STRESS MANAGEMENT

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WHAT IS STRESS?

► Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

► We need some stress in our lives to help keep us focused, motivated, help us meet deadlines and goals and to feel accomplished when overcoming a difficult task.

► Having too much stress with a demand on mind or body, known as negative mental stress or distress; results in the fight, flight or freeze response.

► Find your zone of positive stress: range of stress that each person can tolerant and remain healthy, satisfied and productive.

► Remember: what may be stressful for one person may not be for another.
STRESS AFFECTS YOUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND ACTIONS

- Behavior is used to cope and interact with your triggers to stress
  - These behaviors can be either positive or negative
- Your thoughts drive emotional reactions
- Some stress inducing thoughts include:
  - I must always be productive
  - The only thing that matters is getting ahead
  - I have no choice but to be upset or worried when a task is incomplete
  - I must be all things to all people
  - If I make one mistake I am a failure
STRESS RELATED ILLNESSES

- Long term excessive stress makes you more susceptible to the following illnesses:
  - Migraines
  - High blood pressure
  - Depression and anxiety
  - Ulcers
  - Cancer

- One episode of intense emotional stress can directly lead to the following:
  - Tension headache
  - Heart attack
  - Psychotic breakdown

- High stress can intensify existing illnesses such as:
  - High blood pressure
  - Angina
  - Mood disorders (e.g. depression)
  - Thought disorders (e.g. schizophrenia)
NEUROBIOLOGY AND STRESS

- Stress hormones, like adrenaline and cortisol are produced in stressful situations and travel to all the major organs.
- When they reach the brain they interact with and deplete levels of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine, which moderate moods and thoughts.
- As the neurotransmitter levels decrease the following begins to occur:
  - Fatigue
  - Change in eating and sleeping patterns
  - Difficulty focusing
  - Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
  - Worthlessness, hopelessness and guilty feelings
  - Anger and irritability
  - Anxiety and worries
  - Sadness
  - Suicidal and/or homicidal ideation
    - five of these symptoms, for two weeks, would qualify for a diagnosis of depression
SOME GUIDELINES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Be aware of your stress level
- Let go of what you cannot control
- Plan for probable stressors due to expected major life changes
- Manage your daily life and establish priorities
- Spend time on things you enjoy and are important to you
- Be assertive. Learn to say “No” when you want to without feeling guilty.
- Recognize your accomplishments
- Develop a gratitude list to help you realize what you are grateful for in your life
DEVELOP GOOD COPING SKILLS TO MANAGE STRESS

- Exercise
- Relaxation skills
- Nutrition
- Develop social support networks
- Positive diversionary activities
- Positive self talk
- Recognize what you can and can’t control in life and focus on what is in your control.
TRANSFORM NEGATIVE SELF TALK TO POSITIVE SELF TALK

- Managing your self talk is vital
  - Negative thoughts produce stress
  - Positive thoughts can decrease stress and improve your overall well being

- Steps to manage your negative self talk:
  - Recognize it
  - Challenge it
  - Change it
SKILLS TO HELP ADAPT TO STRESS

- Pace yourself
- Spread out major life changes
- Seek to change a specific situation
- Time management
- Act, don’t react
- Use good communication skills (e.g. listen, speak with clarity, be empathic)
- Change your perception of the stressor
- Recognize what you like about your life and are grateful for
- Maintain a healthier lifestyle to help prevent negative effects of new stresses
- Avoid destructive ways of coping with stress (e.g. drinking, drugs, emotional eating, anger outbursts)
SOME COPING SKILLS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Start at your head and tighten and loosen each muscle one by one down to your toes

- Deep breathing
  - Sit comfortably
  - Take in a deep breath for the count of 4
  - Hold for the count of 4
  - Release for the count of 4
  - Repeat at least 4 times
MORE STRESS MANAGEMENT COPING SKILLS

- Happy place- Pick a place where you feel happy, calm, relaxed like the ocean, or woods
  - Close your eyes and imagine you are in your happy place and go through the 5 senses
    - What do you see?
    - What do you hear?
    - What do you feel/touch?
    - What do you smell?
    - What do you taste?

- Positive diversionary activities
  - Shooting hoops
  - Reading
  - Watching movie
  - Cooking
  - Listening to music
COPING SKILLS CONTINUED

- Be creative
  - Write
  - Paint
  - Play music
  - Dance
  - Make jewelry
- Journaling
  - There are no rules about what you can or can’t write or how to write it.
  - Keep your writings in a private place so they will be seen only by you, unless you choose to show them to someone else
- Light exposure - spend time outside without sunglasses
  - Just 10 minutes of light exposure can help you feel less depressed
Student Health and Wellness Office

- No cost: psychological counseling, nurse consults & Dr. visits for registered students
- Room 2020/ Phone: (530) 242-7580
- Call or stop by the office to make an appointment
- Like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/ShastaCollegeStudentHealthWellness1
- Follow us on Twitter @SCSHandW1
- Check out our website http://www.shastacollege.edu/wellness/
- Free mental health screenings at http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/Wellness