A Guide to Less Stress
Indiana University

IUEAP
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“Morale is worse than we thought. A computer just signed up for our stress management workshop!”
Outline of the Presentation

1. Defining stress
2. Effects of stress
3. Ways to lessen stress
4. Resources
I THINK
IT'S
STRESS!!
How do you know when you are stressed?

What are some of your signs of stress?

Is there such a thing as positive stress? If yes what are some examples?
Fight or Flight Response

- saliva flow decreases
- eyes pupils dilate
- skin blood vessels constrict; chills & sweating
- lungs quick, deep breathing occurs
- heart beats faster & harder
- bowel food movement slows down
- stomach output of digestive enzymes decreases
- blood vessels blood pressure increases as major vessels dilate
- muscles become more tense; trembling can occur
Stress Summary

- Stress a highly subjective phenomenon
- Things that are stressful for some individuals can be pleasurable for others
- There are a variety of physical, emotional, and mental responses
Managing Stress

• Recognize that stress is unavoidable in life

• Learning ways to prevent stressful incidents and managing reactions to stress

• No one strategy is preferable; find what approaches work best for you
dear stress,
let’s break up.
Thinking/Feeling
Connection
Feedback loop
Thinking/Feeling Connection

Feedback Loop

Event

Emotions & Physiological Responses

Thoughts
A. Event       My friend forgot my birthday.
B. Thought     I tell myself, “I really thought he was a really great friend and he forgot my birthday.”
C. Feelings    What emotions might I be experiencing after this thought?
D. Physiol.    What would be the physiological effects?
Thinking/Feeling Connection

Feedback Loop

Emotions & Physiological Responses

Thoughts
Thinking/Feeling Connection (cont)

B. Thought  I tell myself, “Well if he is not that great a friend then I can’t rely on my other friends either.”

C. Feelings  What emotions might I be experiencing that are influenced by this thought?

D. Physiol.  What would be the physiological effects?
Changing Your Thinking – Changes Your Feeling

Partial list of cognitive distortions*

1. All or Nothing thinking - black & white categories
2. Discounting the Positives - positive qualities don’t count
3. Jumping to Conclusions - conclusions not warranted by the facts
4. Magnification or Minimization - blow things way out of proportion or shrink them
5. Should/Ought Statements – use “shoulds”, “oughts”, “musts”, “have tos”

* Adapted from The Feeling Good Handbook by David Burns (2000)
Changing Your Physiology
- Changes Your Reactions

Watching Your Breath
Solutions for Stress

1. Managing time
2. Lifestyle
3. Social support
Solutions for Stress (cont)

1. Managing time

- Save time by focusing and delegating when you can
- Direct your time and activities that are important and meaningful to you
- Commit to what is truly important to you
- Deal with procrastination by using a day planner, breaking large projects into smaller ones, and setting short-term deadlines
Solutions for Stress (cont)

2. **Lifestyle**

- Have a sense of purpose in life (e.g. meaningful work or hobby)
- Get enough sleep to provide a recovery period from the stresses of the day
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Practice yoga, meditation, or tai chi
- Get moderate exercise throughout the week
- Breathe deeply often
- Limit your consumption of alcohol
- Don't smoke
Solutions for Stress (cont)

3. Social support

- Social support from family, friends, and the community – confide in those you trust
- Utilize support groups for special stressful circumstances (e.g. a significant loss)
Summary

• Manage time
• Create a purpose in life
• Get enough sleep
• Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
• Get moderate exercise throughout the week
• Breathe deeply often
• Focus on what you can control (thoughts & feelings)
• Limit alcohol/drugs/tobacco
• Maintain social supports
• Get additional support when needed
If You Need Additional Support

- Consider calling SupportLinc EAP for assistance or a possible referral
  
  Call 1-888-881-5462 to schedule an appointment

- Consult with your family physician

- www.helpguide.org

- Join a support group that “specializes” in your stressor

  Support groups for grief/loss, problems with loved ones who drink too much, etc.
Stressed is desserts spelled backwards.
Extended Relaxation Exercise

Progressive Muscle Relaxation