

# Reducing Stress in a Stressful Environment



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ACTION FOR HEALTHY KIDS**



# Reducing Stress in a Stressful Environment



- In this workshop, we'll explore the various causes of stress, both short and long-term health consequences, and identify healthy techniques to cope with the stressors in your life.

“I cannot and should not be cured of my stress; but merely taught to enjoy it.” Hans Seyle



# Let's Get Started...With Team Building



- Group will be divided into smaller groups of 5
- You have 2 minutes to prepare a short presentation to your group on a special skill or talent. Discuss how this skill or talent will provide as an asset to your team!
- Ready??? Go!!!

# Team Building Outcome(s)



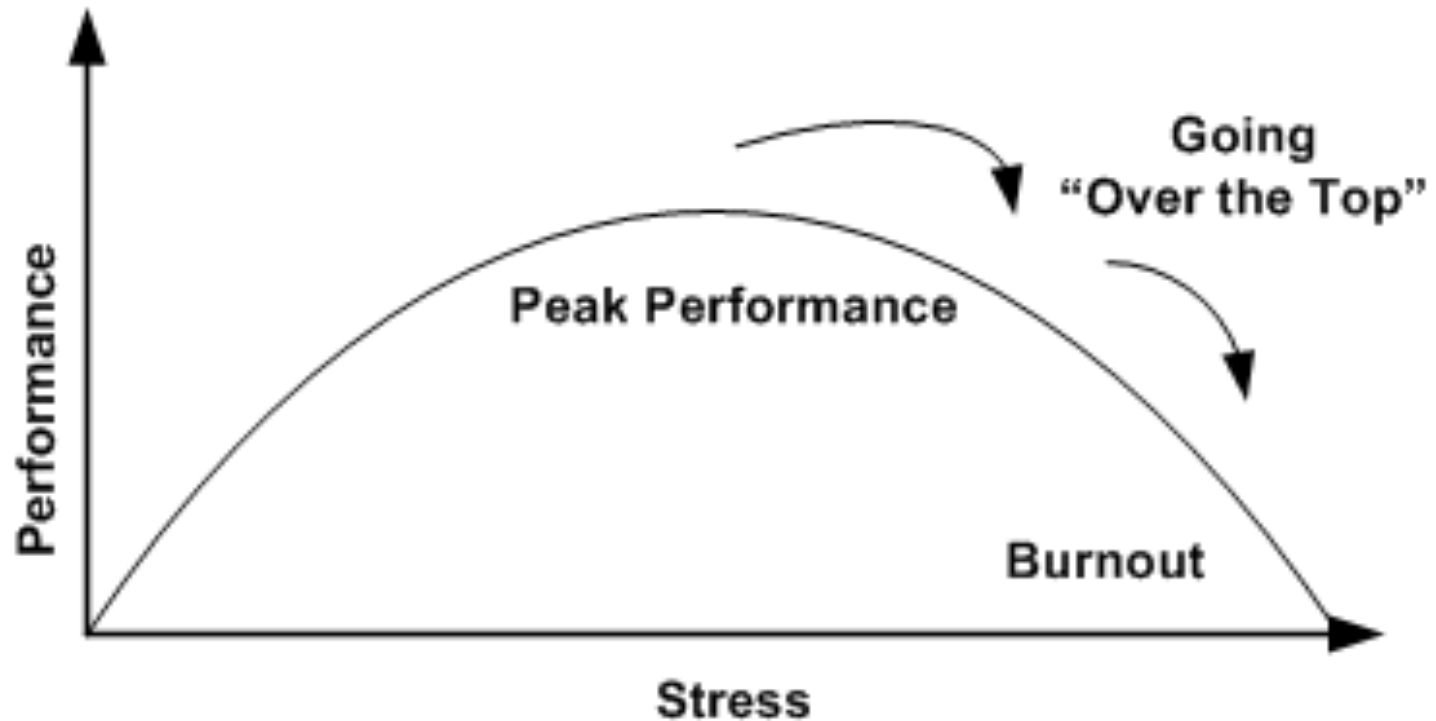
- Rate your stress level between 1-10
- What did you notice?
  - Identify the symptoms of your stress response
  - Identify any coping strategies that you used in an attempt to reduce stress and/or to increase the likelihood of a positive outcome
  - Identify any negative self-talk
  - Identify any areas of “physical” tension

# What is Stress?



- Hans Selye: the “non-specific response of the body to any demands made upon it”
- Characterized by many diverse reactions
- Stress can accompany positive or negative events
  - Eustress
  - Distress

# Yerkes-Dodson Human Performance Curve



# Nature of Stressors



- **Stressors often fall into different categories:**
  - Harm or loss
  - Threat
  - Challenge
  - Bioecological influences
  - Psychointrapersonal influences
  - Social influences
  - Technostress



# Nature of Stressors



- The stress caused by a particular stressor varies greatly from one person to the next because of variability in:
  - Circumstances
  - Interpretation
  - Goals
  - Personality
  - Attitude
  - Gender
  - Values
  - Coping strategy
  - Available resources



# The Stress Response



- Fight or flight response
  - 4 stages
- Hypothesized to have been developed primarily against threats of a physical nature
- The stress response can be activated by all types of threats, not those only of a physical nature
- What are the body's reactions to the fight or flight response?
- [http://cmhc.utexas.edu/stressrecess/Level\\_One/fof.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/stressrecess/Level_One/fof.html)

# Chronic Stress



- Over-activation of the sympathetic branch of the nervous system; triggers the fight or flight response when a threat is perceived
- Under-activation of the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system; triggers a calming effect on the body

# Chronic Stress and Disease



- WHO cited stress as a “global epidemic”
  - The “equal opportunity destroyer”
  - Estimates that approximately 80% of doctors visits are a result of stress\*
  - Estimated perhaps as much as 70-85% of all diseases and illnesses are stress-related\*
  - There are many different models that attempt to explain the relationship between stress and disease
- Seaward, Brian Luke. *Managing Stress; Principles and Strategies for Health and Wellbeing* , 6<sup>th</sup> edition.

# Common Health Issues Related to Chronic Stress



## Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

### Cognitive Symptoms

- Poor judgment
- Inability to concentrate
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying thoughts

### Emotional Symptoms

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, loneliness, and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

### Physical Symptoms

- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds
- Weight gain
- Frequent colds
- Weight gain

### Behavioral Symptoms

- Neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
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# Coping with Stress



- No single stress reduction strategy work
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- First recognize that the stress response is occurring
- Try a variety of stress reducing techniques
  - Change stressors that are within control or ways of responding to the stressors that are out of your control
  - to activate the parasympathetic nervous system



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### Let's Practice!

**deeply through your nose, into a soft belly. Imagine that your abdomen is a balloon. Fill up the balloon with air as you inhale, letting your belly, ribs, and then your chest expand. Exhale completely, letting it all go. Repeat several times.**

- An easy technique to promote relaxation and mindfulness
- Expansion of the abdomen and diaphragm instead of the chest when breathing
- Matches the inhalation to the exhalation

# Diaphragmatic Breathing



Activates the parasympathetic nervous system;  
creates a calming effect

- Boosts Energy and increases vitality
- Strengthens the immune system
- Improves the circulatory system
- Helps digestion
- Helps to center and ground ourselves



# What I can do NOW to reduce stress?



Develop a "cheat sheet" - simple things to help you in the short-term reduce your stress

- Take a hot bath.
- Go for a walk.
- Call a friend or family member and talk about your troubles.
- Journal.
- Go for a jog.
- Ride a bike.
- Read a fun book
- Go to a movie.
- Seek out social support.
- Breathe
- Make a healthy meal
- Exercise

# Coping Strategies



- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Meditation
- Visualization
- Massage therapy
- Music
- Humor
- Yoga/Exercise

# Coping Strategies



Time management

- Creative problem solving
- Communication skills
- Social support
- Cognitive restructuring: Reframing
- Journal writing
- Art therapy
- Nutrition
- Sleep

Last but not least...



**Modify these strategies accordingly!**