STRESS BUSTERS WORKSHOP
Academic Enabling and Support Centre

The University of Notre Dame Australia
CLOSE YOUR EYES NOW

- Dominant thoughts
- Persistent thoughts
- Jobs to be done

- Can’t hold two thoughts in your mind at once? Try it.

- Now mentally think about your body and detect where you feel tension.
- Become a detective: from the tip of your head, your neck, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, torso, stomach, back, thighs, knees, lower legs, feet, toes.
AWARENESS

- Observe yourself:
  1) Listen to your words – your outer talk.
  2) Listen to your self talk. This helps you discover your thoughts.
  3) Recognise your thoughts so you can trace them back to your feelings.
  4) Feelings are what triggers thoughts in the first place.
Health Problems

- Many health problems are caused or made worse by stress, including:
  - Pain (of any kind)
  - Heart disease
  - Digestive problems
  - Sleep problems
  - Depression
  - Obesity
  - Autoimmune diseases — disease caused by antibodies produced against substances naturally present in the body.
  - Skin conditions, such as eczema
The Body’s Stress Response

- When you perceive a threat, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones; including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones rouse the body for emergency action.

- Your heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breath quickens, and your senses become sharper. These physical changes increase your strength and stamina, speed your reaction time, and enhance your focus – preparing you to either fight or flee from the danger at hand.
Stress doesn’t always look stressful

Psychologist, Connie Lillas, uses a driving analogy to describe the three most common ways people respond when they are overwhelmed by stress:

- **Foot on the gas** – An angry or agitated stress response. You are heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.

- **Foot on the brake** – A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.

- **Foot on both** – A tense and frozen stress response. You “freeze” under pressure and can not do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you are extremely agitated.
Stress Warning Signs
Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying
Stress Warning Signs

Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness
Stress Warning Signs
Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Frequent colds, headaches etc
Stress Warning Signs

Behavioural Symptoms

- Eating more or less (not enough)
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
If you are nodding to any of the symptoms
YOU
need to make some changes.
Causes of Stress

- **Common external causes of stress**
- Major life changes
- Work
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial problems
- Being too busy
- Family
Causes of Stress

- **Common internal causes of stress**
  - Inability to accept uncertainty
  - Pessimism as opposed to optimism
  - Negative self-talk
  - Unrealistic expectations
  - Perfectionism
  - Lack of assertiveness
Your ability to tolerate stress depends on many factors; including the quality of your relationships, your general outlook on life, your emotional intelligence, and genetics.
Self Help for Treating Stress

- **Exercise** - exercise has been proven to have a beneficial effect on a person's mental and physical state. For many people, exercise is an extremely effective stress buster.

- **Division of labour** - try to delegate your responsibilities at work, or share them. If you make yourself indispensable, the likelihood of your highly stressed feelings are significantly greater.

- **Assertiveness** – do not say yes to everything. If you can not do something well, or if something is not your responsibility, try to seek ways of not agreeing to do them.

- **Caffeine** - if your consumption of coffee and other drinks which contain caffeine is high, cut down.
Self Help for Treating Stress

- **Nutrition** - eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Make sure you have a healthy and balanced diet.

- **Time** - make sure you set aside some time each day just for yourself. Use that time to organize your life, relax, and pursue your own interests.

- **Breathing** - there are some effective breathing techniques which will slow down your system and help you relax.

- **Talk** - talk to your family, friends, work colleagues and your boss. Express your thoughts and worries.

- **Seek professional help** - if the stress is affecting the way you function; go and see your doctor. Heightened stress for prolonged periods can be bad for your physical and mental health.

- **Relaxation techniques** - meditation, massage, or yoga have been known to greatly help people with stress.
Take action to DESTRESS your life!

- You are never far from help
- Your compass to higher achievement

GO  SUCCEED  NOW