

HANDOUT [A] - WHAT IS STRESS?

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[A] STRESSORS IN YOUR LIFE – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is stress negative? Are all of the examples listed examples of negative stress?
2. Are any of these stressors good? What is an example of good stress?
3. What type of stress dominates your life?
4. What strategies have you used to manage stressors?

[B] SYMPTOMS, FEELINGS, THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOURS:

What Is Stress?*

Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Common stress reactions include tension, irritability, inability to concentrate, and a variety of physical symptoms that include headache and a fast heartbeat.

It's almost impossible to live without some stress. And most of us wouldn't want to, because it gives life some spice and excitement. But if stress gets out of control, it may harm your health, your relationships, and your enjoyment of life.

* (Edited by Guy Slowik MD FRCS. Last updated on June 28th 2011 -- ehealthmd.com)

What Are The Signs Of Stress?

Stress can cause both mental and physical symptoms. The effects of stress are different for different people. Review the lists below and identify which symptoms commonly affect you.

Mental Symptoms of Stress

- Tension
- Irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Feeling excessively tired
- Trouble sleeping
- Anxiety
- Mood swings

Physical Symptoms of Stress

- Dry mouth
- A pounding heart
- Difficulty breathing
- Stomach upset
- Frequent urination
- Sweating palms
- Headaches

HANDOUT [B] - PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- 1. STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES:** In order to tackle the stress in your life, you must look at the things that influence your stress tolerance level.

Your support network: A strong network of supportive friends and family members is an enormous buffer against life's stressors. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress.

Do you have a support network? If so, who are they? If not, how can you build one?

Your sense of control: If you have confidence in yourself and your ability to influence events and persevere through challenges, it's easier to take stress in stride. People who are vulnerable to stress tend to feel like things are out of their control.

Do you have a sense of control? How can you work on this aspect of your personality?

Your attitude and outlook: You are less vulnerable to stress if you have an optimistic attitude. Optimistic people tend to embrace challenges, have a strong sense of humor, accept that change is a part of life, and believe in a higher power or purpose.

Do you have a positive outlook? Why or why not? Can you change this if necessary?

Your ability to deal with your emotions: You're extremely vulnerable to stress if you don't know how to calm and soothe yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, or afraid. The ability to bring your emotions into balance helps you bounce back from adversity.

Do you have the ability to deal with your emotions? What do you need to work on?

Your knowledge and preparation: The more you know about a stressful situation, including how long it will last and what to expect, the easier it is to cope. For example, if you go into surgery with a realistic picture of what to expect post-op, a painful recovery will be less traumatic than if you were expecting to bounce back immediately.

1. Do you go into situations with knowledge or are you often finding yourself stressed out with the outcome?

2. DEALING WITH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS: The Four A's

Change the Situation

1. **Avoid** the stressor
2. **Alter** the stressor

Change your Reaction

3. **Adapt** to the stressor
4. **Accept** the stressor

3. HEALTHY WAYS TO RELAX AND RECHARGE: Which ones do you do?

- Go for a walk
- **Spend time in nature**
- Call a good friend
- **Sweat out tension with a good workout**
- **Write in your journal**
- Take a long bath
- Light scented candles
- **Colour/art**
- **Yoga**
- **Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea**
- Play with a pet
- Work in your garden
- Get a massage
- **Curl up with a good book**
- **Listen to music (in combination with activity for us)**
- **Watch a comedy**

4. Now, with 2-3 people in your group, lead a stress relieving activity, that is not the same as another group, so you may need to negotiate. A signup sheet will be provided.

Planning:

5. Reflect on the activities created

After having underwent each of the stations, reflect on what you liked:

1. What 3 activities did you find would be best at calming your mood if you were activated:

2. How did you they make you feel after, describe each one if you need to? (Both physically and emotionally)

3. What one strategy could you use (this or another) that could reduce your stress and clear your mind?

Why did you choose this? How does it relate to your learning style?
