



Stress Management in the Workplace



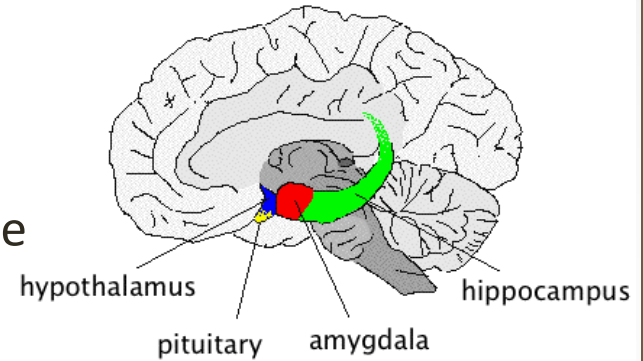
What is Occupational Stress?

- Learning Objectives
 - Gain an understanding of stress
 - Identify your own stressors and responses
 - Management tools and techniques
 - Empowerment through awareness and personal choices
- Agenda
 - History of stress
 - Good stress versus bad stress
 - What stress does to us
 - Stress assessment of this office
 - Managing stress at *Cynthia R. López*

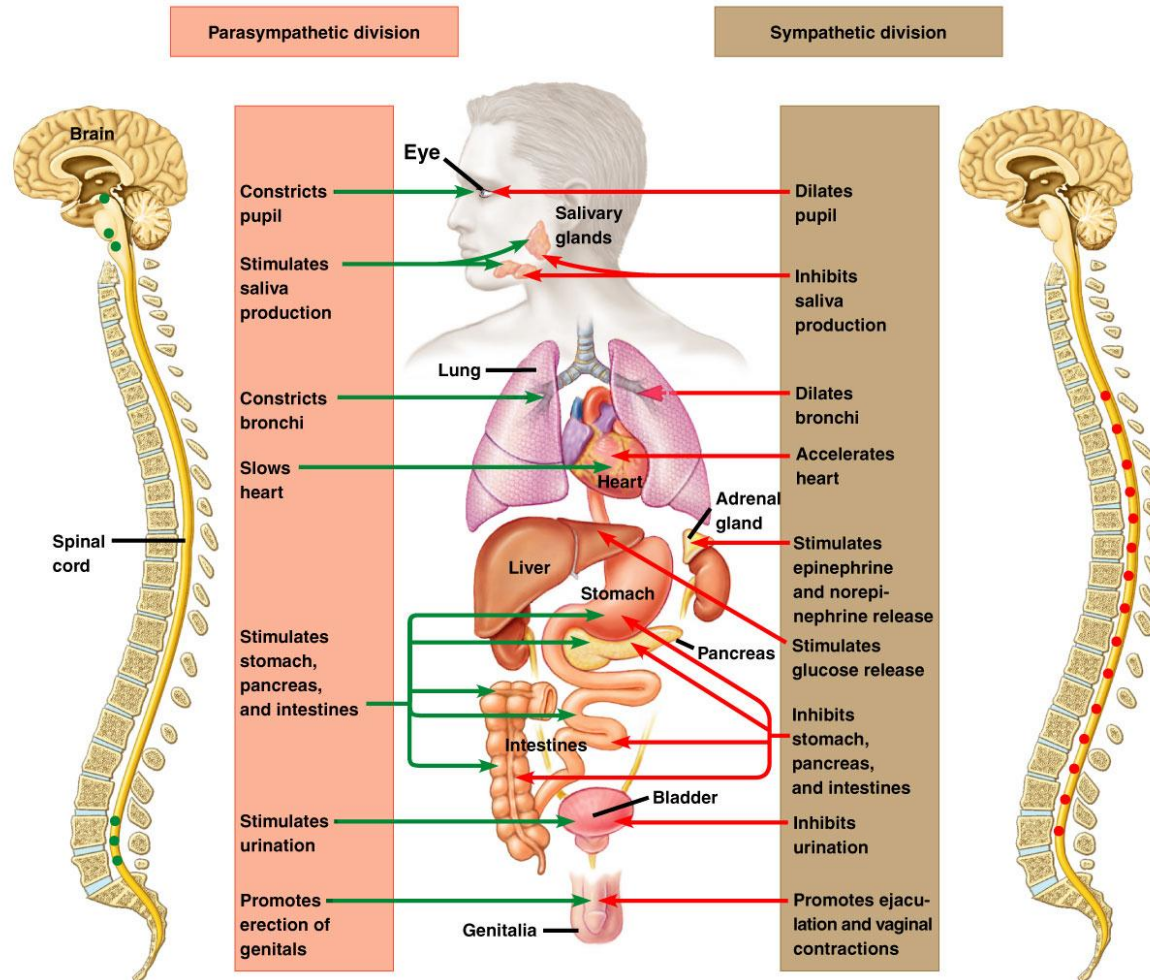


A Little History Lesson

- The human brain has evolved over millions of years.
- Our ancestors survived many dangers by developing *autonomic* controls deep within the center of the brain.
- This control system still regulates our functions.
- When threatened, our bodies naturally become more alert, energetic, and we perform at a higher capacity.
- When relaxed, we store energy for a later time.
- Because of this fundamental process, the human mind now teeters between two gears:
 - Sympathetic “Fight or Flight”
 - Parasympathetic “Rest and Digest”



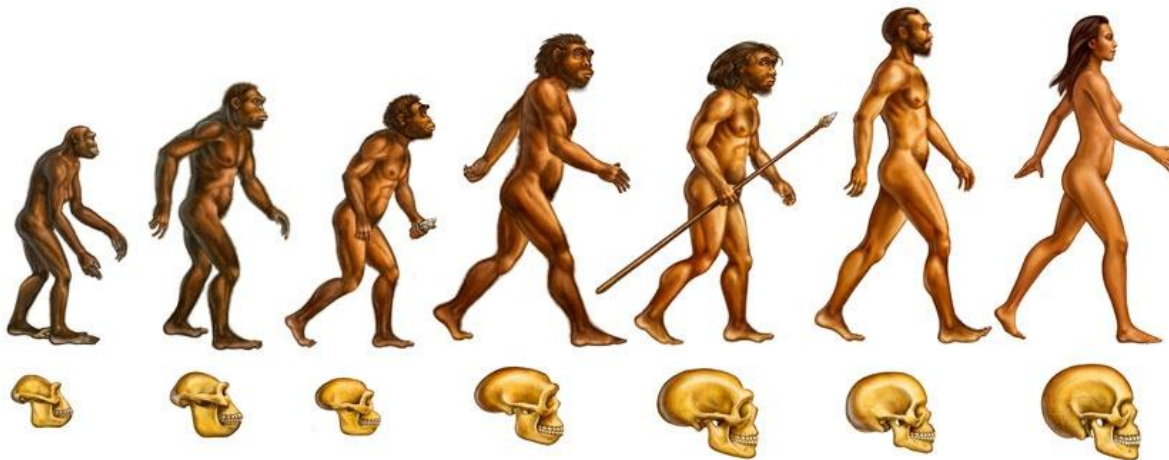
Anatomy of the Autonomic Responses



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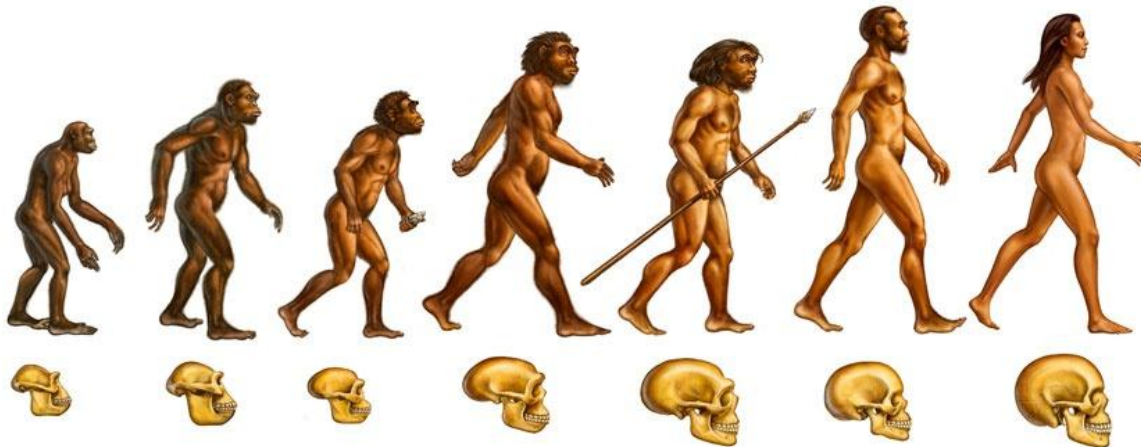
A Little History Lesson

- In order for clans and families to survive, it is believed that stress became a contagious response.
- Reason being, that chances of survival became greater if everyone's mental and physical capacity increased simultaneously.
- As our ancestors became more civilized, humans became less dependent on survival instincts, but this response is still hardwired into our bodies.
- We are also naturally empathetic beings.
- Some experts believe that is why we are so quickly affected by another person's reactive distress.



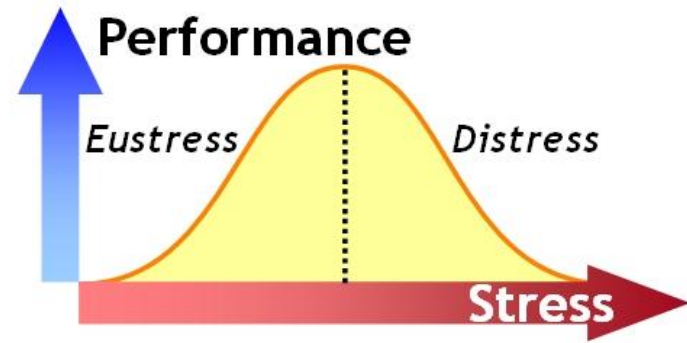
A Little History Lesson

- Fight or Flight is still necessary for survival and societal roles.
- The human mind has adapted to civilization by naturally creating Fight or Flight responses even if we aren't facing danger.
- If we constantly operate in this gear though, our systems will literally start shutting down.
- That is why it is important to understand the differences between good stress and bad stress.



Good Stress vs. Bad Stress

- Good Stress (acute)
 - Eustress
 - Short temporary responses
 - Acts as a motivator
 - Protects us from danger and credible fear
 - Raises alertness
- Bad Stress (chronic)
 - Distress
 - Long term responses
 - Acts as a de-motivator
 - Overreactions to non-threatening encounters
 - Leads to physical and mental complications
 - Wears down the body, makes it susceptible to illness



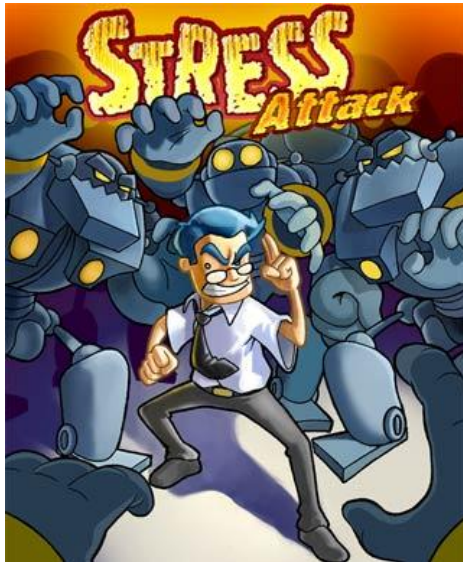
Major Causes of Chronic Stress

- **Significant Life Changes**
 - A big move, buying a home, wedding planning
- **Stressful Incidences or Ongoing Situations**
 - Caring for a sick family member, divorce
- **Career Chaos**
 - Going back to school, starting a new business, work overflow, fast paced productivity, demanding clients
- **Information Overload**
 - High volume phone calls, multi-tasking, time constraints
- **Technology**
 - Computers, cell phones, electronics
- **Lifestyle**
 - Poor nutrition, lack of exercise, life/work unbalance, finances
- **Environment**
 - Pollution, disorganized surroundings, commuting, politics, traffic
- **Habitual Stress**
 - Being so accustomed to stress that we manifest it on our own

Why is Chronic Stress Bad?

- A stressed mental state is a lot like a pot of boiling water.
- If you take the boiling pot off of the burner and slowly let out a little steam to cool off, you control your brain and regulate your mindset.
- After releasing some steam your mind cools down and stressors are not as overwhelming and harmful.
- We can will ourselves to teeter back to Rest and Digest before stress gets out of hand and takes over our behaviors.
- Otherwise the brain will automatically self-regulate on its own.
- When the emotional pressure limit is reached, we inadvertently burst with an over reactive response and boil over in order to self-regulate.
- The water (i.e. our energy) will also burn up completely if the pot is not taken off the burner in time.

Stress Often Attacks When...



- We aren't paying enough attention to our emotional and physical wellbeing
- We feel as though we're losing control
- We're trying to control the wrong or inappropriate areas of our (or others') lives
- We're forced to accommodate a life change that does not make us happy

Individual Cost of Unmanaged Stress

Stress Effects on Body Systems



- Decreased stamina
- Diminished quality of life
- Low morale
- Lack of concentration
- Depression
- Inhibited problem solving
- Physical and/or mental illness
- Memory loss
- Brain tissues atrophy (*dead brain cells*)
- Social behavioral problems
- The list goes on...

Business Cost of Unmanaged Stress



- Stress is socially infectious so it can spread rapidly
- Work environment becomes hostile
 - Employees/Colleagues find it difficult to work with one another
 - People become unresponsive to one another's needs or requests
 - Clients become irritable
 - Bullying
- Productivity is affected
 - Employee apathy leads to bottleneck work flow
 - An estimated 40% of workers say they are unproductive because of stress
 - Work is left undone causing more stress
 - Mistakes are made due to lack of concentration

Business Cost of Unmanaged Stress

- Bad reputation for the company
- Lost revenue with missed future clients
 - Clients are inadvertently mistreated
 - Perceived rudeness discourages future business
- Quality talent leaves
- Business inefficiency leads to poor time management
- Mistakes become frequent, leading to organizational problems



National Cost of Unmanaged Stress

- The cost of stress in the US is approximately \$300 billion dollars per year.
 - Including: accidents, absenteeism, employee turnover, diminished productivity, direct medical, legal and insurance costs, workers' compensation, disability and litigation.
- 8 of the top 10 prescription drugs marketed today and 75% of doctor's visits are treating stress-related conditions.
- An estimated 1 million workers are currently on stress related disability.

Q&A

Break Time

How to Manage Your Stress

Learn your stressors

Recognize stress before and when it erupts

Identify your triggers and responses

Check in with yourself periodically

Adopt a technique that works for you

What Does Stress Look Like at

Cynthia R. López?

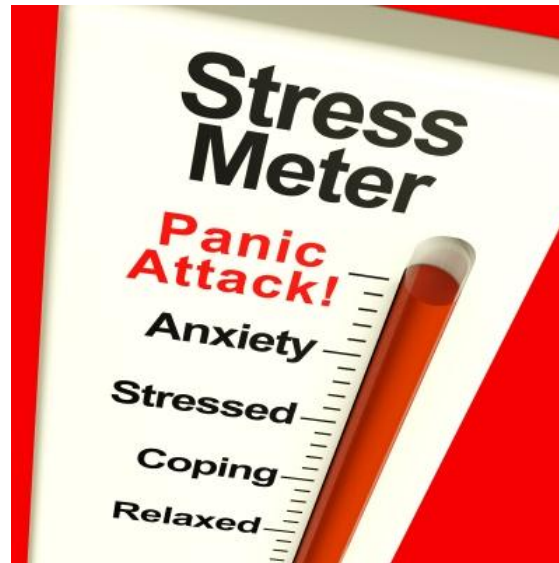
- Lets discuss the top stressors that everyone faces on a daily basis.
 - Clients' issues
 - Fear of deportation
 - Fear of being killed
 - Family harassment
 - Getting paperwork from clients
 - Workflow
 - Paperwork
 - Billing
 - Overflow
 - Phones constantly ringing
 - Disrupts workflow
 - Time management

What Does Stress Look Like at

Cynthia R. López?

- How do you normally respond to these situations?
- What goes through your mind?
- How do you feel when you know that you're going to be dealing with a difficult client?
- Do you do anything to help regulate your responses before they get out of hand?
- Can you think of any personal experiences with distress? Did you...
 - ... yell at anyone?
 - ... use physical force on something? Someone?
 - ...cry or become emotionally charged?
 - ...consume alcohol?
 - ...smoke?

Recognizing Your Stress



First You'll Need to Become Acquainted with Your Stress Behaviors

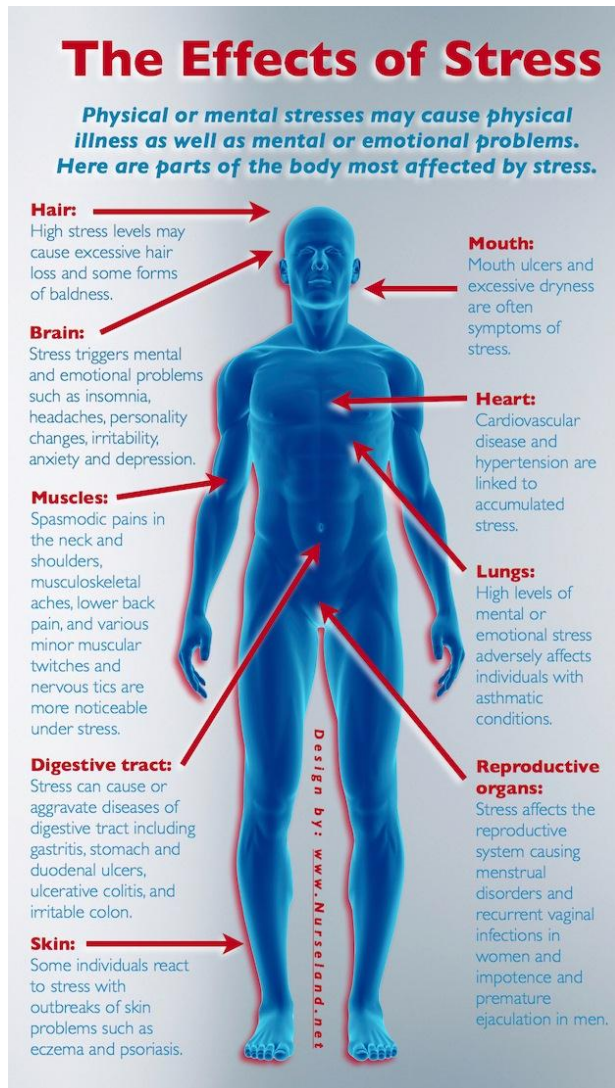
- In order to understand and manage stress, it's important to identify how you perceive and react to stressors.
- Your thought process has a major role in the way life situations affect your overall well being.
- This is extremely helpful to know, because **distress is primarily caused by perceptive unawareness.**
- Understanding your normal day-to-day behaviors will help you spot it quickly and manage it early before stress controls you.
- This will also help protect you from becoming affected by other stressed out people.
- We may not have control over the stressors in our lives, but we do have the ability to face them in a healthy manner.

Recognizing Stress

Physical, Psychological, and Behavioral Signals



Physical Stress Signals



- Heart pounding
- Chest pains
- Digestive problems
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- High blood pressure
- Dry mouth
- Lingering cold
- Weakness
- Fidgeting sweating
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Shortness of breath
- Aches and pains throughout body

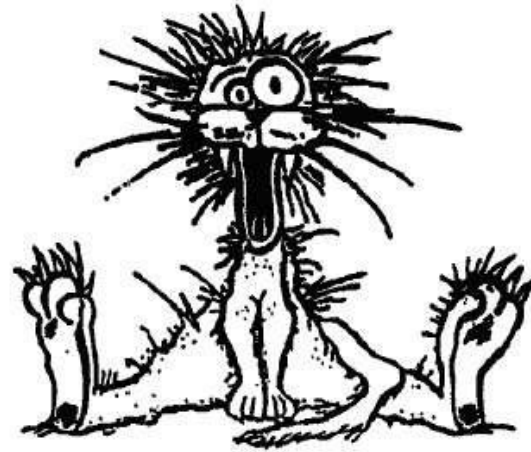
Psychological & Cognitive Stress Signals

- Depression
- Boredom/apathy
- Suspiciousness
- Negative attitude or thoughts
- Helplessness
- Confusion
- Insecurity
- Nervousness
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Trouble concentrating
- Worrying
- Accident prone
- Isolation



Behavioral Stress Signals

- Substance abuse
- Medications (often used to treat anxiety)
- Impulsiveness
- Aggressiveness
- Over-eating/under-eating
- Cynicism
- Short temperament
- Nervous laughter
- Overly argumentative
- Productivity decline
- Inflexible
- Nagging
- Urge to cry
- Irritable



"STRESS"

THE CONFUSION CREATED WHEN
ONE'S MIND OVERRIDES THE
BODY'S BASIC DESIRE TO CHOKE
THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF
SOMEBODY WHO DESPERATELY
NEEDS IT !

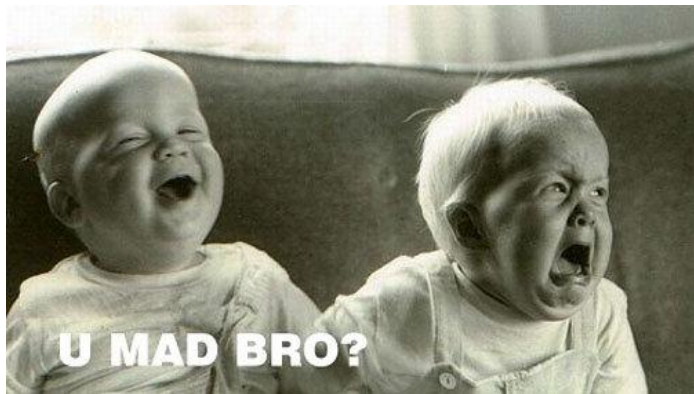
Identify Your Triggers and Responses



Observe Your Own Stress

- Think about something in your life that really stresses you out right now. It can be anything. No need to share.
- Picture it in your mind, close your eyes, and dwell on it a bit... imagine you are dealing with that stressor at this very moment.
- Now... Scan your body, observe any changes in your breathing, facial expressions, heart rate, muscles, etc.
- How are you feeling right now? Are you angry? Upset? Irritable?
- Make a note of the physical and emotional changes that just occurred...
- After you've made a mental list, take a few very deep breaths through your nose, exhale slowly... and imagine you're somewhere very peaceful.
- Maybe you're drinking a mai tai on the beach... watching the waves along the shoreline.
- Notice anything changing in your breathing? This is an example of how you can make your body change gears from fight or flight to rest and digest

Observe Your Own Stress



- The changes that you just observed are your stress signals.
- During and before each stressful encounter, knowing this about yourself will help raise your awareness.
- When you are aware that you are stressed, you can face your stressors with more ease.
- Understanding the natural occurrences within your mind and body will also help prevent an over reactive response.
- Sometimes, all you need to do is acknowledge that you're stressed.
- Try practicing this exercise with other stressors in your life. The more you do this, the more aware you will be of stress before it attacks you.

Check in with Yourself



Check in with Myself?

- It will take some time to truly learn how to manage your auto-pilot responses.
- By repeatedly checking in with your body and mind, you'll develop more ability to manage them.
- You *can* take back control of your mind and body, but this is a new skill so it will take time and patience.
- So it must be practiced frequently, on a daily basis, until it becomes second nature.

Q&A

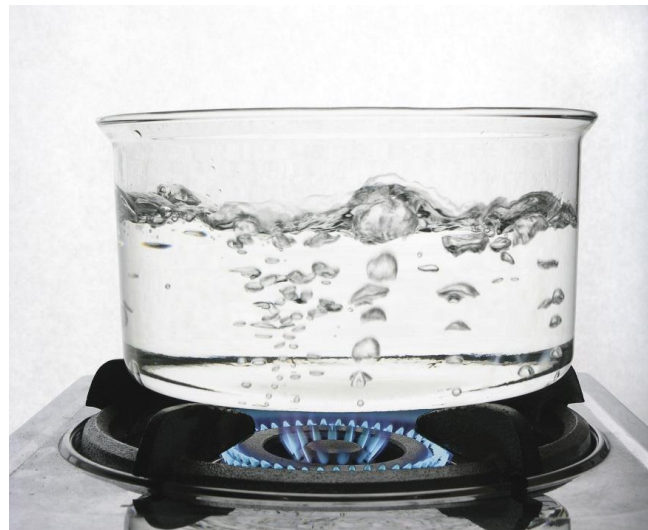
Break Time

Navigate Your Response with a Tool



Manage Your Stress with an Activity

- By becoming aware that stress is approaching or present, you've already taken away most of its power over you.
- Now you can do something about it.
- Try using a management technique to help you take the boiling pot off of the burner...



Manage Your Stress with an Activity

- Stress management techniques and tools all have one thing in common.
- They're designed to bring you back to the present, and give your mind a break from whatever it is that's stressing you out.
- So if you come up with anything on your own that makes you feel relaxed, helps take your mind off the stressor, or just feels spiritually or mentally enriching... even for a second, that is a stress management tool.
- Some people use music, laughter, sleep, and art as a management tool.
- I'll go over some other activities that can also be very effective

Self Talk

- This is a mental tool that helps you stay in the present
- Eliminates negativity
- Removes unrealistic expectations
- Helps you focus on your strengths and the bigger picture
- Gets you through immediate demands
- Self motivates and builds assertiveness
- Best time to use this technique: when you're feeling a heightened sense of stress or frustration

Self Talk

- **Recognize negative thoughts when they arise**
 - Observe yourself (body, mind, spirit) when you are thinking negatively
- **Reframe your mindset**
 - Readjust negative thoughts to feel more in control of a situation
 - There are many ways to interpret the same situation
- **Accept your limitations. Remember that perfectionism is an illusion**
 - You are human and it is impossible for you to do everything perfectly no matter how hard you try
- **Focus on your strengths and abilities**
 - Did you do the best that you could do? Is there anything you can do?
- **Let it go**
 - Accept that something didn't work out the way you intended or isn't going the way you prefer
 - Dwelling on a missed opportunity, predicament, or a mistake will only keep you from accomplishing other tasks or goals in the near future
- **Don't allow a project or an abundant workload turn you into Mr. Hyde.**
 - We all have a tendency to be short tempered, but that doesn't mean others have to be exposed to negativity
 - Focus on the smaller tasks you can manage quickly
- **If applicable... pray**
 - If you believe in a higher power or follow spiritual belief system, it can be very effective to simply verbalize your stress in this format and consider the teachings that may apply

Visualizations

- Guided imagery has been found to have significant stress reduction benefits
- Cultivates relaxation, insight, and wisdom
- Can be practiced just about anywhere at any time for any duration
- Takes practice and requires your own imagination
- Easier than yoga, meditation, and most other physical stress management tools
- Convenient and very simple if you need a quick escape in the middle of the day

Visualizations

- **What you need**
 - Quiet time, privacy, an alarm is sometimes helpful at first
- **Your imagination is the limit**
 - If you feel as though everything is moving too fast and you need to just slow down, picture yourself in a place where everything moves in slow motion
 - If you feel out of control, try...
 - Flying across the continent
 - Leaping over tall buildings and mountains
 - Swimming beneath the ocean surface
- **Play ambient music if it helps**
 - Sound clips are readily available on mobile apps, online, and on CD. Guided visualizations are also available on YouTube

Mindfulness Meditation

- Mindfulness is what happens when we intentionally focus our attention on the present moment without judgment
- **Benefits include:**
 - Focused concentration
 - Raised energy levels
 - Improved mood
 - Pushes metabolic waste out of lungs and draws oxygen into your bloodstream through your diaphragm.
- This practice is proven to strengthen resistance to stress, brightens outlook on life, and enhance a sense of purpose

Mindfulness Meditation

What you need

- Your mind, quiet time (at least 5 minutes), observation skills

What you do

1. Gently close your eyes
2. Deeply inhale through your nose until your lungs are fully expanded
3. Slowly breath out until your lungs fully deflate
4. Repeat and proceed with the next steps
5. Scan your body, and bring awareness to your sensations
6. If you are feeling restless, try the following mental exercises:
 - Focus your attention on one body part at a time
 - Observe the world around you and within you with loving kindness
 - The way your body keeps you alive, blessings you have in this very moment
 - Air passing through your body, temperature of the space around you, sounds that you hear nearby and at a distance
 - Contemplate something that you are grateful for having or experiencing at this very moment.

Physical Exercise

- Reduces anxiety, depression, and stress
- Increases blood circulation
- Reverses damage caused by stress
- Improves memory and performance
- Increases production of happy hormones; improving cognitive function, mood, and assists with your ability to learn
- Improves mental engagement, prevents boredom
- Some research even shows how exercise makes you smarter
- Improves your body's ability to communicate with itself (better awareness of response to stress)
- Increases stamina
- Prevents illness and infection

Easy Physical Exercises for the Office

- Walk around the block
- Jumping (jacks, rope, standing long jump, jump squats)
- Pushups/Sit ups/Burpees/Planks
- Mindful Movement
- Chair dips
- Lunges

Stretching and Breathing

- Relieves physical symptoms of stress
 - Muscle tension, headaches, body pain in general
- Improves flexibility
- Forces oxygen through areas of your body that have poor circulation and opens up your blood stream
- Brings awareness to your body's physical response to stress
- Prevents and improves chronic injuries
- Euphoria sensation
- Feels really good

Stretching and Breathing

1. Breathe deeply into diaphragm through your nose
2. Slowly move into the stretch and breathe out as you become aware of the tension in your muscles
3. Holding this position... Breathe in and out deeply 2-3 times
4. Very slowly, push the stretch a little farther as you breathe out.
 - *Never stretch beyond your comfort level, you should be smiling not scowling*
5. Take very deep breaths in and out until you feel your muscles unravel
6. Slowly come out of the stretch while breathing in
7. Repeat as many times and with as many muscles you think necessary

Equal Breaths

- Relieves physical symptoms of stress
 - Muscle tension, headaches, body pain in general
- Requires very little investment of time and energy
- Lowers your stress hormone levels (cortisol, adrenaline)
- Forces oxygen through areas of your body that have poor circulation and opens up your blood stream
- Brings awareness to your body's physical response to stress
- Prevents and improves chronic injuries
- Euphoria sensation
- Feels really good

Equal Breaths

What you need

- Your mind, nose (or mouth), lungs, observation skills

What you do

1. Count to 4 and deeply inhale through your nose until your lungs are fully expanded
2. Hold for 4 seconds
3. Slowly count to 4 and breath out until your lungs fully deflate
4. Repeat as many times you'd like
 - Inhale 4 seconds, hold 4 seconds, exhale 4 seconds
5. Scan your body and bring awareness to your sensations, try closing your eyes for added benefit
6. As you get better at equal breath, try increasing your time
 - (i.e. 5 seconds, 6 seconds, 10 seconds, etc.)

The 6-Rs for Stress Management

1. **RESPONSIBILITY**

- Choose your response to stress, you're in control
- Establish priorities
- Assess your workload, it's okay to say "no" or "I need to step away for a minute" if you're feeling overwhelmed

2. **REFLECTION**

- Know your stress triggers and your symptoms
- Check your work-life balance

3. **RELAXATION**

- Do something good for you
- Schedule "worry time" and "me time"

4. **RELATIONSHIPS**

- Maintain supportive relationships
- Manage your relationships
 - be observant of people who inflict stress on you

5. **REFUEL**

- Eat a balanced diet
- Drink water
- Take a mental vacation

6. **RECREATION**

- Laugh
- Have fun
- Enjoy life

Group Discussion

- Your behaviors when you are over stressed
 - Do you breathe differently?
 - Do you feel physical discomfort?
 - Tension in your shoulders/neck?
 - Do you have negative thoughts?
- A tool that you think could be used in the workplace... how and when would you use it?
- A tool that you think couldn't be used in the workplace... why do you think it wouldn't be feasible?

Q&A

Thank you

There is no
stress in the
world, only
people thinking
stressful thoughts.
-wayne dyer

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