

AN INTRODUCTION TO ANXIETY AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress Management is the ability to put things in perspective, dealing effectively with stressful situations and knowing how to relax. It involves being able to deal with cognitive worry which is a major factor in anxiety and is manifested in negative self-restraint statements (about one's ability, stability, future). The ability to divert attention from stressful situations and to deal with the task at hand is critical to manage anxiety.

Some ways to address anxiety and stress:

- Increase your awareness of what is stressful for you.
- Practice specific relaxation exercises.
- Try to resolve personal problems or at least try to learn to deal with them to help reduce anxiety.
- Try to determine which situations cause anxiety and avoid them if possible. If not, learn how to manage them.
- Prepare thoroughly for tests and assignments.
- Practice positive "self-talk".

Try to imagine the worst possible outcome resulting from an anxiety-producing situation and prepare how you would handle it ahead of time.

General Vulnerability to Stress

Purpose: There are a number of ways to arrange your life to reduce or increase your vulnerability to stress. A testing situation is not stressful in itself. The way you approach the test will determine how much stress you will experience. This exercise is designed to increase your awareness of the factors that contribute to your awareness (know yourself a little better), you can begin to control your stress level.

Directions: Score each item from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), according to how much of the time each statement applies to you.

- ___ 1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.
- ___ 2. I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
- ___ 3. I give and receive affection regularly.
- ___ 4. I have at least one relative within 50 miles upon whom I can rely.
- ___ 5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.
- ___ 6. I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
- ___ 7. I have fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.
- ___ 8. I am the appropriate weight for my height.
- ___ 9. I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.
- ___ 10. I get strength from my religious beliefs.
- ___ 11. I regularly attend clubs or social activities.
- ___ 12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
- ___ 13. I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
- ___ 14. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth).
- ___ 15. I am able to speak openly about my feeling when angry or worried.
- ___ 16. I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems, such as chores, money, and daily living issues.
- ___ 17. I do something for fun at least once a week.
- ___ 18. I am able to organize my time effectively.
- ___ 19. I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (tea or cola drinks) a day.
- ___ 20. I take quiet time for myself during the day.

Note: To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. Any number over 30 indicates a vulnerability to stress. You are seriously vulnerable if your score is between 50 and 75, and extremely vulnerable if it is over 75.

Closure: If your score is over 50 you should discuss it with your advisor or counselor. The best way to improve your score is to select two or three items at a time and try to reduce your rating by 2.

SHORT TERM EFFECTS OF STRESS

PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS

Poor memory
Inability to concentrate
Poor self control
Lowered self esteem

BEHAVIORAL COSTS

Irritability
Disorganization
Poor management of work flow
Indulging in alcohol, food, tobacco

PHYSICAL COSTS

Flushed Face
Cold and shaky hands
Oily skin
Rapid, shallow breathing
Frequent need to urinate
Dry mouth
Tight stomach muscles
Acid stomach
Atmosphere of not being in control

LONG TERM EFFECTS OF STRESS

PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS

Bouts of depression
Mild paranoia
Free floating anxiety
Low tolerance for ambiguity
Forgetfulness

BEHAVIORAL COSTS

Over/Underweight
Drug abuse
Excessive smoking
Intolerance of others
Unable to make quick decisions
Over-reaction to mild work pressure
Ineffective use of work/leisure

PHYSICAL COSTS

Allergies
Hypertension
Migraine/tension headaches
Coronary disease
Strokes

STRESS MANAGEMENT

The approach used in this module is based on both knowledge and skills. By identifying how we complicate our stress response, we can learn to practice specific behaviors that will, in fact, help us decrease that response. For example, learning to breathe properly will decrease heart rate, perspiration rates, and blood pressure, and leave you with a sense of relaxation. It is important that you choose to implement only one or two techniques at a time since studies indicate that we feel overwhelmed when we decide to tackle many new behaviors at once.

THE INVENTORY OF STRESS DRIVER BEHAVIORS

If the question describes a typical behavior, attitude, or feeling of yours, check the YES column; if it does not describe how you usually feel, check the NO column. The SOMETIMES column should be marked only when you cannot say definitely YES or NO to the question.

	YES usually	NO seldom	SOME TIMES
BP			
1. Do you believe that if you don't set the highest standards for yourself, you are likely to end up a second rate person?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do you feel others will probably think less of you if you make a mistake?	_____	_____	_____
3. Is it difficult for you to feel good about yourself when someone pays you a compliment?	_____	_____	_____
4. Do you push yourself to excel in everything you do?	_____	_____	_____
5. Are you very disappointed in yourself when your performance (work, play, sports) isn't top-notch?	_____	_____	_____
6. Do you expect the performance of others to always be top-notch?	_____	_____	_____
7. Is it hard for you to see the positives in others and extend praise?	_____	_____	_____
8. Do you get very upset with yourself when you make a mistake?	_____	_____	_____
9. Do you put forth great effort into being precise and exact?	_____	_____	_____
10. Are you easily upset when something doesn't go the way you planned?	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____	_____

HU

- 11. Do you have a tendency to hurry your speech? _____
- 12. Do you tend to interrupt other people’s speech?
by completing their sentences for them. _____
- 13. Does waiting in line or traffic make you very
impatient? _____
- 14. Is it typical of you to watch the clock? _____
- 15. Do you find yourself squirming, swinging
your legs when crossed, or tapping your
fingers and feet? _____
- 16. Is it typical of you to be doing more than
one thing at a time? _____
- 17. Do you get impatient watching someone else
perform a task you know you can do faster? _____
- 18. Do you walk or eat fast even when you don’t
have to? _____
- 19. Do you skip meals or breaks to get things done? _____
- 20. Do you find yourself rushing to get things done? _____
- TOTAL _____

BS

- 21. Do you avoid expressing irritable or angry
feelings toward others? _____
- 22. Do you avoid disagreeing with others even
though you may have a strong opinion about
something? _____
- 23. Do you try hard to conceal your feelings when
you may be disappointed over something? _____
- 24. Is it hard for you to say “I love you” to a loved one? _____
- 25. Is it difficult to show excitement? _____
- 26. Do you pull away or withdraw from people when
you may be disappointed over something? _____

- | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| 27. Would you feel you are a weaker person for showing emotions such as hurt, disappointment, or sadness? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 28. When you are not feeling well, do you try to conceal it from others? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 29. Do you tend to keep your gripes and complaints to yourself? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| TOTAL | _____ | _____ | _____ |

PO

- | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| 30. Do you avoid asking others for help or favors? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 31. Do you put others first even though you may not be feeling well or may be needing something for yourself? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 32. Do you say nice things to people when you don't really mean them? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 33. Do you go ahead and give in when a person wants to borrow something you really don't want to lend? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 34. When a friend asks you to do something you really don't want to do, do you do it anyway? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 35. When someone pays you a compliment do you feel a strong obligation to reciprocate? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 36. Do you fail to express yourself when you have a different opinion from others? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 37. In general, is it difficult to say "no" to others? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 38. Do you work hard at trying to please others? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| TOTAL | _____ | _____ | _____ |

SCORING THE ISDB

Directions for Scoring:

- 1) Go back over your responses and write a 3 over every check in the YES column and a 2 for every check in the SOMETIMES column. (The NO column does not receive any points).
- 2) Add up the scores on each section and place that score on the line below each section.
- 3) Write these subtotals in the places indicated below and add to receive your total score.

SCORING SUMMARY

	YES	SOME TIMES	SUB- TOTALS
Section 1 (BE PERFECT driver)	_____	_____	_____
Section 2 (HURRY UP driver)	_____	_____	_____
Section 3 (BE STRONG driver)	_____	_____	_____
Section 4 (PLEASE OTHERS driver)	_____	_____	_____

A. TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR SCORE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

1. The higher your total score, the greater your OVERALL driver behavior.
2. The drivers with the higher scores are your major drivers.
3. Most people have at least one major driver, and many individuals have some characteristics of all the drivers.

B. NOW GO BACK OVER THE 40 QUESTIONS AND CIRCLE THE RESPONSES YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE FROM “YES” TO “NO”. GIVE THIS CAREFUL THOUGHT.

EXPLANATIONS OF STRESS DRIVERS

A driver is a rationalization people use to convince themselves that they are OK because they have behaved in a socially acceptable way. Many people attempt to keep themselves in an “I’m OK, You’re OK” position by telling themselves such things as:

I’M OK IF I...

- ...Hurry up (Do trivia)
- ...Be perfect (Think negative)
- ...Be strong (Don’t feel)
- ...Be pleasing (Ignore self)

As described below, people use these to drive themselves, believing that if they just keep behaving that way, they will be “OK.” However, as you can tell from studying their descriptions, these behaviors are quite stressful. They place us at the mercy of pleasing others.

1. The HURRY UP driver invites a person to do things fast, talk rapidly and move quickly. Believing that he must do everything “right now,” he is always on the go, thinking of the next place he has to be and often doing two things at the same time. He may interrupt people, thus “hurrying them up” to finish their sentence, glance at his watch frequently, or tap his fingers impatiently. “Hurry up” behavior is self-defeating because in hurrying, we often end up consuming more time and making more mistakes and still never seem to get everything done.
2. When a person is under the influence of his BE PERFECT driver, he strives for perfection or expects others to do so. He may use big words, tell more than he is asked to tell, and make sure to “cover all the bases.” Easily upset by mistakes, this individual neither asks for help nor accepts it. “Be Perfect” behavior is self-defeating and stressful because the individual is hard on himself when he makes a

mistake, seldom measures up to the standards he sets for himself, and is easily disappointed in the performance of others.

3. When a person is under the influence of his BE STRONG driver, he is stoic and holds in feelings, even intense feelings such as disappointment or joy. He may talk in a monotone way and show very little excitement, anger, or sadness. Spartan warriors were programmed very early to believe that feelings were a weakness, that a man should be strong and not show feelings, or even have them. Many problems such as ulcers, headaches, and relationship difficulties are due to suppression of feelings or considerable difficulty in handling them effectively.

4. When a person is under the influence of his PLEASE YOU or BE PLEASING driver he feels responsible for “making” others feel good. Constantly seeking approval, he may agree freely with others, nod his head frequently, or say “um hum” often. He experiences great difficulty in saying “no” as he believes people will not like him as much if he doesn’t do what they ask of him. The energy invested in pleasing others to that extent and the difficulty in saying “no” often produces tension and uptightness in the body and limits our sense of independence.

STRESS –FREE PERMISSIONS

IF YOU MUST BE PERFECT

IT’S OK TO MAKE HONEST MISTAKES

Be yourself, be human.
Allow others to make mistakes.
Give praise.
Accept praise.

SO TRY TO THEN LOOK FOR THE POSITIVE

Think positive.
Don’t *over* push yourself on others.
Listen, don’t argue.
Accept it when things don’t go your way.

IF YOU MUST BE STRONG

IT’S OK TO HAVE FEELINGS

Express your feelings.
Feel your feelings.
Find ways to take care of your feelings.

SO TRY TO THEN GET INVOLVED EMOTIONALLY

Become aware of your feelings.
Let people know who you are.
Learn to confront others and be assertive.

IF YOU MUST HURRY UP

IT’S OK TO TAKE YOUR TIME

Set priorities and plan ahead.
Ignore some trivial items.

SO TRY TO THEN SPEAK SLOWER

Sit back while talking.
Take deep breaths when feeling hurried.

Relax, go into slow time.
Stop and think.

Cruise in neutral 20 minutes a day.
Don't wait until the last minute.

IF YOU MUST PLEASE OTHERS

IT'S OK TO CONSIDER YOURSELF

Say "no" at times.
Put yourself first at times.
Let others do for themselves.

SO TRY TO THEN SAY WHAT YOU WOULD REALLY LIKE TO DO.

Ask for what you want... ("Will you?")
Stop being so nice unless you really mean it.
Give up needing everyone's approval.

HOW CAN I DEAL WITH STRESS?

Stress is a part of life; you can neither avoid it nor get rid of it completely. The trick is learning skills that you can use to decrease the effects of the stress response on your body. Deep breathing and muscle relaxation are two ways you can learn to slow that response. Learning to recognize your stress signals, and utilizing rational thinking are also helpful.

RELAXATION TRAINING

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
- Take a deep, slow breath.
- Hold the breath for several seconds.
- Slowly exhale.
- Take another deep, slow breath.
- Hold breath and pull your toes toward your head, tightening your leg and calf muscles.
- Feel the tension.
- Breathe out and let go completely.
- Take another deep, slow breath.
- Hold breath and make a fist with both hands, tightening your arm and shoulder muscles.
- Feel the tension
- Breathe out and let go completely.
- Take another deep, slow breath.
- Hold the breath while tightening you stomach and neck muscles.
- Feel the tension.
- Breathe out and let your muscles go limp.
- Take another slow, deep breath.
- Hold the breath and tighten every muscle in your body until you feel your whole body start to tremble with tension.
- Now breathe out and let go completely.
- Take another, deep slow breath.
- Hold the breath, and tighten every muscle in your body.
- Hold the tension.
- Now breathe out and let go completely.
- Now concentrate on slow, deep breathing.
- Allow yourself to feel calm and quiet, relaxed and heavy.

- Stay in this comfortable, relaxed place as long as you need.

The following series of statements is especially suited for general relaxation and treatment of anxiety. These phrases can be put on an audio cassette and used in home practice.

Find a quiet place free from distraction. Sit or lie down, close your eyes, and take several slow, deep breaths. Continue to breathe deeply and slowly and tell yourself:

- I feel quiet.
- My feet are heavy and comfortable.
- My ankles and knees are quiet, heavy, and relaxed.
- My hips and whole central portion of my body are quiet and comfortable.
- My chest, my arms and my hands are heavy and quiet.
- My neck and my head are comfortable and quiet.
- My face and my forehead are smooth, quiet and comfortable.
- My arms and my hands are heavy, quiet, and warm.
- I feel warmth flowing into my hands and they are warm.
- My attention is drawn inward and I am at ease.
- Deep in the center of myself I feel quiet and peaceful.
- My attention is drawn inward and I am peaceful and serene.

IMAGERY

Once you are in a relaxed state, picture yourself approaching your next math assignment with confidence. Feel the feeling of being in control of your anxiety. See yourself doing well on your next math exam. See yourself sitting down, and beginning to work on the problems feeling calm, secure, and unafraid. Practice feeling like a success in math. Act as if you were not afraid of math. "Pretend!" Carry this feeling of confidence with you when you approach your next math problem.

AFFIRMATIONS

Feel free to formulate your own affirmations or to change these to suit your own personal needs or taste. The more comfortable you feel with an affirmation, the better it will work.

1. I can understand math.
2. I can pass this class.
3. I have listened in class.
4. I have done my homework.
5. I can pass this test.
6. It's OK to feel nervous.
7. I can make a mistake and still pass this test.
8. I can think clearly.
9. I am prepared.
10. I am allowing my knowledge to surface.
11. I can do this.
12. I will answer one problem at a time.
13. I can pace myself.
14. My mind is clear.
15. My body is calm.