Strategies for Stress Management

Tiffany Wentz, MA, LMHC
EAP Counselor
Stressors

World
- National and global events

Work
- Changes in roles and environments

Home
- Increased personal stress
Defining Stress

Physical and emotional response to change

- Body is designed to experience it
- Can be “good” or “bad”
- Activates “fight, flight, or freeze” response
STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

Brain (Hypothalamus)

ACTH

Adrenal Gland

Adrenaline and Cortisol

Kidney

Increased Heart rate

Liver converts glycogen to glucose

Decreased Digestive system activity

High Blood pressure
Symptoms of Stress

- Anxiety/Depression
- Headaches
- Over/under eating
- Restlessness
- Burnout

- Substance use
- Isolation
- Loss of focus
- Fatigue
- Anger/Irritability
Circle of Control
Vulnerabilities

- Physical or emotional conditions
- Impact our ability to respond effectively
- Can be reduced
- Impact ability manage stress
Managing Vulnerabilities

- Exercise
- Eat regular, balanced meals
- Establish a good sleep schedule
- Avoid substance use
- Engage in self-care
- Engage in community (social, religious or spiritual)
Vagus Nerve

- Nerve that connects brain, stomach, and many other parts of body.
- Part of parasympathetic nervous system.
- Can be stimulated to help combat stress.
Stimulate Vagus Nerve

- Cold stimulation – apply cold water to your face or back of neck
- Singing or humming
- Yoga
- Massages
- Laughing
- Supplements
- Paced Breathing
Paced Breathing

Used to decrease heart rate and emotional intensity.

Instructions:
1. Breath from belly
2. Slow your pace of breathing
3. Exhale longer than you inhale
mindfulness
Challenge Distorted Thinking

Avoid
- “I can’t handle this!”
- Polarized thinking.
- Catastrophizing.

Practice
- How can I handle this?
- Seek to find balance.
- Focus on what is.
Create Work/Life Balance

• Leave work at the “office”.
• Create a transition time.
• Practice being present.
• Avoid multi-tasking.
• Make time for mental “freedom”.
Create an “end of day” practice

1. Write tomorrow’s “to-do”.
2. Identify priorities and create a plan for your day.
3. Send final emails.
4. Turn off computer and tidy your workstation.
5. Take a few deep breaths and consciously release the work day.
6. Adopt an end of day affirmation.
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No-cost, confidential support to help with work and life challenges.
Resources

• A Mindful State - Washington
• Find Your Words - Kaiser
• Finding Balance: Stress Management Guide - Kaiser
• Finding Balance Workbook - Kaiser
• Mental and Emotional Well-Being - Washington
• National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - Washington
• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
• Understanding the Stress Response – Harvard Medical School
• WA Listens or call 1-833-681-0211
• WA Warm Line or call 1-877-500-9276
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