Stress Management and Strategies for Coping

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Learning Objectives

• Discuss the common symptoms of stress experienced by patients with bone marrow failure or cancer and their families
• Review the symptoms of anxiety and depression and traditional treatment approaches
• Provide strategies for identifying and managing stress
What is Stress?

- Physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension
- A type of change which is **Positive** or **Negative**
- To subject to physical or mental pressure, tension, or strain

Causes of Stress for Patients/Families

- Treatment trajectory
- Unpredictability of life
- Physical changes – appearance and function
- Navigating the health care system
- Changing roles/Relationships
- Work/Finances
- Expectations of others
- Different coping strategies from your loved ones
- Guilt
Physical Effects of Stress

- Difficulty sleeping
- Fatigue
- Flight or fight
- Weight gain/loss
- Tense muscles/back Pain
- Increased blood sugar level
- Stomach aches/Headaches
- Loss of sex drive
- Increased blood pressure or heart rate

Emotional Effects of Stress

- Worried
- Irritable
- Depressed
- Moody
- Lonely and isolated
- Unable to relax
- Short tempered
- Agitated
- Overwhelmed

Cognitive Effects of Stress

- Memory
- Concentration
- Poor judgment
- Negativity
- Anxious thoughts
- Unfocused
Depression and Anxiety

**Depression:** Five or more of the following during a 2-week period:
- Diminished interest in activities, depressed mood, weight loss or gain, insomnia or hypersomnia, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue, feelings or worthlessness, difficulty concentrating, suicidal ideation

**Anxiety:**
1. Excessive worry (generalized, for at least 6 months)
2. Difficulty controlling worry
3. Three or more of the following: Restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, sleep disturbance

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Traditional Treatment Approaches:
- Medication
- Talk Therapy (CBT/Psychotherapy/Family Therapy/Support Groups)

**When to See a Professional:**
- When you feel anxious/depressed or have thoughts of hurting yourself
- When somebody else expresses concern/identifies symptoms

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Stress Management

Methods of controlling factors that require a response or change within a person by identifying the stressors, eliminating negative stressors, and developing effective coping mechanisms to counteract the response constructively. Examples include progressive muscular relaxation, guided imagery, biofeedback, breathing techniques, and active problem solving.

Why should I learn stress management?

“You may feel like the stress in your life is out of your control, but you can always control the way you respond. Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can’t, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest and relaxation.”

www.helpguide.org

Stress Management Can…

• Help you be in control of your emotions (when you can calm and soothe yourself you can better recover from the situation)
• Help you sleep better
• Reduce muscle pain
• Improve your mood
• Improve social relations

*Small interventions over time can make a big impact*

“For patients with stable Ischemic Heart Disease, exercise and stress management training reduced emotional distress and improved markers of cardiovascular risk more than usual medical care alone.”

Effects of Exercise and Stress Management Training on Markers of Cardiovascular Risk in Patients With Ischemic Heart Disease: A Randomized Controlled Trial. James A. Blumenthal, PhD; Andrew Sherwood, PhD; Michael A. Ratey, PhD; Laura L. Wolitzky, PhD; Robert Wiegand, MD; Antonia Georgiadis, PhD; Thomas L. Hunter, PhD; Yunchan Lim, PhD; R. Edward Coleman, MD; Alan Hinderliter, MD. JAMA. 2005;293:1626-1634.
Driving Analogy:
When people are overwhelmed by stress...

Foot on the Gas
Angry, agitated, heated up, and can’t sit still

Foot on the Brake
Withdrawn, depressed, very little emotion, shut down, no energy

Foot on BOTH
Tense and frozen position. You freeze under pressure. You look paralyzed but under the surface are very angry and heated.

Psychologist Connie Lillas
www.helpguide.org

Am I in control of stress?
Or is stress controlling me?

• When I feel agitated, do I know how to quickly calm and soothe myself? Can I easily let go of my anger?
• When I come home at night, do I walk in the door feeling alert and relaxed? Am I seldom distracted or moody?
• Am I able to recognize upsets that others seem to be experiencing?
• Do I easily turn to friends or family members for a calming influence? When my energy is low, do I know how to boost it?

Source: The Language of Emotional Intelligence by Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.
www.helpguide.org
Unhealthy Ways to Cope with Stress

• Sleeping too much or not enough
• Social isolation
• Procrastinating
• Neglecting responsibilities
• Medical non-compliance
• Using alcohol/cigarettes/drugs to relax
• Nervous habits

How do I do it?

When faced with stress, you can either:
  - Change the situation
  - Change your reaction

How Do I CHOOSE to respond to stress?
Strategy of the 4 A’s

Change the Situation  Change Your Reaction

1. Avoid the Stressor  3. Adapt to the Stressor
2. Alter the Stressor  4. Accept the Stressor

Change the Situation

*Avoid the Stressor*

- Avoid unnecessary stress
- Learn how to say no
- Avoid people who stress you out
- Take control of your environment
- Avoid hot-button topics
- Pare down your to-do list

Change the Situation

*Alter the Stressor*

- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up
- Be willing to compromise
- Be more assertive
- Manage your time
Change Your Reaction

Adapt to the Stressor

• Look at the big picture
• Adjust your standards
• Focus on the positive
• Cultivate flexibility

Change Your Reaction

Accept the Stressor

• Accept the things you can’t change
• Don’t try to control the uncontrollable
• Look for the upside
• Use humor
• Share your feelings
• Learn how to forgive

Remember the 4A’s

Avoid

For

Accept

Accept
Alternative Approaches

Meditation

Meditation is a practice of concentrated focus upon a sound, object, visualization, the breath, movement, or attention itself in order to increase awareness of the present moment, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance personal and spiritual growth.

Free online applications to teach and guide you through these meditations:
http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22 (UCLA)

Guided Imagery

Mind and body connection. You use your thoughts to imagine you are in a relaxing or peaceful place

Types of guided imagery:
1) Breath Awareness Guided Meditation
2) Deep Rest Guided Meditation; and
3) Whole Body Guided Relaxation.

Health Journeys: http://www.healthjourneys.com

Breath Work

Breathing exercises can lower your blood pressure and heart rate by sending more oxygen to your brain

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

“Through repetitive practice you quickly learn to recognize—and distinguish—the associated feelings of a tensed muscle and a completely relaxed muscle. With this simple knowledge, you can then induce physical muscular relaxation at the first signs of the tension that accompanies anxiety. And with physical relaxation comes mental calmness—in any situation.”
http://www.guidetopsychology.com/pmr.htm
Alternative Approaches

- Music
- Nutrition
- Writing
- Support Groups
- Exercise/Yoga
- Self-care

What is my role in the amount of stress I feel?

- I choose my attitude
- I choose my response to stress
- I choose how I think about stressful things in my life
- I can choose to take a step back
- I have the ability to calm my emotions and soothe myself
- I have the ability to take a break and do something nurturing for myself

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"My doctor told me to avoid any unnecessary stress, so I didn't open his bill."

Questions? Comments?

If you would like a copy of the slides, please email me:

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