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## The 3 Biggest Stressors for SLPs and What to Do About Them

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## 3 Biggest Stressors for SLPs and What To Do About Them

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## Learner Outcomes

After this course participants will be able to:

- Identify the 3 biggest sources of stress for SLPs.
- Explain how stress is perceived by the brain.
- Describe how to use mindfulness and positivity to reduce and manage stress.

Objective: To bring awareness to practices and techniques that can reduce stress and improve job performance and satisfaction for the Speech Language Pathologist.

Financial Disclosures: Coaching services at [jessiandricks.com](http://jessiandricks.com), CEU presentations, author  
Nonfinancial Disclosures: Speaker/presenter

5



## Introduction

JESSI ANDRICKS, MS CCC-SLP  
STRESS MANAGEMENT COACH  
YOGA AND MINDFULNESS TEACHER

- Graduated in 2008 CF completed in 2010
- Quit due to Burn Out in 2012
- Started again in 2016 Coaching in 2017
- Presenter and Speaker in 2018

6

continued

# Centering PRACTICE

7

continued

## Stressed Out SLPs

- Stressed, overwhelmed and burnt out.
- Feeling inadequate, underappreciated and overworked.
- Many wanting to quit or wondering if they chose the wrong profession
- In all ages and experience levels, with undergraduates, graduate students, CFs and CCC's
- Across all settings and placements
- Many different personality types and styles of therapy

8

continued

# Stress and Burn Out

Stress happens on a daily basis  
and can become chronic if not  
managed.

Burn out stems from chronic stress  
that is left unmanaged over time.

9

# Stress and Burn Out

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ▪ More of a nervous energy<br>and feeling                               | ▪ More of an<br>apathetic/cynical attitude      |
| ▪ Pushing through   | ▪ Little effort, giving up                      |
| ▪ Feel more frazzled,<br>scattered and disorganized<br>in your thoughts | ▪ Feel bored, drained and<br>mentally exhausted |
| ▪ More motivated  | ▪ Less motivated                                |
| ▪ Can lead to anxiety   | ▪ Can lead to depression                        |
| ▪ Builds into Burn Out  | ▪ Builds into a Breakdown                       |

10

## Why Does (Chronic) Stress Happen?

### BRAINS REACTION TO THREAT

Your brain is wired to notice and look out for threats and things that could be harmful to you. Stress is perceived as a threat. Chronic stress happens when your brain, specifically the amygdala, keeps being stimulated by these "threats".

- Brain wired to find threats
- Stimulates "fight or flight" in the amygdala
- Brain stays in cycle of finding threats

11

## Biggest Sources of Stress

There are many stressors, but these are the most prevalent across all settings, levels and experiences.

- Paperwork
- Productivity
- Caseloads

12



## What makes these so stressful?

- Never seem to change in a positive direction
- Do not lessen or get easier
- Not enough time
- Fear you aren't good enough at your job
- There is no end in sight

13

## Paperwork and Stress

- Constantly acquiring more
- New protocols are continually released or changed
- SLP never feels caught up

14

continued

## Productivity and Stress

- Getting more and more strict, often with less patients to see
- Not enough balance between other tasks and therapy time
- SLP feels like a number, not a person

15

continued

## Caseloads and Stress

- Too low or too large  
Little say in clients and types of disorders you are treating SLP feels incompetent

16

continued

## TO DECREASE STRESS

### Rewire the Reaction

It's not always about changing the stressors, but about turning off the cycle of stress.

17

#### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the act of bringing your awareness to yourself and the present moment. It is the act of going inward to check in with your feelings and thoughts, as well as notice what is going on around you.

Definition: the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.

#### Positivity

Positivity is more than just “being happy”. It is being aware and mindful of the positive aspects and moments of your day and life to help cultivate more optimism, kindness, and positive outlook, while in turn decreasing the feelings of negativity, anxiety and chronic stress.

Definition: the practice of being or tendency to be positive or optimistic in attitude.

18

## How do these work?

Rewire the brain to notice more of the positive and less of the stress.

- Build resilience so day to day stressful events and triggers are perceived as less threatening.
- Become less reactive to stress and are better able to manage it, leading to less burn out and exhaustion.

19

## Create a Positive Shift

Strategies to put into place to make daily and chronic stressful triggers seem easier to manage and less of a threat, through the use of mindfulness, self-care and aspects of Positive Psychology.

20

## Movement

### STEP AWAY FROM ANXIOUS AND STRESSFUL THOUGHTS

Having a mindful movement practice can help you to move out of an anxious or stressful moment.

- Increases blood flow and deepens your breath
- Pulls you out of anxious thought spiral
- Allows thoughts to flow more freely
- Creates a shift to positive thinking

21

## Movement

Anything that helps you feel BETTER and more energized, yet grounded - not depleted, exhausted or "punished"

- Examples:
- Stretching or taking a few steps
- Yoga or Tai Chi
- Walking , Hiking or Running outdoors Pilates or Barre
- Cycling Climbing
- HIIT, Cardio or strength training

22

## Meditation

### DRAW YOUR FOCUS INWARD TO LESSEN STRESS

Meditation has been shown to help rewire the brain to handle and manage stress better.

- Increases the gray matter thickness of your brain
- Reduces activity in the amygdala
- Reduces cortisol levels (the stress hormone)
- Increase your focus and effectiveness, and decrease mental fatigue

23

## Meditation

Try 5-10 minutes most days of the week.  
Start with 1-2 minutes, 1-2 days a week.

Examples:

- Meditation audio, video or app
- Walking meditation
- Focus on body or thoughts
- Focus on breathing
- Using a visualization or mantra

24

## Journal

### LET GO OF NEGATIVITY AND CREATE MORE POSITIVITY

Having a journal practice can help you shift from a place of stress to a place of positivity.

- Allows you to release the stressful moment
- Draws awareness to thought patterns
- Rewires your brain to shift out of "flight or fight" mode
- Shift attention from "threats" to positive moments

25

## Journal

### Write to help reduce stress and create positivity

Examples:

- Brain dump: write down the stressful moment or ruminating thoughts
- Gratitude Journal: write down 3 positive moments from the day

26

# Let's try!

## Positivity and Mindfulness Practice

27

### How to Put it Into Practice

Set a time each day to practice one or all of these.

- You may find that a certain practice resonates with you more. If so, keep doing that practice and growing your skill within it.
- Notice your thoughts throughout the day. Where are you on “autopilot”? What moments or things trigger your stress? What is your first reaction to it?
- Use these techniques when things are stressful, but also on days when you are not feeling stressed.

28



continued

## Positive Shift

All of these things will help to create a more positive shift in your way of thinking and reacting, even when there are stressful situations at hand.

29

continued

## Thank you for Joining!

Questions?

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30

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