

In the Office

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STRESS IS OUR FRIEND

Most of us may have a negative feeling about stress. Maybe we want to avoid it, we fear it, or we believe we should not be stressed. In reality, stress is our friend and it has a purpose. Research is starting to show the negative effects of stress actually come from our negative perceptions of stress. In my favorite stress video “How to make stress your friend” with Kelly McGonigal she mentions that we need to stop making stress the enemy but realize that the danger of stress comes from our belief that it is bad. Believing stress is bad for you could be considered in the top 15 things that end up killing people. McGonigal states that changing our mind about stress will also change our bodies response to stress to help us utilize the good of the physiological responses occurring.

When our body is experiencing stress our musculoskeletal system tenses up to guard our body from injury, our respiratory system supplies oxygen to our body resulting in shortness of breath or rapid breathing, hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are pumped through our body, and we may enter “fight or flight” mode. Additionally, when we are stressed our memory improves due to the stimulation of our brain cells so that we can recall the scenario and learn from it and store that valuable new information for future interactions. These responses may feel uncomfortable in the moment if we focus on the change, discomfort, or event causing the response, but our body is doing everything it can to contribute to your success. It’s your friend trying to supply you with more energy to work, a boost to protect yourself, or the things needed to get you out of a situation. Being able to recognize the benefits of the stress response allows you to utilize those additional resources to your advantage now that they are present.

Perception of stress typically comes from parents and the school systems. The more we can foster a healthy relationship between our mind and stress the more likely we can lessen the negative effects of stress, such as being overwhelmed or freezing. This can be done through modeling and explaining the science behind the body’s stress response. Have conversations with each other about how you can become aware that you are stressed early on, and how you choose to focus on the actions that can be done versus the factors that are beyond our control. What we do in the moment impacts our future, so turn those anxious thoughts into actionable items.

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Newsletter Highlights

Stress is Our Friend

Types of Stress

Stress Management

Recommended
Resources





**“YOU DONT HAVE TO SEE THE
WHOLE STAIRCASE, JUST
TAKE THE FIRST STEP
-MARTIN LUTHER KING”**

TYPES OF STRESS

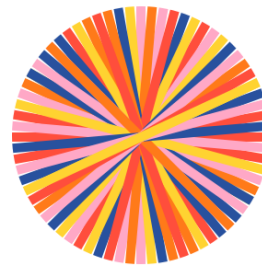
It is really important to be able to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy stress. We cannot as easily reframe or strategize with chronic unhealthy stress. Being able to label what stress is being experienced will help build language to communicate with each other and help guide you to how to manage it.

Acute Stress is a reaction to a one-time trigger. This type of stress often occurs suddenly during your day to day activities and may contribute to being startled, irritable, and anxious about the rest of your day. When addressing acute stress it is important to pause and allow yourself a moment to consider what the trigger of your stress response was. Most often a need is not being met or a worry has started to creep in so it is important to decide what actions will overcome it or ask for help in solving the challenge.

Episodic stress is an intense reaction to a certain stimulus that occurs periodically or in certain contexts, like crowds for example. This stress reaction feels panicky, very tense, and almost unsafe. When addressing episodic stress we need to process the reason behind the fear of the stimulus and work to reframe, scaffold, and build experiences that make us feel safe, like we have tools to handle the stress, and work with others for support. Avoidance of addressing this type of stress often drains individuals, prevents them from doing things they may enjoy, or continue a loop of stress.

Positive stress is felt when we have to perform a task or activity that is important to us or an outcome we have. This could be performing a song on stage or making it to a family dinner on time. Positive stress is most associated with bursts of energy, excitement, butterflies in the stomach, and nervousness about our ability. When addressing positive stress self-affirmations, focusing on our intentions of completing the task, and acting more than thinking are all great approaches.

Lastly, chronic stress is the body's reaction to an ongoing stress trigger that cannot be easily escaped or confronted. Symptoms of low energy, lack of hope, negative mindset, or helplessness, and physical illness may occur with this type of stress. Whenever something seems too big to handle or like you don't have the tools to address it then our best strategy is to ask for professional help.



feelings before you
talk about them



feelings after you
talk about them

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Counselor Strategies:

Stream of Consciousness Journaling: take 5 minutes to write down everything that is popping up into their mind. Follow where your thoughts take you. Whatever you do, don't stop until the time is up. After the 5 minutes reflect on what themes tend to be present... are these something we want to address, plan, share with others? Taking time to understand your mind is often the first step!

Chunky To-Do List: when making your to-do lists or planning your time chunk up the big tasks. Instead of saying write the essay, break it up into the steps. Big tasks can be overwhelming but the components tend to seem more manageable. Additionally, make sure to add those simple to-dos at the start and middle of your day so that you can cross them off and receive that energy boost and productivity encouragement! I often have make my bed as my morning task and eat a snack as my afternoon task so i can get that first box checked off immediately and stimulate my brain to continue with the list.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

There are several ways to address stress. The following are some simple stress-management interventions and tactics that are applicable and easy to add to our toolkit.

Behavioral activation is a tactic used when we find ourselves in a stress funk contributing to our lack of motivation or feelings of wanting to retreat. When we feel unmotivated it is critical to have a list of behaviors that bring us joy that can restart, or activate, our motivation so our mind and body realizes it can also feel good while processing its stress. Having a list of activities that you can do at home, or go-to activities in your town/area, will allow you to not have to think about what to do but have a reminder of the things you enjoy.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation addressed the stress responses tendency to make us feel overwhelmed or tense. Alternating between tensing and relaxing the body can contribute to reducing stress. To complete the muscle relaxation you first go to the extreme of tensing up your body and slowly relaxing each muscle group one at a time, signaling to your body it can relax.

Speak up for yourself! If you are aware of your triggers then setting up boundaries and informing others of these triggers are pivotal in preventing them from occurring in the first place. People are not psychic and they tend to help others in the ways that they like to be helped or treated. We must invite people into our world to better manage it.

Most often our stress may be triggered by our very own thoughts. It is important to realize that thoughts are not facts, but are actually our minds' interpretation of the scenario based on what it knows... and it probably doesn't know everything! In order to de-stress those negative or intrusive thoughts you can label the thoughts as intrusive so your mind and body recognizes worry from reality or paint a picture of your current situation in your mind. Our brain may go on a worry tangent as its job is to protect us but we often need to remind it about the current situation. When we start to have those unwanted voices in our head I encourage people to talk through where they are, what they are doing, the facts that they know, and the actions they want to take within the next hour or so to start to gain more control over their thoughts.

STRESS RESOURCES

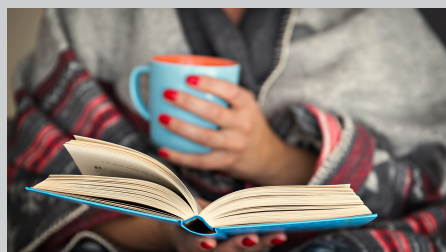
[Ted Talk: "How to Make Stress Your Friend" - Kelly McGonigal](#)

[Worry Watch - Apple IOS App](#)

[American Institute of Stress | Free Introduction to Stress for Teens Online Course](#)

[Help Guide | Stress Management: How to Reduce and Relieve Stress](#)

[The Best Stress Management Books Link](#)



SOME NEW REFLECTION SONGS

MUSIC CAN HELP US COMMUNICATE
AND INITIATE REFLECTION IN A FUN
WAY!

“Nobody Hates You” by JESSIA:

Why is it that we are toxic to ourselves, or
believing every thought we have?



“My Turn” by Acapop! KIDS: We all have voices
that want to be heard. What does that feel like
and what can we do?



Additional Resource

Don't Call People Out -
Call Them in |
Loretta J. Ross

YOU DON'T HOLD ANYONE ACCOUNTABLE. YOU
CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN YOURSELF AND THEN YOU
CALL THEM UP TO THE LEVEL YOU ARE LIVING AT.

LOTS OF PEOPLE LIKE TO CALL PEOPLE OUT
(HYPOCRITICALLY I MIGHT ADD), BUT VERY FEW
ARE WILLING TO GO FIRST AND CALL PEOPLE UP
STEP BY STEP. -JMM



Take a listen to the
TedTalk to hear what
our High School
students are watching
in advisory and grade 7
is discussing on
communication tactics
for hate.