



Self Care for Aging Services Providers in the Aftermath of Katrina and Rita

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Today's Presentation

1. What is stress?
2. Sources of stress
3. Effects of stress
4. Prevention and self-care
5. Identifying signs of stress
6. Finding help

Check-In #1

Who Are We?

1. Stress: Definition

Defining Stress

- The characteristic of negative or challenging life events that arises from three factors:
 - Uncontrollability
 - Unpredictability
 - Challenge or threat

2. Sources of Stress

- ### Sources of Stress
- Environmental Events (Stressors)
 - Major Life Events
 - Daily Life Events

- ### Major Life Events
- Top 15 life events (Holmes & Rahe)
- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Death of spouse | 9. Marital reconciliation |
| 2. Divorce | 10. Retirement |
| 3. Marital separation | 11. Change in health of family member |
| 4. Jail term | 12. Pregnancy |
| 5. Death of close family member | 13. Sex difficulties |
| 6. Personal injury or illness | 14. Gain of new family member |
| 7. Marriage | 15. Business readjustment |
| 8. Fired at work | |

Sources of Stress
Daily Hassles: "When it Rains it Pours"

- Annoying events in everyday life
- Job stress
- Financial stress
- Family stress (e.g., child misbehavior)
- e.g., rush hour traffic, no parking, overdrawn checking account, lock keys in car, difficult co-workers or clients

Sources of Stress:
Compassion Fatigue

- You have cared for others more than yourself
- Your sense of responsibility to others has become out of balance
- You feel you must "make it all better," fix or solve all problems for the people you help
- You feel you have failed when you can't make it all better," fix or solve all problems

Sources of Stress:
Vicarious Traumatization

- Psychological consequences of hearing about others' traumatic experiences
- May persist for months or years after working with trauma survivors
- Can occur even if you love your work
- Can be stronger if helper has a history of personal trauma

Sources of Stress: Direct Trauma

■ **FLOODS** are among the most traumatic natural events.

Check-in #2

Where is YOUR stress coming from?

Stress Questionnaire

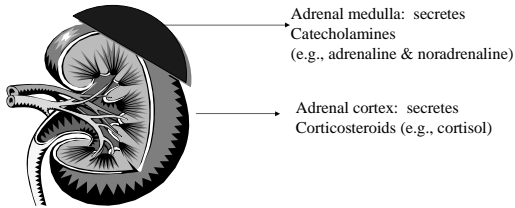
- What are the most important or common sources of stress for you?
- How do you know when you are beginning to feel stressed?

3. Effects of Stress

- Physical
- Psychological
- Relational

What Happens to my Body When I'm Stressed?

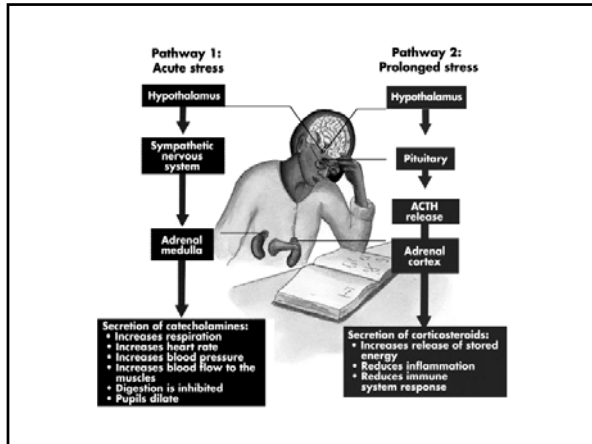
Adrenal Gland and Endocrine Hormones



What Happens to my Body When I'm Stressed?

Acute (short-term) stress response (20 – 60 minutes):

- Fight or flight preparation of the body
- Sympathetic Nervous System Activates
- Endocrine System: Adrenaline & Noradrenaline



Psychological Effects of Stress

- Anxiety (general tension)
- Worry
- Irritability
- Hypervigilance
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbance (insomnia)
- Acute or chronic psychological disorders

Relational Effects of Stress

- Works stress “spills over” to home
- Conflict and arguments
- Withdrawal (more often men)
- Emotional expression & support-seeking (more often women)
- Lack of positive time, relationship development – not enough FUN

4. Prevention and Self Care

Physical Self-Care

- Exercise
- Good nutrition
- Adequate sleep
- Regular physical check-ups
- Relaxation/meditation practices
- Avoid excessive substance use

**Psychological Self Care:
Enhancing the Positive**

- Positive recreational activities
- Time for yourself (bath, massage, back rubs, etc.)
- Positive mental engagement (it's not just TV watching)

Check-In #3

What's Fun for You?

Psychological Self-Care: Coping

- Problem-focused coping
 - managing or changing the stressor
 - use if problem seems alterable
 - planful problem solving
- Emotion-focused coping
 - try to feel better about situation
 - use if problem out of our control

Maladaptive emotion-focused coping strategies

- Escape-avoidance
 - try to escape stressor
- Distancing
 - minimize impact of stressor
- Denial
 - refuse to acknowledge problem exists
- Wishful thinking
 - imagining stressor is magically gone

Adaptive emotion-focused coping strategies

- Seeking social support
 - turn to friends, support people
- Positive reappraisal
 - minimize negative, emphasize positive
- Downward comparison
 - compare self to those less fortunate

Perceived control

- When facing a stressor, sense of control decreases negative responses (stress, anxiety, & depression)
- How?
 - Can minimize stressor
 - Can prepare for stressor
- Perceptions of control must be realistic to be adaptive
 - Trying to control what cannot be controlled leads to negative emotions
 - Must focus on things that are truly controllable

Social support: The Importance of People

- Social support
 - resources provided by others in times of need
 - emotional
 - expressions of concern, empathy, positive regard
 - tangible
 - direct assistance
 - e.g., lending money, providing meals
 - informational
 - suggestions, advice
 - Networks

Relational Self-care

- Schedule/protect time with people that matter to you
- Regularity/rituals
- Plan positive time
- Maintain boundaries between work and home
- Reciprocity & appreciation

What can I do to prevent negative effects of stress?

- Cultivate an 'optimistic' explanatory style to help handle defeat and rejection
- Use problem-focused coping, combined with adaptive emotion-focused coping
- Don't use maladaptive emotion-focused coping that involves avoidance & escape
- Cultivate supportive relationships
- Get involved with people!
- Guard against cynical, negative attitudes
- Change or discontinue undermining, hurtful relationships

Boundaries: Work vs. Home

- Rituals to transition
- On your way home, think of 1 good thing that happened at work
- Honor yourself
 - Remember that in the big picture you are part of the solution
 - Feel proud about your contributions

Boundaries: Self-Care & Serving Others

- Individual differences
- Care for yourself as much as you care for others
- You are a helper, not a magician
- You cannot change another person; you can only create an environment to help a person change him or herself

Boundaries: Case load

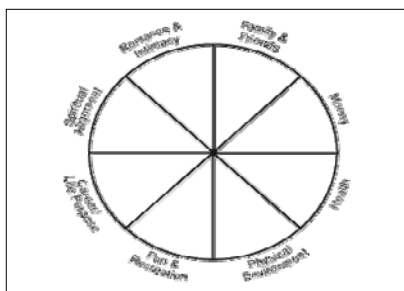
- Keep numbers manageable
- Case mix
- Seek assistance
- Peer supervision and support groups

Check-in #4

How am I coping?

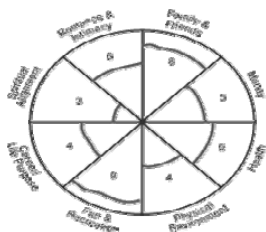
5. Identifying Signs of Stress

Pause and Assess Yourself



Source: Adrienne, Carol. (1998). *The Purpose of Your Life*. William Morrow & Co.

The 8 sections of the wheel represent aspects of your life. With the center of the wheel as 0 (no satisfaction), and the outer edge as 10 (complete satisfaction), draw a line to show your level of satisfaction with each aspect of your life. If the lines you draw do not make a circle, then your life may be out of balance and you may need to re-focus on some parts of your life.



Even if you find that your life is in balance, you may wish to evaluate whether you would like to increase your satisfaction with any aspect of your life. If so, how would you go about doing this?

Source: Adrienne, Carol. (1998). *The Purpose of Your Life*. William Morrow & Co.

General Stress

0 = never 3 = fairly often
1 = almost never 4 = very often
2 = sometimes

In the last month, how often have you felt:

- that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- lack of confidence about your ability to handle your personal problems?
- that things were not going your way?
- difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Cohen & Williamson (1988). Perceived stress in a probability sample of the United States. *The Social Psychology of Health*, pp. 31 - 67.

General Stress

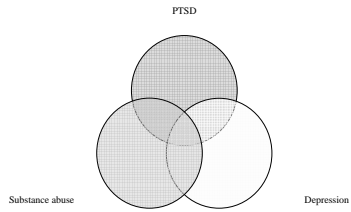
Higher scores associated with:

- poorer perceived health
- more hospitalizations in previous year
- poorer functional status
- greater utilization of health care services
- more reports of serious illness
- increased incidence of infection when exposed to viral challenge

Identifying Signs of Stress: Compassion Fatigue

- Feel powerless
- Feel helpless
- Believe you are incompetent; question your abilities
- Feel angry at client
- Feel resentful toward client for not changing or making progress
- You are working harder than client

What is the usual “bad stuff” of trauma



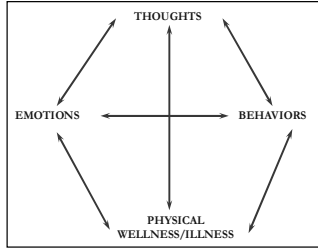
Why Trauma Starts

Arousal

Why Trauma Persists

Avoidance

The Players



Symptom Assessment

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Trauma

6. Getting Help

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Relaxation is a skill that needs to be practiced.
- When you are relaxed, you may experience peculiar sensations, such as tingling or heaviness
- Try to “go with” the process
- You have control.

RELAX!

What can I get help with?

- Stress Management
 - Muscle relaxation training
 - Meditation
 - Exercise
 - Cognitive Restructuring
 - Time Management
 - Reduce unhealthy behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking, poor nutrition)

Cognitive Restructuring: Your thoughts create your emotions

A = activating event in the environment

Loss of job → I'm worthless → Depression

Loss of job → Company downsized → No Depression

Who Should I Call?

- Primary Care Provider (family doctor)
- Health Insurance – Mental Health Service Contractor
- State Psychological Association

What Should I Expect?

- Assessment first
- Treatment plan
- Frequency & duration:
 - Usually weekly
 - Usually 50-minute sessions
 - Duration is difficult to predict

What about Medication?

- Can be effective with Major Depressive Disorder
- Can provide relaxation, "take the edge off" anxiety
- Does not provide lasting tools for coping

Stress as an opportunity

- Signal
- Change and growth

Check-Out

- How are you doing?
- Evaluation of workshop

Recommended Books

- Benson, J., & Stuart, E. M. (1992). *The Wellness Book*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Borysenko, J. (1987). *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*. New York: Bantam.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living*. New York: Bantam Doubleday.
- Gottman, J., Notarius, C., Gonso, J., & Markman, H. (1976). *A Couple's Guide to Communication*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Burns, D.D., & Beck, A.T. (2003). *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. New York: Avon Books.
