

Address Your Stress (Slide 1)

- Everyone experiences stress; most people want to handle their stress better

Identifying Stress (Slide 2)

- **Exercise 1:** Identifying Stress
 - What causes stress in your life?
 - What makes you feel off balance?
 - How do you know you are stressed?
 - What do you do to cope or deal with stress?

Objectives (Slide 3)

- Identify when stress impacts well-being
- Identify strategies and techniques to address stress

Stress (Slide 4)

- Stress is the response we have when life challenges seem greater than our ability to handle them

Real and Perceived Stressors (Slide 5)

- Stressors, real or perceived, can still disrupt our balance
- Focus of this class is on how we perceive what is happening
- Perceived stress is subjective and reflects our appraisal of a scenario or a situation
- We may read more into a circumstance and imagine it is a real stressor
- A perceived stressor might be “My husband is late; he must have been in a car accident”

Good Stress (Slide 6)

- Moderate stress, especially when perceived as a challenge or as something that can make us perform better, can keep us sharp, alert, and energized
 - May make us more resilient
- Too much stress can be harmful for our well-being, especially in the form of loss or threat

Cascade of Responses (Slide 7)

- Prolonged stress wears us down, whether the stress is real or perceived
- Under stress, our concentration is limited, we are more likely to have negative moods, and our daily chores may seem more difficult to handle

Stress Busting Strategies (Slide 8)

- Stress busting strategies to help you handle stress include the following:
 - Journal about your stress and worry
 - Take the perspective of a detached observer
 - Develop a gratitude practice
 - Focus on the present
 - Do a physical activity
 - Talk to a friend
 - Look for something potentially positive in the situation
 - Slow down your breathing
 - Relax your body
 - Do something good for someone else

Guided Imagery (Slide 9)

- Just as real or imaginary situations can trigger the stress, relaxing thoughts can promote relaxation

Guided Imagery Steps (Slide 10)

- **Exercise 2:** Guided Imagery
- Find a comfortable position, relax, and concentrate on your breathing
 - Make sure you keep an open attitude
- Think of a visual theme, such as a beach, forest, or your family, and allow your mind to develop the image using all of your senses
 - The key is to see the images in great detail and notice everything
 - Choose images that are personally meaningful, positive, and detailed enough to engage your mind and body
 - Use your senses to be creative in the details
- Loosen your abdomen, and breathe through your nose with your eyes closed
 - Notice all the physical sensations associated with breathing
- Select the image you wish to see in your mind
 - Something peaceful, serene, calming, meaningful to you
- Once you have that image in mind, begin to sharpen the image in your mind
 - See the colors; feel the textures; connect smells to the image
 - Are you alone? With a loved one?
- Bring the image into even sharper detail
 - Note everything about the image
 - Where are you? A new place? A familiar place? What do you smell?
 - Perhaps flowers, salt water, food
 - If the sun is shining, imagine the feeling of warmth on your skin
 - Maybe you are expecting a cool breeze

- ☐ If there are other people, see their faces, their expressions in greater clarity
 - ☐ Are they talking?
 - ☐ Hear their voices as if they are with you right now
- ☐ Whatever you are doing, imagine that you are calm, at rest, peaceful
 - ☐ You have no cares at this time, no pressures, no kids to take care of, no errands to run
 - ☐ It is safe, secure
 - ☐ This is your time outside of ordinary time
- ☐ Notice how peaceful you feel right now
- ☐ You are going to carry that feeling forward as you begin to focus on my voice
- ☐ Notice any noises or distractions in the room right now
- ☐ Allow your attention to move toward the room and my voice
- ☐ Open your eyes
- ☐ Keep the feeling of calm with you
- ☐ Remember it in detail
- ☐ Now you are completely present in the moment

Countering Stressful Thoughts (Slide 11)

- ☐ The good news is you can become good at controlling negative thoughts

Recognizing Stressful Thoughts (Slide 12)

- ☐ Key categories of negative stressful thoughts include:
 - ☐ All-or-nothing thinking
 - ☐ All circumstances are either black or white, always or never, perfect or failures
 - ☐ Overgeneralization
 - ☐ Clinging to a bad experience and expecting the negative experience to hold true forever
 - ☐ Diminishing the positive
 - ☐ Not counting positive experiences
 - ☐ Jumping to conclusions
 - ☐ Making conclusions without considering the evidence
 - ☐ Catastrophizing
 - ☐ Negative thinking that involves expecting the worst-case scenario
 - ☐ Should or shouldn't thinking
 - ☐ Holding strict standards that no one can live up to
 - ☐ Labeling
 - ☐ Attaching labels to ourselves based on our self-perceived shortcomings (e.g., calling yourself a loser or stupid)
 - ☐ Personalization
 - ☐ Taking responsibility for things outside our control

Keep a Thought Record (Slide 13)

- ☐ **Exercise 3:** Keep a Thought Record
- ☐ **Handout 1:** Thought Record *complete the first four columns for one or more rows*
- ☐ To better control our worry, we need to understand it
- ☐ A Thought Record allows us to keep track of our negative and worrisome thoughts
- ☐ Keep this Thought Record for 2 weeks
 - ☐ Each time you have a worrisome thought, add it to the Thought Record
 - ☐ You can begin to examine patterns in your thoughts
 - ☐ You can answer questions like the following:
 - ☐ How frequently do I worry?
 - ☐ When do I worry?
 - ☐ What do I usually worry about?
 - ☐ How strong are my feelings of worry?
- ☐ Keeping a Thought Record does not increase your negative thoughts or worries
 - ☐ It may decrease your negative thoughts and worries because you are taking control of what has been out of control
 - ☐ Self-monitoring is a useful tool for helping to recognize and correct negative patterns of behavior

Learn About Your Thoughts (Slide 14)

- ☐ The alternative to negative and worrisome thoughts begins with relying on evidence and not emotion
 - ☐ What is the evidence against what I am predicting?
 - ☐ What is the best/worst that can happen?
 - ☐ What might be an alternative view of the situation?
 - ☐ If someone I cared about had the same worry, what advice would I give?

Counter Your Stressful Thoughts (Slide 15)

- ☐ **Exercise 3:** Keep a Thought Record (Continued)
- ☐ **Handout 1:** Keep a Thought Record *complete the last two columns*
- ☐ If we use this minimizing process on a regular basis, we may be able to reduce our negative thoughts and worry scores

Review of Objectives (Slide 16)

- ☐ When does stress impact well-being?
- ☐ What are some techniques you can use to address stress?

Review of Key Points (Slide 17)

- ☐ Not all techniques may work for everyone
 - ☐ Find one that you like and works for you
- ☐ If at any time you feel that stress is beyond your ability to cope, seek help