

*Braving the storm :
Understanding and
managing stress*

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My goals for this discussion are the following:

- To identify what stress is and how it is helpful and harmful
- To present ideas for you to explore your stress
- To inspire some thought on ways of regarding stress and coping
- To provide motivation for each of you to take control of your stress (note that the process of controlling stress is life- long)

Bent Fork Image

- If a fork is used for the purpose intended it will last forever.
- If a fork is used for things it is not intended it will bend and break.



A short list of signs of burn out

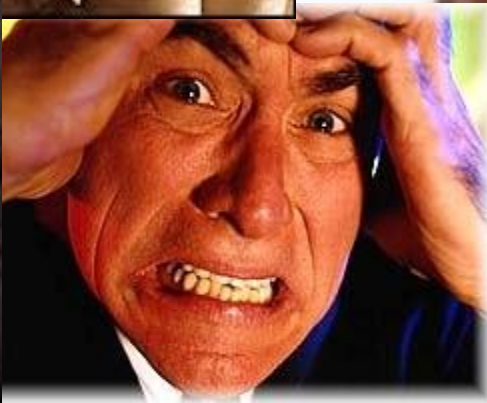
- Chronic fatigue
- Anger at those in charge
- Self criticism
- Feeling besieged
- Exploding easily
- Physical: headaches, weight changes, lack of sleep, shortness of breath
- Suspiciousness
- **Depression**
- **HELPLESSNESS.....**

Learned helplessness- Seligman's dogs

- Lack of control leads to sense of helplessness, which leads to depression...



*Another response is **STRESS***



What is stress?

- **Stress is your body's way of telling you to get ready to act.** This is why it is hard to relax when you feel stressed. Fight or flight-
- A little stress is good; a lot of stress is bad



Discussion question..

- Think about the way your body feels when you are stressed.
 - What is the physical sensation? This is part of the process of identifying sources of stress.
 - Get in the habit of recognizing these physiological signs as a call to “manage thoughts”.

To determine severity of stress reaction consider the following:

- The behavioral reactions one is showing
- Duration and severity of symptoms
- Has the stress impacted functioning



Managing emotions:



1. Identifying the source of stress-

- **Think about things that stress you.** Try not to block the things that worry you. Be completely present to the sources of your stress. List them in a journal or on a pad if it helps.
 - Set alarm one hour earlier to meditate
 - Take a walk
 - Sit quietly for one hour with limited distraction (perhaps in a bath)

2. Reframing the stress

- For each source of stress ask yourself these questions:
- Am I worried about something that is really important? Or has my stress become automatic?
- Is my worry in proportion to the problem?
- What parts of the source of this stress are within my control and what are not? Am I trying to change things I can't?

3. The cornerstones of coping with stress are the following:

- *Developing self efficacy*
- *Thinking positively or “optimism”*
- *Social Support*
- *Active Stress Management*

Creating a Plan to reduce stress: Responding rather than reacting to stress

- ***Ask yourself these questions:***
- Am I spending too much emotional and cognitive energy on being stressed and less on coping and finding solutions?
- Are there things I can do differently to reduce stress?
- Make a plan to control behavior that adds to your stress level

Motivate yourself with these thoughts



Outside of a real threat to your safety, stress is within your control

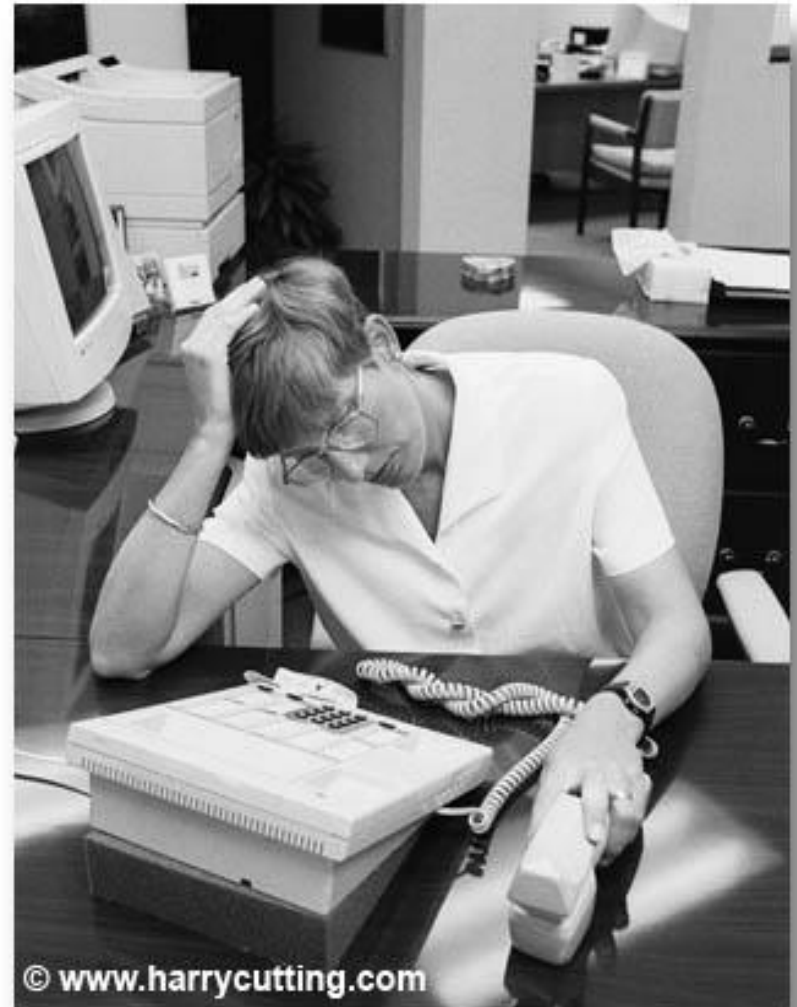
- When you are stressed your performance is hampered- Stress reduces energy and blocks creative thought
- Stress is contagious, even if you think you are hiding it well
- Stress is associated with physical and mental health problems and addictions.
- When managers take time to care for themselves, they strengthen their ability to be effective with staff

Managing Stress at work

- Acknowledge the things you can and cannot change and don't sweat the small stuff.
- Avoid “thought attacks”- Mentally rehearse problems and outcomes that may or may not come about.
- Light a candle rather than curse the darkness- In other words understand yourself and take action.

Managing Stress at work

- Create a bridge between spirituality and work.
- Make a list of your priorities each day- take delight in crossing each thing off-
- Your life is more than your time on the job- seek balance-
- BREATHE



“What is sharable is bearable”

(Dan Segal).

- Don't be afraid to encourage communication about uncomfortable and stress-causing topics in the workplace.

CONCLUSION



- Rather than having automatic thoughts about things, take time to reflect on the way you are thinking about things.

- By restructuring our thoughts in a positive way, we can approach stress in a new way- we can take charge rather than become a victim of it.
- The experience of life is created from the inside out not the outside in (Richard Calson)
- We are responsible for our own feelings and have over our stress and moods. Our experience of life comes from our own thinking and perception.

Becoming aware of the power of
your thoughts can change your life.





"STRESSED"
is
"DESSERTS"
spelled
backwards