Negative Self-Talk**
  - **Engage in dangerous activities (i.e. driving too fast)**
  - **Smoke**
  - **Avoidance**
  - **Aggressive**
  - **What other ways?**

# Coping with Stress



- **Healthy Strategies**

- **Exercise**
- **Engage in activities you enjoy**
- **Journal**
- **Socialize**
- **Play with your pet/children**
- **Take a shower or bath**
- **Listen to music**
- **What else?**

# RELAXATION EXERCISE



**10 MINUTES**

# Key Points



- **Practice technique 3 times daily for at least 10 minutes**
- **Practice at times when you are not stressed or anxious initially**
- **Continue with practicing technique for at least 30 days**

# Relaxation Techniques



- **Diaphragmatic Breathing**
- **Guided Imagery**
- **Meditation**
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**
- **Yoga**
- **Self Hypnosis**



# How to Help



- CVM as caring community
- Remember stress signals
- Pay attention to your intuition
- If you have a relationship, approach the person in a caring way:
  - *I've noticed...*
  - *I care about you...*
  - *I'd like to help. What can I do?*
- If in doubt and worried, consult. Possibilities: trusted colleague, CVM HR, FASAP, NCSU Risk Assessment
- Preserve confidentiality

# Faculty and Staff Assistance Program



- No cost, confidential and professional assessment and referral services for employees who may be experiencing personal or work-related concerns.
- Examples of problems addressed are emotional, family, marital, alcohol, drug and other personal issues.
- Deer Oaks EAP Services provides services and support to employees and their dependents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.
- You can contact Deer Oaks by calling 1-877-EAP-SOLV (1-877-327-7658) or by visiting their [web site](#). The web site login and password for NC State participants is FASAP.

# Resources



- *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* (2000), Davis, Eshelman & McKay
- *The Relaxation Response* (1975) and *Beyond the Relaxation Response* (1994), Benson
- *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind* (1993), Borysenko
- *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (1995), Kabat-Zinn

# Thank you for coming

