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## Managing Work Stress

Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference

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## Today's Objectives

- Review the meaning, sources, and dynamics of stress
- Explore 12 ways to reduce stress at work
- Learn how to develop resilient lifestyle habits

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## Stress is...



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## Stress defined

When demands exceed resources

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## Things to know about stress

- You’ve got to have some
- Sources of stress: the environment, our thoughts, our bodies
- Dynamics – individual reactions
- Too much, for too long, will cause strain
- Stress is “sneaky” – we get mixed messages

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## What may cause stress?

- High responsibility/low control
- Doing more with less
- “Toxic” culture
- Rapid, chaotic change
- Conflict
- Perception
- Perfectionism
- Unrealistic expectations from self and others
- Overload
- Low coping resources
- Underdeveloped skills
- Habits

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## Effective Stress Management

Change is constant  
Flexibility and adaptability are key

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## A good place to start

- ❖ “Sorting it out...” “More and less of?”
- ❖ Make *stress* more manageable



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**Things you can change**

- How you think about things
- How you prioritize what's important to you
- How you express yourself
- How often you say "yes" or "no"
- How you deal with conflict
- How you take care of your body
- How resilient you become

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**12 Ways to Reduce Stress at Work**

Adapted from "Success Under Stress" by Sharon Melnick, Ph.D., Business Psychologist and Stress-Resilience Speaker

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**1. Act Rather Than React**

- When situations seem "out of our control" we experience stress
- If chronic, the stress hormone wears down our confidence, concentration, and well being
- Identify aspects of the situation you *can control*
- Focus on your responses and actions

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**2. Take a Deep Breath**

- Activate your "relaxation response"
- A few minutes of deep breathing will restore balance when feeling tense or overwhelmed
- One way: inhale for five seconds, hold and exhale in equal counts

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### 3. Reduce Interruptions

- Interruptions bombard us throughout the day
- Unpredictability makes control difficult
- You can learn to adjust your response
  - Accept the interruption
  - Cut it off - “time out” for later
  - Analyze the importance/take action accordingly
  - Plan for recurring interruptions

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### 4. Make Energy a Daily Focus

- Continuous “push, push, push” throughout the day is an energy drain
- Productivity goes down, stress levels go up, little “reserves” are left for later/family
- Advice recommends stretching, doing breathing exercises, scheduling walking breaks
- Balance concentration with rejuvenation

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### 5. Eat Healthy, Sleep Healthy

- Eat low sugar, high protein when possible
- See suggestions: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)
- Sufficient sleep is critical for recovery from daily stress
- Breathing exercises help calm the body to balance “racing” thoughts

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### 6. Change Your Story

- Check your perception of a stressful event
- Your “view” is a subjective interpretation of facts seen through your own “filter”
- Step back: take a more objective view and less personally
- Search for collaborative solutions

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## 7. Shift Gears: Cool Down Quickly

- Feeling frustrated/angry can cause a rise in “body heat” triggering one to “react” hastily
- Pause. Try a calming breathing technique to “cool down” so you can “choose to act”
- These precious seconds are powerful tools to minimize the impact of a stressful situation

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## 8. Question Self-Imposed Stress

- We put more stress on ourselves by worrying about what other people think, approval seeking, and procrastinating
- Control what you can – your performance, not another’s perception
- Shift the focus to you and be confident in your ability to get the job done

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## 9. Adjust Your Priorities

- Constant change and competing deadlines make prioritizing essential
- It’s critical to define what’s truly important and why
- Identify your goals and strengths
- Align your to-do list with those projects that have the most impact

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## 10. Reset Your Panic Button

- The opposite of anxiety is calm
- Practice ways to elicit “the relaxation response” when you are tense or anxious
- Breath work, knowing acupressure points
- Commitment to meditation, yoga, etc. over time will yield long-lasting (calming) results

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## 11. Connect with Others

- Influence others in a positive way
- You are responsible for your behavior and outlook
- When other people’s behavior is stressful, use listening skills to deescalate the situation
- Collaborate and talk through solutions, instead of dissecting the problem

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## 12. Turn Your Inner Critic into a Cheerleader

- Our thoughts stream continuously
- “Internal negativity” inflates stress levels as much or more than external events
- Encouraging thoughts help motivate yourself and inspire others
- Be kind to yourself and positive you will succeed

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## Consider your life now

- Pick a situation that is currently causing you stress
- Are you reactive or do you choose to act?
- What can you adjust?



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## A stress scenario

- High stress
- Low coping skills
- High strain
- Here, one is out of balance
- What action can you take?



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**Find Your Balancing Point**

Try self-monitoring your stress level  
(On a scale of 10-1)

Small changes count: it's a matter of energy!

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**Resiliency**

- ❖ Develop your resiliency skills (habits and actions)
- ❖ Bounce back
- ❖ Bend without breaking



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**Resilient Lifestyle Habits**

- The basics: proper nutrition, exercise, healthy sleep, practice relaxation skills
- Social support: do something for others
- Stay in the “now” – present moment time
- Communication skills – use “I” statements
- Collect affirmations and quotes
- Humor can help manage stress

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**Review and commit**

- What tip(s) will you take away from today's learning experience?
- What small change might you make to help manage stress better?
- Set a daily, weekly or monthly goal

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## The heart and soul of managing work stress is....

You!



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## Resources

*The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook:*  
Davis Eshelman & McKay

*The Resilience Factor:* Reivich and Shatte

*Resilience at Work:* Maddi and Khoshaba

*The Survivor Personality:* Al Siebert

*Don't Sweat the Small Stuff at Work:*  
Richard Carlson

*Learned Optimism:* Martin Seligman

*The Four Agreements:* Don Miguel Ruiz

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HEALTHY opportunities  
YOUR HEALTH. YOUR FUTURE.

- Related Resources for Wellness-Eligible Employees



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HEALTHY opportunities  
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- Related Events for All Employees

Live Healthy Iowa Challenges		
Challenge	Challenge Date	Registration Opens
Strut Your Pup	Apr 21 – May 30	Mar 10
Burst Your Thirst	Jun 16 – Jul 25	May 5
The Next Step	Sep 8 – Oct 17	Aug 4
Healthy Families	Sep 22 – Oct 31	Aug 18

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Thank you!



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