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 the 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 Response* (1975) and *Beyond the Relaxation Response* (1994), Benson
- *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind* (1993), Borysenko
Thank you for coming