“Stress” Management for Teachers

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Unscramble the Words

- A L M C: __________
- E T R S: __________
- E C P E A: __________
- I M E S L: __________
“Stress” Management for Teachers

- Goals, overview
- Set an *Intention* for this session.
Got “Stress”?
How Do We KNOW We’re “Stressed”? 

- Imagine the last time you were “stressed.” 
  - How were you feeling?
  - Where were you feeling it?
  - What were your thoughts?
  - How did you behave?
How Do We Notice Stress In:

- Our students?
- Our spouses, significant others?
- Our children?
- Our pets?
What is “Stress”?

- Stress is a bodily and/or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an equilibrium.
- Two aspects:
  - Stressor – a stimulus event that challenges the integrity, or health, of the body/mind. STRESS TRIGGERS!
  - Stress response – the body/mind’s compensatory reaction to the challenge.
IMPACT OF THE CURRENT STRESS EPIDEMIC

According to APA Stress in America (2010, 2011)
- 70 – 80% of doctor visits have a basis in stress.
- CDC Data suggest that 80 – 90% of medications are due to stress-based illnesses.
- 70% of Americans identify work as the major source of stress in their lives.
- 67% of Americans stated they were not dealing effectively with stress.
- Relationships can be stress-reducing OR Stress-enhancing
- Meta-analysis: work stress contributes an extra 50% excess CHD risk.
- Children surveyed about parental stress indicated their parents’ stress was impacting their family.
STRESS AND PERFORMANCE CURVE

STRESS CURVE

Performance

- too little stress (underload)
- optimum stress
- too much stress (overload)
- burn-out

Stress Level

- laid back
- fatigue
- exhaustion
- anxiety/panic/anger
- breakdown

inactive
ALL “STRESS” IS NOT BAD

- Good Stress  ↔  Bad Stress
  (Eustress)    (Distress)

- Acute Stress  ↔  Chronic Stress
TYPES OF STRESS

- **Eustress – good stress – sometimes seen as a challenge.**
  - Motivates, focuses energy
  - Is short-term
  - Is perceived as within our coping abilities
  - Feels exciting
  - Improves performance
**Types of Stress**

- **Distress** – *bad stress* – sometimes seen as pressure.
  - Causes anxiety or concern
  - Can be short- or long-term
  - Is perceived as outside of our coping abilities
  - Feels unpleasant
  - Decreases performance
  - Can lead to mental and physical problems

- Individual differences in response to stress.
How Does “Stress” Affect Us Physically?

- Physiological fight, flight or freeze response (also Tend and Befriend)
- Shifts blood to extremities, away from core, shuts down digestion, narrows cognitive focus, reduces problem solving.
- Acute stress responses are normal and beneficial!
- Chronic stress responses can lead to major health issues.
- Daily Hassles Model (allostatic load): Charles Strobel (MD) : we experience an average of 30 “heart hassles”/day – “irritating, frustrating, or distressing mini-crises.”
**How Does Stress Affect Us Cognitively?**

- Interactive role of Control, Efficacy
  - Self-efficacious → challenge
  - Lower efficacy → threat
How Does “Stress” Affect Us Psychosocially?

- Impacts personal relationships. Stress - Outward
  - Family of four: 11 interrelationships
  - Class of 20 (2–5 grps): 16,644 interrelationships
  - Class of 30 (2–5 grps): 174,406 relationships

- Influence our sense of self (identity). Stress-Inward

- Influence our degree of engagement with life (avoid and restrict our life space)

- Influences our choice of goals and behaviors
  - Operating from a set of CORE VALUES
Dirty Little Secret

- There is no such thing as **STRESS**!
IT’S ALL IN OUR HEADS!

- Nun Study: Happy Nuns make Older Nuns!

- Telomeres and the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

- “…perception is key: The amount of stress people in the study felt they were under, not external circumstances, correlated with how close their cells were to the end of life.”

- (Stress Less (2010)
STRESS IN THE CLASSROOM

• “Stressed teachers make poor role models for students”

• Research on teacher stress within the first 3 years:
  • Classroom management
  • Student issues (diverse & challenging learners; behavioral problems) – “emotionally contagious students”
  • Parents
  • Administrative support
  • Accountability
  • Planning
  • Time Constraints
  • Balancing life outside of school
STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: TWO APPROACHES

- Building Resiliency & Protective Factors – Proactive Approach: Primary Prevention
  - (Takes time & PRACTICE)

- Managing Stress – Reactive Approach: Secondary or Tertiary Prevention
  - (Effective, if temporary)
Stress Management Strategies

Reactive Approach

- Exercise (if you did nothing else do this – for your cells, too!)
- Relaxation strategies
  - Progressive relaxation
  - Body scan
STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
REACTIVE APPROACH

- Breath work (engaging parasympathetic)
  - Equal Ratio Breathing
  - Breath Retention
  - Choo-choo breathing
  - Three-part breath
  - 1:2 Ratio Breath
  - Belly Breathing (putting the cat to sleep)
  - Breath of Joy
  - Crying Breath
  - Bees Breath
STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
REACTIVE APPROACH

- Visualization (Leaves on a Stream)
- Pass it on – figuratively & literally – Stress Dumpster!
- Humor: positive not negative
- Journaling
- Gratitude Journal
- Talk it out/act it out
- Catastrophize to the EXTREME!
- Make a plan/list
- Cognitive re-frame (only with practice)
BUILDING STRESS RESILIENCE

- Mindfulness meditation
- Being mindful is the ability to be nonjudgmentally present to the here and now.
- It is about controlling attention
  - We are often asked to “pay attention,” but seldom given strategies for doing so.
  - Particularly effective for executive control function issues
WHAT MINDFULNESS MEDITATION IS AND IS NOT

- Not having a blank mind or stopping all thoughts from showing up.
  - Mindfulness practices help us see our thoughts and mind more clearly.

- Not about seeking blissful states.
  - Mindfulness practices help us accept all of our experiences instead of just clinging to those we enjoy and avoiding those we dislike.

- Not becoming emotionless.
  - Mindfulness practice enables us to more fully bear a full range of emotional experiences.

- Not withdrawing from life.
  - Mindfulness practice attunes us to others, assists us to become more compassionate.

- Not about escaping pain.
  - Mindfulness practice helps us recognize our pains, sufferings and diseases and allows us to embrace them.

- Not about converting to a new religion.
  - Mindfulness practices can support our efforts in any spiritual or psychological condition.
TYPES OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

- Formal
  - Sitting
  - Walking
  - Prone
  - Eating
  - Standing

- Informal
  - Everywhere!
  - Mini mindful moments
BUILDING STRESS RESILIENCE

- Humor – laugh every day!
- The Power of NO! Time Management IS Priority Management!
- Avoid TOXIC PEOPLE – they are STRESS DUMPERS
  - “Energy Vampires!”
  - Nattering Nabobs of Negativity
- Positivity Ratio of 3:1
- Operate from a base of CORE VALUES
TIME WASTERS

- Lack of Goals
  - “paralysis of analysis”
  - Fear of making a wrong decision
  - Ruminate to death
TIME WASTERS

- Too many goals

  Inability to say “NO”

  Pareto principle: 20% of the people do 80% of the work.
TIME WASTERS

- Procrastination
  - The thrill of brinkmanship
  - Low priority items/tasks
  - Too many commitments
TIME WASTERS

- Perfectionism
  - Paralyzed perfectionists
  - Common among highly gifted people with contingent self-worth
TIME WASTERS

- Work Interruptions
  - Co-workers
  - Family
  - Cyber-Monday shopping....
TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Keep a daily time log – where did it all go?
- Establish goals and PRIORITIES based on Core Values
- Make use of the Pareto Principle: 20% of my time to get 80% of my tasks.
- Prune and Weed – Three Piles
- Delegate when feasible (let go)
- Set Boundaries and Manage Technostress (schedule email response time; limit digital fog, data smog, screen sucking, frazzling)
- Schedule Relaxation Time
A NATIVE AMERICAN STORY

There is a Native American legend which tells of a grandfather teaching his grandson about life. He said to him, “A fight is going on inside all of us. It is a fight for our souls. It rages within all of us daily. It is fought between two wolves. One wolf represents anger, greed, hatred, envy, fear, arrogance, resentment, self-pity, guilt, lies, and ego. The other wolf stands for peace, love, patience, joy, compassion, generosity, humility, kindness, friendship, truth, and faith.”

“Which wolf will win, grandfather?”

“The one you feed.”
OPERATE FROM YOUR CORE VALUES

- Define/select your CORE VALUES – 3 – 5.
- Re-framing involves defining the situation in terms of YOUR CORE VALUES
- Operating from your CORE VALUES shifts from:
  - STRESS  GROWTH
**Final Meditation**

- Compassion or Loving Kindness Meditation
- Four People (yourself, loved one, neutral person, difficult person)
  - May I have happiness and the causes of happiness.
  - May I be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.
So, at the end of the day, when asked: How was your day, dear?

- _____________ I survived.
- _____________ I was busy.
- _____________ I was productive.
- _____________ I made a difference.
CONTACT ME

- Questions?
- Feedback?
- Suggestions?
- Send large sums of money!

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THANK YOU!