STRESS - It’s Today’s Norm

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Hans Selye is considered to be the “Father of modern stress research”

Man should not try to avoid stress any more than he would shun food, love or exercise — Hans Selye —
STRESS - It’s Today’s Norm

Goal
- Understand stressors and how to manage our stress

Objectives
- Understand the causes of your stress
- Identify ways to reduce your stress
- Know when to seek help
STRESS - Outline

- Definition: What is stress?

- Causes of Stress
  - Physical
  - Mental/emotional

- Types of Stresses
  - Internal
  - External

- Symptoms of Stress

- Tools to Reduce Stress

- Conclusion
DEFINITION OF STRESS

- Hans Selye, the father of modern stress research, defined Stress as "any event which may make demands upon the organism, and set in motion a non-specific bodily response which leads to a variety of temporary or permanent physiological or structural changes".
What is Stress?

- Stress is the reaction a person has to excess pressures or other types of demand placed upon them.
  - Expected: relationships, work, financial
  - Unexpected: disasters, loss of a job and income

- It arises when a person worries that they cannot cope with the amount of pressures/demands placed on them
  - Multiple stressors may push us past our usual coping point

- Stress is how we try to cope with ongoing changes
### Dr. Hans Selye (1956)

**Stages of Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alarm</td>
<td>In response to a stressor, the body prepares for immediate physical action. The sympathetic nervous system is activated, and stress hormones (cortisol, epinephrine, norepinephrine) are released in greater amounts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>If the stressor continues, the body maintains a moderate level of physiological arousal. The organism has increased its ability to withstand the original stressor, which brought about the alarm reaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>With added stressors or depletion of the ability to continue resisting, the body enters a stage in which a variety of <em>illnesses</em> or even <em>death</em> may occur.</td>
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### Causes of Stress

| Uncontrolled events/disasters (COVID-19) | Unsafe environment |
| Fear and uncertainty                  | Fear: lack of food, toilet paper, etc. |
| Loss of income or job loss            | Commuting challenges: car issues, lack of transportation |
| People being rude, aggressive, etc.   | Sudden changes in regulations, rules |
| Unhappy in your job                   | Heavy workload or too much responsibility |
| Working long hours or cut in work hours| Chronic illness or injury |
| Increase in financial obligations     | Unclear expectations of your work |
| Constant change at work, environment  | Working conditions |
| Facing work discrimination/harassment | Having poor management |
| The death or loss of a loved one      | Getting married or divorced |
| Increased concerns/pressures in relationships | |
| Change/move or loss of home          | Taking care of an elderly or sick family member |
| Emotional concerns (depression, anxiety, anger, grief, guilt, low self-esteem, etc.) | No input in the decision-making process |
|                                     | Environmental: noise, temperature, odors, lighting, etc. |
Stresses We Create

Excessive work hours

Expecting the worst case scenarios

Lack of sleep

Negative Thinking (eg., The sky is falling; It’s my fault; they all hate me)

Overemotional, non-flexible, unrealistic expectations

Self criticize; pessimistic thinking

Shift changes without adequate rest in between
Symptoms of Stress (partial listing)

- Anger
- Headache
- Anxious/Anxiety
- Stomach problems
- Depressed/Depression
- Easily agitated or short tempered
- Elated
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Fear
- Increased blood sugar
- Tense
- Increased Blood Pressure
- Tired
- Increased or irregular heart rate
- Worry
- Vision changes
Symptoms of Stress by Systems

**BODY**
- Headaches
- Frequent infections
- Muscular tension
- Fatigue
- Skin irritations
- Breathlessness

**MIND**
- Worrying
- Muddled thinking
- Inability to concentrate
- Nightmares
- Indecisions
- Negativity
- Hasty decisions

**EMOTIONS**
- Loss of confidence
- More fussy
- Irritability
- Depression
- Anger
- Anxiousness
- Apprehension

**BEHAVIOUR**
- Accident prone
- Over-/under-eating
- Loss of sex drive
- Drinking more
- Sleeplessness
- Restlessness
- Smoking more
PERCEPTION OF THREAT

ENVIRONMENT

STRESSORS
(from sensory input)

HYPOTHALAMUS (brain)

PITUITARY (endocrine)

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS:
HYPOthalamus–PITUITARY–ADRENal CORTEX (HYPAC)
Cortisol, corticoids, etc.

↓ Fluid loss
↓ Glucose by gluconeogenesis
↓ Inflammation
↓ Brain norepinephrine

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS:
SYmpathetic–ADRENal MEDULLA (SAM)
Epinephrine, norepinephrine, etc.

↑ Heart rate
↑ Respiration
↑ Plasma FFAs and sugar
↑ Triglycerides
↑ Platelet aggregation
↑ Kidney clearance
↑ Blood to skeletal muscles
↑ Muscular tension
Stress - Positive Effects

- Fight or Flight
  - Survival response to threatening situation
  - Release hormones: Adrenaline
    - Increase pulse and blood pressure
    - Increased mental alertness
    - Blood sugar
    - Adaptation

- Motivation
  - Short time-frame motivates some people to action
Coping Strategies - Where to Start

- **Awareness**
  - Recognize stressors and your reactions to them

- **Balance** between what I can cope with and what I cannot

- **Control** - what can I change and how do I cope
  - Change lifestyle
    - What can you change to decrease stressors
    - Look for opportunities: seek positive people, positive experiences
  - Change your thinking
    - Re-frame thinking
    - Positive internal speaking
    - Positive thinking
    - What can you change to decrease stressors
Coping Strategies - Action

- Change lifestyle
  - What can you change to decrease stressors
  - Look for opportunities: seek positive people, positive experiences

- Change your thinking
  - Re-frame thinking
  - Positive internal speaking
  - Positive thinking
  - Set priorities
  - Establish goals and timelines that are realistic
  - Create to-do lists
  - Learn to say no or delegate
  - What can you change to decrease stressors
Coping Strategies - Active Action

- Physical things you can do
  - Laugh or just smile
  - Exercise
    - Change position in chair or stand up
    - Walk around the room...or further
    - Change activity to something more engaging to increase your focus
  - Communicate
    - Be assertive
    - Talk to friends, co-workers (in person is always best; call; text; e-mail)
  - Change sleep behaviors to get enough sleep
  - Deep breathing
  - Music - try to sing along or move to the beat
  - Hobby - make time for something you enjoy

- Deep breathing
- Music
- Hobby
Coping Strategies - Active Action (Continued)

- Things you can do immediately
  - Diet
    - Limit salt, fried foods, take vitamin and/or herbal supplement
    - (Please consult with your healthcare provider before taking any over-the-counter pills)
  - Alcohol
    - Limit how much you drink
  - Smoking
    - If you cannot stop reduce the number of cigarettes or puffs per cigarette
  - Caffeine
    - Limit caffeinated beverages
Coping Strategies - Deep Breathing

- Take a 5-minute break to focus on your breathing
  - Sit up straight (if possible)
  - Close your eyes (*DO NOT* close your eyes if you are driving)
  - Place one hand on your belly as you take a slow breath:
    - Keeping your hand there as you inhale through your nose and feel the air move down inside you and it fills your abdomen (your hand feels your abdomen expand).
    - As you exhale push the air out of your abdomen feel that breath go up through your body and out through your mouth.
    - Repeat this several times
  - Don’t do this too fast or you will hyperventilate and get dizzy. *Stop if you feel dizzy and consult your healthcare provider before continuing with this exercise.*
To be totally without stress is to be dead.

Hans Selye

Stress is the spice of life.

Hans Selye
Conclusion

- Stress can be good or bad: it’s how we handle it - *or not handle it* - that can be a challenge
- Take care of your own needs first
  - A good caregiver is a healthy caregiver
- Stay tuned to what is happening to you medically, emotionally, and mentally
- Keep your body and your mind as healthy as possible
- If you feel a need for help get help sooner versus later
  - Do not wait until your plate is over-full
- Get help from family, friends, community resources or call a hotline (next slide)
Emergency Resources

- EAP – Employee Assistance Program through your job

- Religious Contact through place or worship

- Suicide Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
  - **1-800-SUICIDE** 1-800-784-2433
  - **1-800-273-TALK** 1-800-273-8255

- The Veterans Crisis Line is also available by phone or text:
  - Call **1-800-273-8255** and Press 1
  - Text 838255

- Support for deaf and hard of hearing: **1-800-799-4889**