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Stress, Trauma & Mindfulness

Understanding Self-Care for Healthcare Professionals

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Learner Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

▪ Explain stress and levels of stress, including symptoms, impacts, and trauma.
▪ Explain the basics of the three-part brain model and each level's attributes.
▪ Distinguish stressors and implement self-care tools to calm the brain and body.
Stress /stres/

(noun)
a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

Stress is simply a reaction to a stimulus that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium.
Stress

**Stress generally refers to:**
- The psychological perception of pressure *and*
- The body’s response to it, which involves multiple systems, from metabolism to muscles to memory.

*Psychology Today*

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**Levels of Stress**

- Brief increase in stress response
- Limited/perceived “threat”
- Elevated heart rate & stress hormones
- Gone when “threat” has passed/problem solved
Levels of Stress

- Temporary increase in stress response
- Serious but temporary threat to safety
- Buffered by supportive relationships & resources
- Sometimes preventable or can become chronic

Levels of Stress

- Overwhelming stress response
- Serious, prolonged threat (real or perceived)
- Inability to cope
- Causes physical illness/disease
- Absence of supportive relationships/resources
Trauma

trau-ma (noun)
a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.

“Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning.”

- Judith Herman, Trauma & Recovery

3-Part Brain
Reptilian Brain

- Primitive brain
- Online at birth
- Brainstem & Cerebellum
- REGULATE body's vital functions
  - Body temp
  - Breathing
  - Heart rate
  - Balance

Mammalian Brain

- Emotional brain
- Perceived emotions
- Amygdala, Hippocampus, and Hypothalamus
- RELATE connection to others
  - Value judgments
  - Emotional regulation
  - Ability to relate to others
  - Recorded memories & learning
  - Unconscious influence on behavior
Rational Brain

- Neocortex
- Thinking brain
- Accurate representation of the world/self

- RATIONAL what makes you YOU

- Abstract, rational thought
- Foresight, hindsight & insight
- Imagination, Judgement & Logic
- Development/understanding of human language

Limbic System: Learning Center

Amygdala:

- Perception of emotions
- Fear response: Fight, Flight, Freeze
- Impulse control
- Memory creation
- Aggression control

Hippocampus:

- Memory storage & recall
- Spatial memory
- Navigation
- Proprioception
Stress Impacts the Learning Brain

Webb’s DOK Levels
1. Recall
2. Skills & Concepts
3. Strategic Thinking
4. Extended Thinking

Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Remember
- Understand
- Apply
- Analyze
- Evaluate
- Create
Burn out is the opposite of this...

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”
- Mahatma Gandhi

Burn out is the opposite of this...
Burn out
A build up of toxic stress that can lead to cynicism, depression, and exhaustion...Definition: physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.

- You're not in control of how you carry out your job (*may feel ineffective at work*);
- You're working toward goals that don’t resonate with you (*sense of detachment*);
- You lack social support (*may lead to depression & isolation*).

Compassion
Sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.
Latin origins: “to suffer with”

Compassion Fatigue
Indifference to charitable appeals on behalf of those who are suffering, experienced as a result of the frequency or number of such appeals.
Compassion Fatigue

"Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people...in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper."

Dr. Charles Figley
Director, Tulane Traumatology Institute
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

Compassion Fatigue

- A strong identification with helpless, suffering, or traumatized people
- Blaming others for their suffering
- Lack of strong supports for self-care/poor self-care
- Feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
Vicarious Trauma

**vi·car·i·ous**
*adjective*
1. Experienced in the imagination through the feelings or actions of another person.

Vicarious trauma is a response to an accumulation of exposure to the pain of others (Figley, 1995).

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Self-Care

In order to prevent burn-out & compassion fatigue we must commit to Self-Care.

“Self-care is what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health [and] prevent and deal with illness,”

6 Domains of Self-Care

- Physical
- Professional
- Inter-relational
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Spiritual

Notice it.

In order to treat toxic stress, we must first notice it & acknowledge it.

- How is it in my mind?
- How is it in my body?
- How is it in my heart?

Internal Weather Report: What weather pattern are you feeling within you right now?
Name it.

“Name it to tame it.”- Dr. Dan Seigel

Emotions activate the Amygdala, while naming our emotions deactivates the same brain region.

Naming our emotions tends to diffuse their charge and lessen the burden they create.

Move it.

Once we can notice and name our emotions, we must move them along.

MOVE the breath & the body.

- Increased blood flow, oxygen to the brain
- Hippocampus gets bigger: learning, memory
- Norepinephrine: increase heart rate, attention, motivation
- Serotonin: enhanced mood
- Dopamine: motivation, focus, learning
Mindfulness

“Paying attention, in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”
Jon Kabat Zinn
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Mindfulness, the practice of being fully present in the moment: noticing thoughts and letting them go, without judgment.

Mindful Movement

Move the Breath & Body

Moving the body & breath at the same time helps ground our brain stem (primitive brain), and allows us to pull into our cortex (thinking brain).

- Take 5 Breath
- Elevator Breath
- Lions Breath
- Birthday Cake Breath
Contact

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“If you’ve come here to help me
you are wasting your time.
If you’ve come because your
liberation is bound with mine,
let us work together”
– Lila Wilson
References/Resources

- All definitions from Oxford Dictionary
- Journal articles
- Books:

References/Resources

- Links to websites:
  - Psychology Today
    https://www.psychologytoday.com/us
  - American Counseling Association
    https://www.counseling.org/
References/Resources

- Videos (YouTube links):
  - Emotions and the Brain
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNY0AAUth3g
  - Mindfulness as a Superpower
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4
  - Name it to Tame it
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AJAc28xkvM

- Articles:
  - Neurosequential Model in Education, The ChildTrauma Academy

- Books:
    https://www.amazon.com/Body-Keeps-Score-Healing-Trauma/dp/0143127748

    https://www.amazon.com/Little-Book-Big-Emotions-Everything/dp/1592850790/ref=sr_1_1?m=AT1A1D144X7P7&s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1528826382&sr=1-1&keywords=little+book+of+big+emotions