

Stress and the Health Care Professional

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast
Wednesday, May 19, 2010
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Faculty

**Maury West, LGSW
Social Work Director
Alabama Department of Public Health**

Objectives

- **Identify three stressors in the helping profession**
- **Identify four effects unresolved stress has on the body and mind**
- **Identify four stress management techniques that can be used at work or at home**

Stressors in the Work Place

- **Deadlines**
- **Clients**
- **Covering for others**
- **Meetings**
- **Time management**
- **Clients' Families**

Other Stressors

- **More responsibilities than they can handle**
- **Needing to complete routine tasks that have little intrinsic value**
- **Being expected to work long hours**
- **Unclear job expectations**
- **Inability to balance professional and personal life**

Other Stressors

- **Traffic**
- **Personal appointments**
- **Child or parent care**

What is Stress?

- **Conditions that cause physical, psychological , or emotional strain**
- **Something we all experience, but social workers are at risk**
- **Stress can be positive or negative**

Levels of Stress

- **Eustress**
- **Distress**
- **Traumatic Stress**

Eustress

- **Coined by Dr. Hans Selye**
- **Eustress is the result of everyday occurrences that causes minimum disruption to our lives**
- **Disappears when the event is over**
- **Energizes and motivates**

Eustress

- **Give an example of eustress in your life**

Distress

- **Result of less frequent, but fairly common events in our lives**
- **Events that take over our lives**
- **Significant disruption occurs**
- **May take longer to return to a relatively normal state**

Traumatic Stress

- **Stress resulting from a catastrophic event**
- **Combat, terrorist events**
- **Natural disasters**
- **Those who experience this are changed forever in some manner**

The Concept of Stress is Controversial

- It's not as simple as once thought
- Everyone perceives stress differently
- Stress is geographic and culture based

The Physiology of Stress

- **Good Stress**
 - The good stress allows us to perform at a higher level (fight or flight)
 - The production of cortisol improves memory and enhances immune function
 - Spikes in blood pressure flood our muscles and brain with oxygen

The Physiology of Stress

- **Bad Stress-overload**
 - The allostatic system becomes charged too frequently with **NO CHANCE TO VENT** the build up of energy
 - Too much cortisol will damage memory, hurt or weaken your immune system and enlarge your stomach

Work Stress

“Stress measured by blood pressure increases is generally twice as high during the work day compared to when at home or time off.”

(Pickering, 2005)

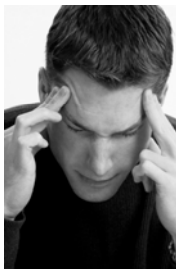
Work Stress

- The worst work-related stress is caused by jobs where people have little control over activities and the rate at which they have to address them
- This is inherent in disaster work

Traumatic Stress

- The disaster situation-fear, grief, pain, uncontrollable conditions
- Loss, death, gruesome scenes, screams, heat/cold, water
- The community/social response (or lack of)

Physical Effects of Unresolved Stress



- Nausea
- Tics and tremors
- Increased blood pressure
- Heart Racing
- Headaches

Emotional Effects of Unresolved Stress



- Anger
- Irritability
- Sorrow
- Anxiety
- Uncontrolled crying

Behavioral Effects of Unresolved Stress



- Impulsive Behaviors
- Pacing
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Explosive episodes
- Depression

Cognitive Effects of Unresolved Stress



- Confusion
- Lack of concentration
- Indecisiveness
- Forgetfulness

Helping Professionals

- Helping professionals are generally self sacrificing
 - Many place themselves in danger
 - Many will work until it hurts
 - Many will skip breaks
 - Many will ignore/fight direction to rotate assignments, go off duty or take benefit time even when encouraged

What Can You Do?



- Learn
- Be Aware
- Monitor
- Think
- Practice
- Change
- Manage

What Can We Do?

- **Organizational Prevention**
 - Provide training
 - Utilize a buddy system
 - Initiate and encourage breaks
 - Allow time for persons who have experienced loss or trauma
 - Direct self care activities

What Can We Do?

- **As a supervisor or yourself these questions:**
 - Am I a stressor in the work place?
 - Do I dictate, coach or mentor?
 - Do I correct employee behavior in front of others?
 - Do I “stir the pot”?

What Can We Do?

- Does my ego fill the room when I enter?
- Do I bring all of my personal baggage to work with me?

Prevention - Personal

- **BE AWARE** of limitations and needs
- **Recognize** when you are
 - Hungry
 - Angry
 - Lonely
 - Tired
- **Practice Self Care**

Self-care

- **Maintain support systems-personal and professional**
- **Use benefit time-take vacations**
 - Schedule personal time
- **Maintain boundaries**
- **Maintain a balance**
 - Practice stress management exercises during breaks and opportune moments

Tools

- **Interrupt the stress response**
- **Reduce the reaction**
 - Use cognitive messaging
 - Thought stopping
 - Thought insertion
- **Practice turning down the emotion**
- **Resume normal activity level**

What You Do To Relieve Stress!



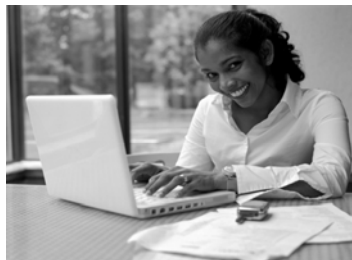
Tools

- Try acupuncture, art, awareness, create, cook, dance, dream, draw, exercise, enjoy, explore, go home, kick-box, laugh, limit work, loosen up, listen to music, massage, meditate, practice yoga, paint, pet the pet, sing, sit quietly, sleep, start a book, stretch, talk to yourself, family and friends, wade, walk, watch a bug, or a movie or the sunset, whistle, wish
- Do something other than WORK

Perspective and Commitment

- Be realistic
- Commit to implementing self-care
- Recognize that the world won't fall apart without you
- LET GO

Tips for Stress Success



SMILE

Tips for Stress Success

- **SMILE**

There are over eighty muscles in the face. That is eighty muscles that can shift you into a good mood right now. Go on. You can do it. Do it for no reason. Smile because you can. Smile because you are alive. Smile because you are breathing. Smile because you are the only one of you. Smile because you know what makes you smile!

Tips for Stress Success



GET REFRESHED

Tips for Stress Success

- **GET REFRESHED**

Drink a glass of cool water. Even the slightest level of dehydration can contribute to feelings of higher stress. You might experience a slight headache and even a mild sense of nausea when your water level is low.

Tips for Stress Success



RELAX YOUR EYES

Tips for Stress Success

- **RELAX YOUR EYES**

Take a moment to close your eyes and hold your palms over them. Enjoy the feeling of darkness and soothing calm. Still your mind and turn all of your focus towards calming and relaxing your eyes. It only takes a few minutes to feel calm, refreshed and ready to see things with a new view!

Tips for Stress Success



WRITE IT OUT

Tips for Stress Success

- **WRITE IT OUT**

- Close your door and ignore the phone. Grab a piece of paper and start writing whatever comes to your mind. This is just for your eyes. Write furiously for 10 minutes. Keep writing and don't look back, edit, correct, change or delete. Write any size, any topic, anywhere. Now stop and take a look. This is your thinking. Take a deep breath and enjoy having it outside instead of inside your head.

Contact Information

**Maury West, LGSW
Social Work Director
Alabama Department of Public Health**

(334)206-3383

maury.west@adph.state.al.us

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Publications Website

- **National Mental Health Information Center**
– www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/katrina/pub_respond.asp
- **National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**
– www.ncptsd.org
- **Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Test**
– www.isu.edu/~bhstamm/tests/safat.htm

Have a Great Day!



STRESS TIP OF THE WEEK
Stress needs an outlet. When you don't find a healthy one, it will find its own.