Objectives

- *Define stress and anxiety*
- *Identify techniques for coping with stress*
- *Practice stress relaxation exercises*
- *Identify job related stress management strategies*
- *Learn when to seek professional help*

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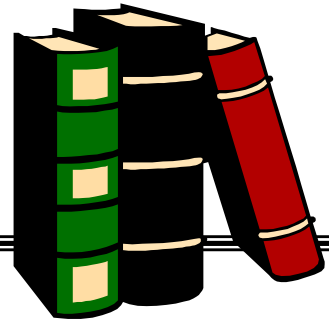
Some Definitions



- *Stress: A physical, chemical, or emotional factor that leads to bodily or mental tension and may cause illness or disease if not appropriately managed.*

- *Anxiety: a state of apprehension, tension and uneasiness in response to a perceived threat. It is considered normal, when it is temporary during a stressful or uncertain situation. Prolonged anxiety may lead to a variety of disorders requiring professional treatment.*

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Anxiety and Phobias

Anxiety is a normal human feeling. When our anxiety is a result of a continuing problem, such as money difficulties, we call it *worry*. If it is a sudden response to an immediate threat we call it *fear*. Normally, both fear and worry can be helpful, however, if the feelings become too strong or go for too long, they can stop us from doing the things we want to and can make our lives miserable. A *phobia* is a fear of particular situations or things that are not dangerous and which most people do not find troublesome.

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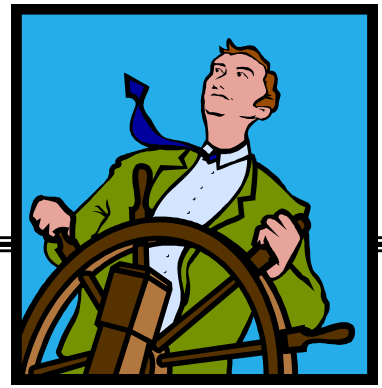
If You are Still Feeling Afraid...



- *Get on with your day to day activities*
- *Try not to think of everything as a potential catastrophe*
- *Do a reality check to challenge your fears*
- *Verbalizing your concerns may help*
- *Practice deep breathing to feel more relaxed*
- *Speak up if you see something that doesn't seem right*
- *Take better care of yourself*

Jerilyn Ross, President, Anxiety Disorders Association of America

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Steps to Managing Today's Stress and Anxiety

- ***Be proactive in maintaining life clarity & balance***
  - *Breathe deeply to release stressful thoughts*
  - *Try not to constantly focus on personal & world problems*
  - *Do things that make you happy; laugh*
  - *Help others*
  - *Express love and kindness*
  - *Remain humble and grateful for the things you have*
  - *Practice forgiveness; remember this will pass*
  - *Become comfortable not having all the answers*
  - *Trust in a higher power*

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Coping with Stress and Worry

- ***Change your attitudes/perceptions***
- ***Take charge of your world***
- ***Create a healthy environment***
- ***Change your physical ability to cope***

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Progressive Relaxation

- *When we experience mental stress, our muscles tense & this makes our mental stress worse. Try to break the cycle.*

- *Alternate between tensing & relaxing muscles to help you see how it feels to relax.*

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Progressive Relaxation

- ***Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet on the floor.***
- ***Make a tight fist with your right hand, hold it for 5 seconds & experience the tension.***
- ***Unclench & let the tension flow out, noting how it feels to relax.***
- ***Do the same with the left hand & the muscles in your upper arms & shoulders.***
- ***Tense your neck, hold & relax. Note how it feels to relax.***
- ***Frown as hard as you can & relax.***
- ***Smile as hard as you can & relax.***
- ***Raise your toes, feel the tension & relax. Again, notice the tension drain away.***
- ***Take a deep breath & feel the tension in your chest. Exhale & relax. Feel how calm you are.***
- ***Daydream of a peaceful setting & enjoy it for a while.***
- ***Count slowly to 4 and open your eyes. You will be alert & relaxed.***

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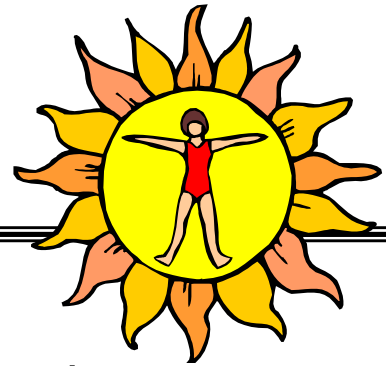
Deep Breathing



- *Sit in your chair or stand comfortably, but erect.*
- *Place the palms of your hands against your stomach.*
- *Breathe in slowly through your nose, allowing your stomach to expand forward against your hands.*
- *Hold this deep breath for a few seconds.*
- *Slowly exhale through your mouth, slightly pursing your lips together & feel the tension drain away.*
- *When you have exhaled as much as you can, repeat.*

Repeat a couple of times at the beginning and work up to 4 or 5 times. Don't breathe too fast as this may cause hyperventilation or lightheadedness.

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Positive Imagery

- *Lean back in your chair and become as comfortable as possible.*
- *Breathe in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth about 10 times with your eyes closed.*
- *As you breathe out, say to yourself, “calm” or “relax”.*
- *After a couple of minutes, picture a positive, beautiful, peaceful scene from your own experience and imagine yourself in this place. Keep engrossed in the scene until you feel the tension draining from you.*
- *Open your eyes, arise from the chair & you’ll be ready to go.*

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Focusing

This activity helps you identify & deal with stress.

- *Recognize how stress affects your body (tense neck or back muscles, stomach aches...?)*
- *Write down the stresses that affect you and to what degree.*
- *Look for possible solutions to individual stresses.*

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Strategies to Manage Job Stress

- *Be clear on organization mission/goals*
- *Develop orderly work habits*
- *Determine and stick with priorities*
- *Create daily “to do list”*
- *Don’t procrastinate*
- *Stick with decisions; don’t continue to worry*
- *Admit mistakes, correct them and move on*
- *Learn to negotiate assignments*
- *Resolve conflicts*

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When to Seek Professional Help

- *When disturbing behaviors or emotions last more than four to six weeks*
- *When behaviors or emotions make it difficult to function normally (including at work or school and in the family)*
- *Anytime an individual feels concerned about his/her behaviors and /or emotions*

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Everyone experiences stress and some anxiety in life. Effectively coping is up to ***you***.

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Where to Get Help

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Community mental health resources
- Clergy
- Internet resources
  - *National Mental Health Association (www.nmha.org)*
  - *Mental Health Info Resources (www.mentalhealthinfo.net)*

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