



Stress Management

For Professionals

Greg Sazima, MD

1

Stress Management

Greg Sazima, MD

I Introduction

- Definitions, Types and Models of Stress
- Direct and indirect benefits of stress management

II "Diagnostic" tactics

- Symptom scales/journals/diaries
- Apps: health, nutrition, sleep, stress management

III "Therapeutic" tactics: extending your treatment

- Sleep Hygiene and Rx's
- Relaxation Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- A cognitive/behavioral tactic: ADAPT
- Meditation and Mindfulness

2

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What is stress?

It's your body and mind's fight/flight/freeze response to the novel and unfamiliar....

(.....and thus possibly a threat!)

3

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Stress: Everybody's got some....

Pathologic Stress ("Dis"-tress) vs. "Eu"-stress: A little stress can be good

Pathologic Stress Response: A lack of "fit"

An ongoing mismatch in internal resource vs. external threat

**Eustress ("good stress"): No stress is not necessarily the goal, either
Lack of stress can suggest an unfulfilled, less-than-challenging life**

**Symptoms or signals?: stress can be also viewed as complex
neuropsychological phenomena that have meaning
(so pay attention...)**

4

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Why "Management"?

The stress response is built in.... not to be "cured", but tamed

**Costs: stress a major factor in the six leading causes of death in US
(Cancer - heart dz - Accidents - lung dz - Cirrhosis - Suicide)**

- Up to 90% of all 1st MD visits impacted

**Benefits: reduced anxiety, muscle tension, fatigue; higher self-esteem;
lower rates of chronic heart, immune, inflammatory disease, dementia**

But.... Requires ongoing patient effort..... Impact is gradual

5

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Stress and the "OS's" of mind

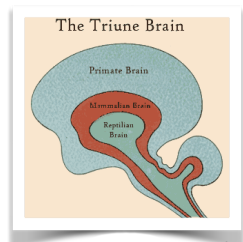
Survival Brain (brain stem/cerebellum - "1.0"): earliest, wired for action

Relational Brain (limbic - "2.0"): emotion, relationship

"Conceptual" Brain (cortex - "3.0"): later to develop; verbal/intellectual/imaginative brain

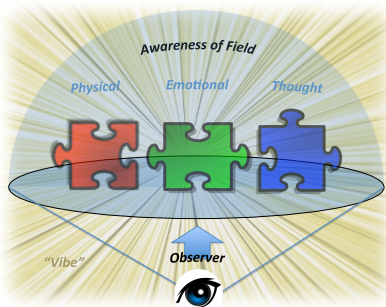
("4.0" PFC: Under dev't - awareness/integrative)

**Anxiety: deeply rooted in 1.0 and 2.0,
and with manifestations in soma, affect,
thought, awareness/attention**



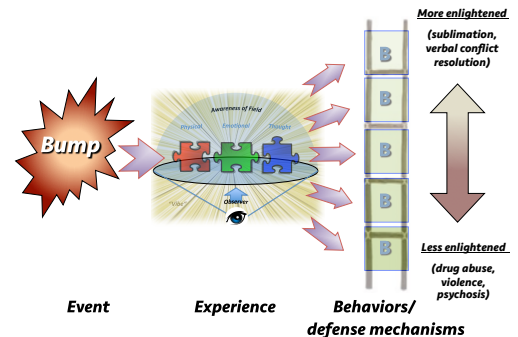
6

The "Mind Field" (It's a mine field....)



7

The "Mind Field" in action...



8

The Holmes-Rahe Scale: Both "good" and "bad" stress

Life Events	Life Crisis Units	Life Events	Life Crisis Units
Death of spouse /child	100	Change in financial state	38
Divorce	73	Death of close friend	37
Marital separation	65	Incr. # of arguments with spouse	37
Jail term	63	Mortgage over \$100K (\$500K?)	31
Death of close family member	63	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	31
Personal injury or illness	53	Change in work responsibilities	29
Marriage	50	Son/Daughter leaving home	29
Fired at work	47	Outstanding personal achievement	28
Dr. Saz's tedious attempts at humor	45.9	Begin or end school	26
Retirement	45	The fish or the chicken?	23.5
Marital reconciliation	45	Trouble with boss	23
Pregnancy	40	Change in residence	20
Sex Difficulties	39	Change in sleeping habits	16
Gain of new family member	39	Vacation	13

Holmes & Rahe (1967). Holmes-Rahe life change scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, Vol. 11, pp. 213-218.

9

What Do Attorneys Consider Most Stressful?

"Exterior shame" (public error, peer judgment)

"Interior shame" (tactical errors insecurity about competence in work)

Giving bad news to clients

Malpractice/misconduct

Loss of control over practice security, income

Lack of time/resource with and for family and friends

10

Attorneys: What characters!

Johns Hopkins Study: Two major character traits separated from other professionals...

- perfectionism: control issues....

- pessimism: "we're paid worriers"; trained to look for error, risk, mistake

.... both traits predict for higher rates of anxiety

11

Resilience: "Raising the curve"

"Resilience" is the ability to navigate through stressful challenges, and grow from them, improving/sustaining productivity and wellbeing

Building resilience requires preventive skills and tools in stress management and increased self-awareness

There is a "peak" at which stress cultivates productivity

Beyond it, there are diminishing returns (and more suffering)

While reactive treatments bring relief, resilience training improves productivity at all levels of stressors



12

Tools: Rating scales, Symptom diaries, Reinforcers

- Enlists/reinforces the patient and their MD as partners
Reinforces taking control of own health care
- De-emphasizes regression, improves compliance
- Examples:
 - Pain scales
 - Sleep records
 - Apps and wearables

13

Health, Exercise, Sleep, Nutrition Apps

- Symple: Health and symptom tracker



- MyNetDiary: complete food and exercise tracker



- My Fitness Pal: comprehensive health/nutrition/exercise app



- Sleepbot: sleep quantity/quality tracker



- Fooducate: healthy food rating app - uses barcodes, grading⁴

Stress Management Apps

- SAM: anxiety monitoring and rating; self-help calming routines



- Stop Panic and Anxiety Help: More specific information and audio "walk-throughs" for panic events



- Headspace: popular, progressive guided meditation practices



- Calm: More basic breath meditation with nature sounds

15

Sleep Hygiene

- Poorly controlled sleep leads to cycle of daytime fatigue, loss of performance, heightened arousal/shame, more insomnia

"Honoring sleep": includes coaching in sleep hygiene skills

- Rigid sleep cycle, Limit napping/ "unauthorized use"
- Limit evening caffeine, alcohol
- Daily exercise
- Conditions: cool, dark, quiet/white noise
 - Evening "wind-down": reduce stimuli, slow down
 - Reading much better than TV
 - Watch "backlit" e-readers... blue light mimics sunrise!

16

Insomnia: treatment tips

- Assess sleep difficulty...
 - Early ("DFA"): anxiety, interior tension, pain
 - Middle ("FFS"): Anxiety/ruminations; can be W/D symptoms
 - Late (EMA): melancholic MDD, pain Rx wear off, PTSD
- Address distorted thinking about sleep
 - "earlier = better"; "8 hours is necessary"; "If I don't sleep, then..."
- Coach on managing wake-up's
 - Up or even out of bed if awake >15-30 minutes; try again
 - (don't "condition" bed as a place of struggle...)
 - Grin and bear it after ~ 2 am... try to stay up the following day
 - avoid "sleep inversion" pattern emerging

17

Exercise: A Good Stress Buster

- Builds stamina, nervous and immune system
- Represents routinized locus of control/ autonomy ("got my walk in, even if the rest of day went to")
- Lower the bar on a beginning routine ("20 minutes, sneakers, gravity") then build

18

Give it Away....

- Multiple studies show higher rates of self-rated contentment in those who volunteer time/effort
- The \$20 experiment....
- Consider activity thru ... schools, church, volunteer/ non-profit board work; hospitals/hospice; advocacy; animal rescue/aid; mentoring/ child guidance
- (Book tip "The Book of Joy")

19

Relaxation Breathing: An essential tactic

- Moderates "fight or flight" versus "rest/relax"
- Works via volitional control of respiration rate, slowing heart rate; resultant sino-atrial feedback calms, changes EEG!
- Most effective with....
 - full extension of diaphragm downward, full expansion of lung volume
 - Slow, gradual inhalation, even slower exhalation

20

Relaxation Breathing: Instructions

One hand on abdomen, other on chest

- Breathe through nose, filling lungs on a slow count to two. Lower lungs first (to push diaphragm down and abdomen out) and continuing to inhale into upper chest.
- Rest at full breath for a count of two.
- Exhale slowly through mouth on a count of four (TWICE as slowly as inhalation). Visualize tension leaving the body.
- Rest at the "bottom" of the breath for a count of two.

Repeat a minimum of four breaths.

Relaxation Breathing

Mindful breathing (also called "belly breathing" or "body breathing") helps you relax by gaining control of some basic body functions - breathing rate and heart rate. These functions tend to play off each other in a "feedback" loop.

- Usually effort is fueled by the tendency of the anxious person to breathe shallow, rapid breaths (hyperventilation), which reduces the amount of oxygen in your bloodstream.
- Our brain will sense even small reductions in oxygen in our bloodstream and send a message to the heart to beat more rapidly to get more oxygen there in the bloodstream to the rest of the body more efficiently.
- The anxious person will often perceive the increased heart rate and shortness of breath with even more anxiety - a "vicious cycle".

We can cut this loop the other way by voluntarily breathing slowly, full, deep breaths. Fully extended breaths will lead back to the heart to beat more slowly, so there is less need to compensate less-than-optimal oxygen intake.

First: hand on abdomen, hand on chest

- Inhale slowly through your nose, filling your lungs in a slow count to two (say, "one / two..."). Once inhaled, fill your lower lungs first (pushing your diaphragm down and your abdomen out) (hence the name "belly breathing") and continue to inhale into your upper chest.
- Hold the full breath for a moment (silently say, "hold it in").
- Exhale slowly through your mouth on a count of four in other words, TWICE as slowly as your inhalation (silently say, "half four... and four... and four... and four").
- Rest at the "bottom" of your breath. Visualize the tension leaving your body as you relax and gain control of your respiration.

Repeat the cycle of slow inhalation, hold, and even slower exhalation four times (or more, if you feel like it). Use the silence you feel as rest.

21

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

- Targets a common somatic manifestation of stress - muscle tension
 - Neck, shoulders, back, intercostals
 - Chronicity leads to trigger points; insomnia
- PMR: "finding" the muscle (via conscious tensing), then relaxing it
 - Move through muscle groups sequentially
 - Visual imagery, RB can be employed

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

People who often experience tight muscles or tight muscles without even realizing it, already connected muscles become even more relaxed as a result. Some of the most common sources include the neck, jaw, throat, shoulders, and muscles of the neck and upper back. It's important to relax these muscles because learning to control your muscle's state of being helps is a great way to reduce stress, and even ease your way into sleep without the use of medication.

But just "relaxing" all your muscles at once can be impossible. The most effective way of relaxation involves tensing the muscle groups separately, one at a time. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)**. The aim is to tense the muscle group first to focus your mind on the muscle group to be relaxed, then relax it, allowing the muscles to become more relaxed and relaxed.

First: Find a comfortable place to relax with all your muscles at gently lying on a bed, sitting in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, or lying on a carpeted floor with all of the above starting with a mental note of how tense your muscles feel.

- Start with your left hand. Clench it tightly for a count of four. Release your hand slowly in a count of 8 (twice as slowly as you tensed it) and relax. Repeat the tensing and relaxing of your right hand.
- Now tense your right hand for a count of four. Then release for a count of four. Remember to breathe slowly and evenly, as you learned in the relaxation breathing exercise.
- Now tense the right forearm. The forearm is the muscle group that is closest to the hand, then it is possible to compare the difference, then repeat with the right forearm.
- Next, apply the same process to your upper arm. First off, then a pause, then right. Keep breathing slowly and evenly.
- Now shoulders and neck are next. Bring your shoulders to a four count, and then relax. Now your neck is tensing your head back four count and then relax. Then do the same with your neck and neck.
- Now head to neck. Tense your head back in a four count (your count) and relax. Close your eyes tightly (your count) and relax. Then as well as you can (four count) and relax. Then your face tightly (three count) and relax. Remember to breathe slowly.
- Next is your upper body. Tense your chest muscles by taking a full breath, holding for four, the relaxing and your head tightly (four count). Now, hold your arm in tightly (four count) and relax.
- Next are the hips and buttocks. Press these back together tightly for a count of four, then relax.
- Lastly, work on your legs - their thighs, then lower legs, then feet and toes. As you sit with your arms, with your legs, tighten and hold for four, then relax the difference, and then do the same on the right.

Practice for a moment and notice the difference in how your muscles feel compared to before the exercise.

PMR: Instructions

First: Comfortable seating, all muscles at gravity; rate tension

Place attention on one hand - clench for a count of 4, then release slowly to a count of 4. Breathe deeply and slowly during tightening and release. Compare one hand to other. Repeat exercise with other hand.

Repeat process sequentially with muscle groupings...

Ending: Note pre- and post- differences in tension 1-10 rating)

23

ADAPT: A cognitive/behavioral routine

- Helps with "mindless" ritualized behaviors, intense interior states
 - panic anxiety
 - cravings
 - compulsions
- Define the item to be managed (not "cured"); function is job #1
- Explore experience of that sensation - as fully as possible
 - Break it into physical, emotional and cognitive components
 - Try to nail down "earliest reliable signal"
 - "Don't wait 'til the horse is out of the barn" (peak intensity)

24

ADAPT: The Routine

"A" for Accept: Accept the momentary state (say "hello")

"D" for Data: gather 3 bits of information on your state

- 1-10 scale; Time Stamp: When is it happening?; Why now?

■ **"A" for Ahhhh...:** (think spa treatment, not a shriek of terror...)

Take a minute or 2 for a brief relaxation break

"P" for Productive: Go back to whatever you were doing

■ **"T" for Trending:** Go back and reassess if/when you get stuck

25

Meditation for Stress Management

Mindfulness: non-judgmental, moment-to-moment awareness

Meditation: an organized, intentional practice of cultivating mindfulness

Core benefit - gradual adaptation to varied states of mind

Success factors:

A quiet place to practice, a fairly regular time of day (consider a timer)

Sitting, comfortable but alert, eyes slightly open trained on a spot

A "fresh", non-judgmental attitude...

Suggest starting with 1-2 minutes at a time, slowly building to 15-20 minutes/day

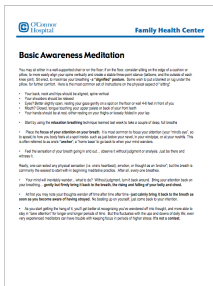
26

Meditation 101: Start with the breath

Place attention on the sensation of breathing

A few relaxation breaths to start, then just witnessing)

- The mind will invariably wander to thought... when that happens, without judgment, note it, and return to watching the breath
- Goal: "pitch and catch" with attention; building adaptation to experience

**Meditation 102: The "3-pointer" variation**

- Witness the IN breath, then the OUT breath... at the end of exhalation, open attention out to the whole "felt sense of the body" - then to the next in-breath

27

Mindful Movement

Using physical motion as the anchor for attention

Often more effective for those with poor baseline attention, physical conditions that preclude sitting

Examples:

Walking meditation

Yoga

Tai Chi

Qi Gong (Chi Kung, Chi Gong) - "energy practices"

28

Summary

Stress represents the body heart/mind's response to novelty and uncertainty - to be tamed rather than eliminated

Attorneys have some specific temperamental attributes that set up for stress: shame, pessimists, perfectionism

Predictors for lower stress, higher contentment: sleep hygiene, healthy nutrition, regular activity/ exercise.... and compassionate action (volunteering, etc.)

Consider use of both "dx" tactics (journaling, self rating, apps) and "tx" tactics (relaxation breathing, PMR, cognitive tactics, mindfulness practices)

29

FINIS

... thanks for listening.

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30