BREATHING EXERCISE TO RELIEVE STRESS:

1. Exhale
2. Inhale one entire pizza
3. Exhale
6 Steps to Victory Over Stress

1. Have a Plan;
2. Understand the Physiology of Stress;
3. Identify Sources of Your Stress;
4. Be Proactive with Circumstances;
5. Identify your best Relaxation activities; and
What is Stress?

• STRESS – *c. a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation* - Merriam Webster;

• Is stress necessary?

• Eustress vs. Distress.
One Nation Under Stress

Worksite Stress Facts:

• 93% of worksite accidents are the result of human error. (National Safety Council);

• 47% of US executives surveyed in 2003 didn’t use their vacation time due to job pressures;

• Up to 60% of all absences are caused by stress;

• 72% of US workers report emotional stress is pervasive in the worksite; and

• More heart attacks occur on Monday mornings than any other day of the week.
So Why Should We Be Concerned?

- Chronic stress may be the ultimate risk factor;
  - Some experts think stress is a major cause of 50% of all disease;
  - Dramatic effect on your immune system;
- 80% of all primary care visits stress related;
- Sympathetic/parasympathetic nervous system imbalance research; and
  - Primary cause of Heart attack? Possibly…
The Nature of Stress

There are two kinds of “Distress:”

- **Acute Stress:** Very intense, but short lived (usually around 20 minutes); and

- **Chronic Stress:** Not very intense, but it endures for days, weeks, months.
Basic Causes of Di-Stress

• **Emotional Responses** - fear, frustration, loss of control, anger, grief, sadness, horror; and

• **Situational Causes** – trauma, relational, work, time, financial, survival, state of the world, personal insecurity, loss or lack of identity, the unknown, unexpected stressors.
Major Life Event Stresses (Holmes-Rahe Scale)

1. Death of a child, spouse, parent, other family member;
2. Divorce or separation;
3. Jail;
4. Death of friend;
5. Loss of job;
6. Hospitalization or illness;
7. Birth or adoption;
8. Pregnancy;
9. Miscarriage or abortion;
10. Change of health of family member;
11. Foreclosure;
12. Illness;
13. Major financial change;
14. Change in marital status of parents;
15. Marriage;
16. Moving;
17. Change in work; and
18. Accident.
The Physiology of Stress

- Fight or Flight response;
- Hormone Cocktail Release;
  - Epinephrine;
  - Norepinephrine;
  - Vasopressin;
  - Aldosterone;
  - Cortisol;
- Sympathetic nervous system activated; and
- Bodily Responses.
Equal and Opposite Nervous and Biochemical Systems

**Fight or Flight Response**
- Sympathetic nervous system activated;
- Activating hormone cocktail release;
- Heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, blood sugar and sweating increase;
- High alertness;
- High energy state; and
- Primed to run or engage.

Physiological responses triggered for survival!

**Relaxation Response**
- Parasympathetic nervous system activated;
- Calming hormone cocktail release;
- Heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, blood sugar and sweating decrease;
- Calm and collected;
- Lower energy state; and
- Primed to chill or sleep.

Physiological responses triggered to reverse effects of fight or flight response!

Ineffective for mental, emotional or spiritual stressors.
Short Term Symptoms of Chronic Stress

- Headaches;
- Upset stomach, ulcers;
- Back pain;
- Trouble sleeping;
- Weakens immune system;
- Moody, tense, depressed;
- Decreased performance; and
- Insomnia.
HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE BODY

**BRAIN**
Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

**CARDIOVASCULAR**
Higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

**JOINTS AND MUSCLES**
Increased inflammation, tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness

**IMMUNE SYSTEM**
Decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of becoming ill, increase in recovery time

**SKIN**
Hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

**GUT**
Nutrient absorption, diarrhea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

**REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**
Decreased hormone production, decrease in libido, increase in PMS symptoms
Long Term Effects of Stress Physiology

- Impaired cognitive performance;
- Blood sugar imbalance – diabetes risk;
- Suppressed thyroid;
- Premature aging, decreased bone density & muscle tissue;
- Lowers immunity & inappropriate inflammatory responses;
- Higher BP & Increased abdominal fat - Coronary Heart disease;
- Chronic pain; and
- Epigenetic Expression.
Long Term Effects Contribute to:

- Cancer;
- Heart Disease;
- Lung ailments;
- Accidents;
- Cirrhosis of the liver;
- Suicide;
- Migraine headaches;
- Digestive problems;
- Mental illness;
- Sleeping problems;
- High blood pressure;
- Asthma;
- Allergies;
- Ulcers;
- Tooth decay; and
- The common cold.
The Inflammation Link

Stress

Cortisol Release

Genetic Immune Cell Alteration

Release of Pro Inflammatory Cytokines

Chronic Inflammation
Impact of Inflammation

- Heart Disease;
- Many Cancers;
- Obesity and abdominal fat;
- Diabetes;
- Alzheimer’s and Dementia;
- Crohn’s, IBS, Ulcerative Colitis; and
- Auto-immune diseases.
Are You Self-Medicating Your Stress?

- Self destructive behaviors that increase stress down the road?
- Unhealthy foods, sugar, nicotine, alcohol and caffeine chemically lower coping skills;
- Addictions give you a brief reprieve, but counterfeit relief.
Confounding Effects

• HALT;
• Tobacco, caffeine, stimulants;
• Poor sleep;
• Poor social support; and
• Poor nourishment that exacerbates the stress response.
Feeling stressed out at work and home

Stress relief through eating
Excess calorie intake associated with weight gain
Weight-related accumulation of stress

Vicious Cycle
PTSD Symptoms

Symptoms of PTSD: Re-experiencing the traumatic event
- Intrusive, upsetting memories of the event;
- Flashbacks (acting or feeling like the event is happening again);
- Nightmares (either of the event or of other frightening things);
- Feelings of intense distress when reminded of the trauma;
- Intense physical reactions to reminders of the event (e.g. pounding heart, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle tension, sweating);

Symptoms of PTSD: Avoidance and numbing
- Avoiding activities, places, thoughts, or feelings that remind you of the trauma;
- Inability to remember important aspects of the trauma;
- Loss of interest in activities and life in general;
- Feeling detached from others and emotionally numb;
- Sense of a limited future (you don’t expect to live a normal life span, get married, have a career);
Symptoms of PTSD: Increased anxiety and emotional arousal

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep;
- Irritability or outbursts of anger;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Hypervigilance (on constant “red alert”); and
- Feeling jumpy and easily startled.
PTSD Treatment

- Therapy with experienced PTSD counselor;
- Support Group;
- Prayer and Spiritual Journey;
- Biofeedback;
- Medication (does not cure, only masks).
PTSD Key Points

• Longer you hide it the worse it gets;
• Treatment will help process trauma in a healthy way rather than suppress it;
• Helps you regain control;
• Work through feelings of guilt, self-blame, and mistrust;
• Learn how to cope with and control intrusive memories; and
• Address problems PTSD has caused in your life and relationships.
Solutions!
Identify Your Sources of Stress

• Within your control;
  – Learned Skills;
  – Perspective;
  – Reactions;

• Beyond your control;
  – Accident scenes;
  – Other people; and
  – Life events.

Biofeedback unit.
Skills To Learn for Stressors Within Your Control

- Time Management;
  - Prioritizing urgent vs. important;
- Money Management;
- Saying no – Boundaries;
- Conflict Resolution;
- Relationship & Marriage skills; and
- Parenting Skills.
MANAGE 1
Short-Term Crises & Problems

FOCUS 2
On Long-Term Strategic Goals

AVOID 3
Distractions & Interruptions

LIMIT 4
Time-Wasting Activities
Change of Perspective

“Any area of your life where hope does not glisten, indicates you are believing a lie in that area.” – Francis Frangipane

• Choose to see the situation differently; and

• Reframe your thoughts.
Identify What Relaxes You Most….

Pay Attention…
• Introvert or Extrovert?
• Which senses affect you most?
• Are you comfortable sharing your stress? With whom?
Induce Relaxation When Stress beyond Your Control

- Serenity Prayer/“Not my circus, not my monkeys”;
- LAUGHTER;
- Exercise – Aerobic and Strength;
- Diaphragmatic Breathing;
- Vista bigger than self – perspective “Grand Canyon”;
- Anti-inflammatory foods.
Induce Relaxation When Stress Is Beyond Your Control

- Sharing in safe environment;
- Prayer or meditation;
- Puppies or pets;
- Yoga/Tai-chi;
- Journaling;
- Art;
- Aromatherapy/Music therapy; and
- Massage.
### Take a Bite out of Stress –

*“Could you have eaten it 500 years ago?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods That Fight Stress</th>
<th>Foods That Biochemically Make Stress Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Vegetables &amp; Fruit – rich in antioxidants</td>
<td>Sweet &amp; sugary foods &amp; beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, herbal teas</td>
<td>Caffeine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken, fish &amp; organ meats</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td>Fast Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish, fish oil, nuts and seeds, olive oil, avocados, flax</td>
<td>Processed Foods, inflammatory vegetable oils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Be Proactive with Relaxation/Stress Relief

- What works best for you?
- Choose 1 skill to improve and 2 relaxation activities;
- Make time – pre-schedule it in daily or weekly.
References


Grimm, J. "Turning on, turning off, turning over." Editor & Publisher. 04/24/2000 (.5 to 2 times salary). PricewaterhouseCoopers research (.5 to 4 times salary depending on individual’s skill sets), 2001.


Thank You

TAC Healthy County
(512)478-8753 • (800)456-5974
healthycounty@county.org
www.county.org/healthycounty

Follow us on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/TACHealthyCounty