

Session 2: Our Reactions to Stress



- Centering meditation
- Go around
- Home practice review
- Health topic:
 - Upstream, Downstream
- Raisin eating exercise
- Health topic:
 - Introduction to Stress
- Mind-body:
 - Body Scan
- Review home practice assignments
- Recipe

Upstream, Downstream



"Imagine a large river with a high waterfall. At the bottom of this waterfall hundreds of people are working frantically trying to save those who have fallen into the river and have fallen down the waterfall, many of them drowning. As the people along the shore are trying to rescue as many as possible one individual looks up and sees a seemingly never-ending stream of people falling down the waterfall and begins to run upstream. One of other rescuers hollers, "Where are you going? There are so many people that need help here." To which the man replied, "I'm going upstream to find out why so many people are falling into the river."

Reference: Saul Alinsky, in Shelden & Macallair

What is Stress?

Stress is our brain and body's response to any demand or change.

All animals have a built-in stress response, which is called the '*fight or flight*' response. This response developed as the body's way of preparing for a dangerous situation. This physical response comes from a rush of hormones, like adrenaline, that speed up your heart and breathing, offering a burst of intense energy.

Stress in the modern world:

With life's increasing pace, there are many daily events that can trigger stress. Stressors can include your daily commute, crowded spaces, and changes in relationships, work, and money. Long-term stressors can include traumatic events, death of a loved one, and chronic illness.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THERE IS POSITIVE STRESS AND THERE IS NEGATIVE STRESS.

What is ***positive stress***?

- *A sense of challenge and excitement*
- *A sense of renewed energy*
- *Paying attention to detail, increased accuracy*
- *Feelings of excitement and hope*
- *Increased self-confidence*

What is ***negative stress***?

- *Feeling that the demands from the outside world are greater than what you can manage*

If not addressed, long-term negative stress can lead to many serious mental, emotional, and physical health problems.

Reference: <http://nimh.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>

Watch the OWL video:
Our Reactions to Stress



What are some negative effects of stress on the **body**?

Short Term Physical Symptoms

'Fight or flight' response
Faster heart beat
Increased sweating
Cool skin
Cold hands and feet
Rapid Breathing
Constipation
Tense Muscles
Dry Mouth
A desire to urinate
Tiredness
Diarrhea
'Butterflies in stomach'

Long Term Physical Symptoms

Pain
Change in Appetite
Asthma
Headaches
Frequent colds
Digestive problems
Depression
Skin eruptions
Aches and pains
Feelings of long-term trouble
Sleeping/insomnia
Inflammation

What are some changes in your **thinking**?

You may notice:

- It is hard to concentrate
- Lowered self-confidence
- Lapses of memory
- Poor judgment
- Feeling pressured

What are changes in your **emotions**?

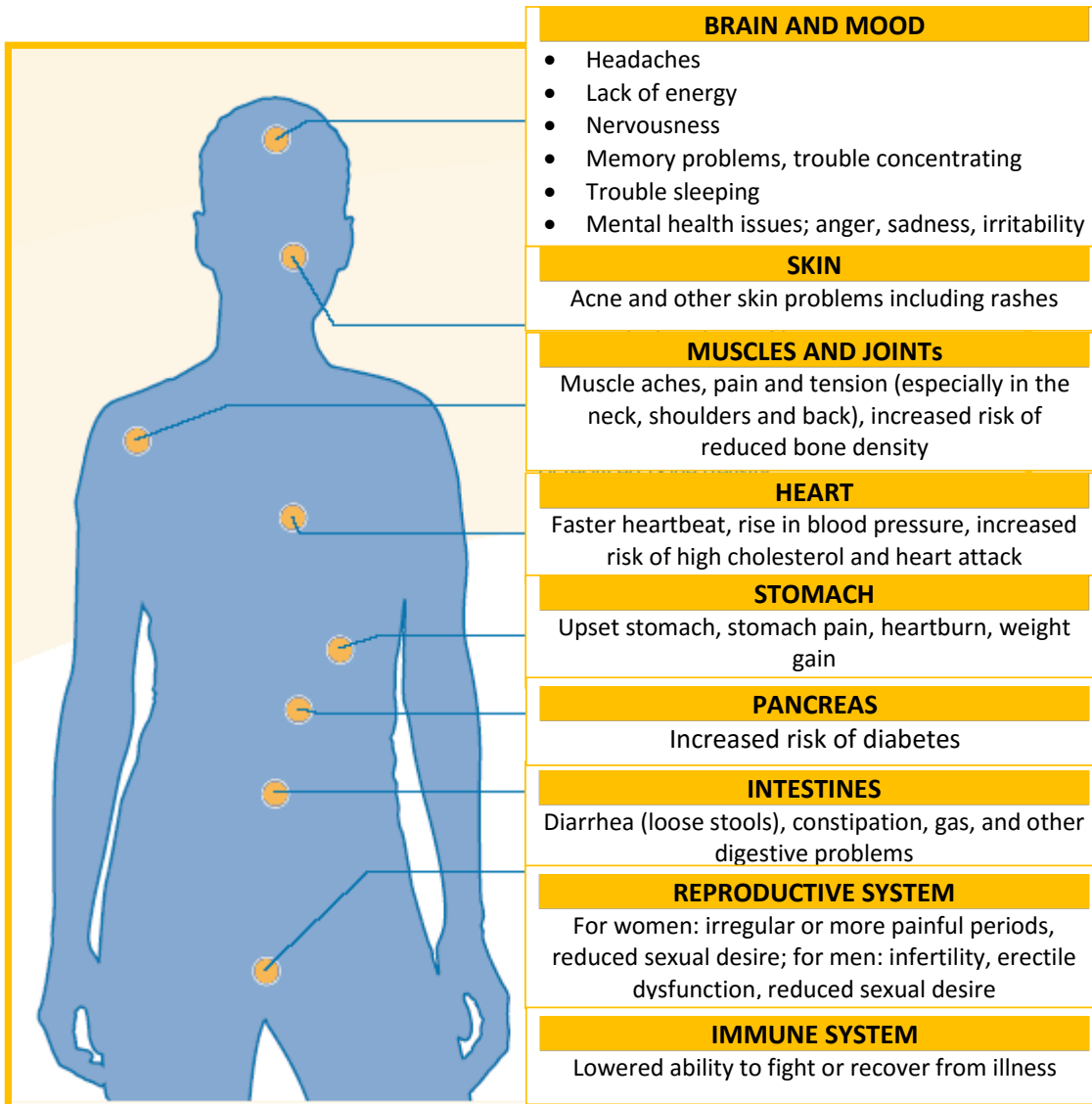
You may notice:

- Resentment
- Anger and irritability
- Feeling "on edge" or agitated
- Feeling blue, down, hopeless
- Moodiness

References:

1. *UMass Department of Psychiatry Health Psychology Program*
2. <http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/stress-and-anxiety/what-stress>
3. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>

Stress and Your Body



Ways to Respond to Stress

-Everyone responds to stress differently-

WHAT ARE SOME **UNHEALTHY** WAYS TO RESPOND TO STRESS?

Examples:

- Increased smoking, alcohol, drug use
- Withdrawing from loved ones
- Absenteeism
- Overeating
- _____
- _____
- _____

WHAT ARE SOME **HEALTHY** WAYS TO RESPOND TO STRESS?

Examples:

- Deep breathing
- Exercise: Start with a 10 minute walk or 10 minutes of stretching during the day.
- Reach out to a friend or family member; connecting with people that we love can help us feel more relaxed and supported.
- Eating healthy foods
- Listening to music or singing
- Prayer
- Writing in a journal
- Taking time for yourself
- _____
- _____

Adapted from U. Mass Medical School, Department of Psychiatry,
'Improve Your Health through Better Stress Management'

Home Practice: Session 2



MIND-BODY PRACTICE

- Practice the body scan once a day, 6 out of 7 days this week
 - Visit OWL for audio of the body scan. OWL can help you practice

Guidelines for doing the body scan:

- Regardless of what happens (falling asleep, losing concentration, being distracted by thoughts, emotions or physical sensations), stay with the practice. You can do it!
- These are your experiences in the moment. All you have to do is be aware of them even if your mind is wandering.
- This is not a competition. This is a time for quiet and privacy.
- Be open to whatever you experience during the body scan.
- Cultivate an attitude of openness, curiosity and friendly acknowledgement about what is here right now. There is no need to fight off or suppress any unpleasant thoughts, emotions or sensations-or to hold onto pleasant ones.
- You don't have to like the body scan. The most important thing is to stick with it and see what happens.

DAILY LIFE PRACTICE

- Take a few moments each day to pay attention to thoughts, emotions and physical sensations.
- Eat one meal mindfully.

MANUAL ACTIVITY

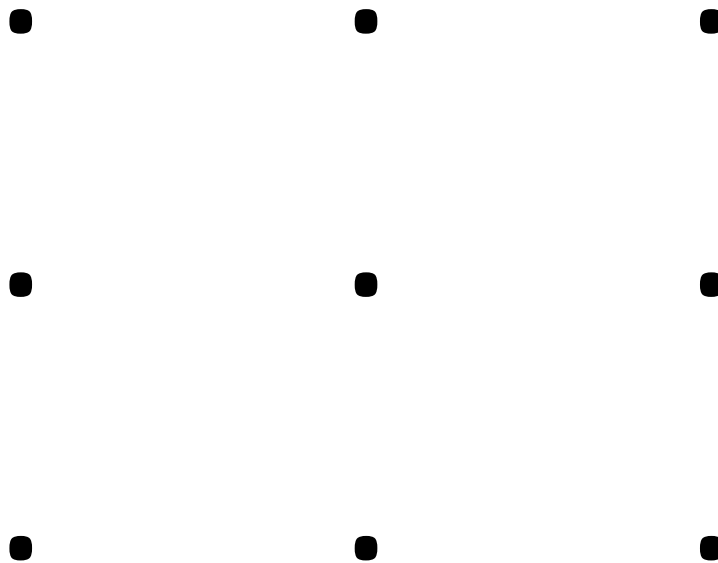
- Nine Dots

HEALTH TOPIC VIDEO

- Our Reactions to Stress

Nine Dots Exercise

Directions: Connect up all these dots with four straight lines without lifting the pencil or retracing over any of your lines.



Sautéed Vegetables and Quinoa

Serves 4

This mood-boosting recipe offers an abundance of fiber and vitamins to fuel your day.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup quinoa, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable stock (or water)
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 bell pepper (any color), diced
- 1 cup of broccoli, sectioned (or use frozen)
- 4 tablespoons sunflower seeds (optional)



Image credit: kirstenskitchen.blogspot.com

Tools:

- ✓ Large pot
- ✓ Large Pan
- ✓ Cutting board
- ✓ Knife
- ✓ Spatula/something to mix veggies

Tips:

- ✓ Use any combination of vegetables in this recipe: the more colors, the better! Zucchini, spinach, summer squash, avocado, carrots, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes make awesome additions.
- ✓ Frozen fruits and veggies can be just as nutritious, and can often be a much more cost efficient option.

Instructions:

1. Wash and chop vegetables. Set aside.
2. Heat large pot over medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil.
3. Add onions and garlic and sauté until soft.
4. Add the vegetable stock or water and bring to a boil. Add quinoa. Reduce heat and simmer the quinoa until most of the liquid is absorbed, about 15 minutes.
5. In a separate sauté pan, add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and sauté vegetables until tender over medium-high heat.
6. Top cooked quinoa with sautéed vegetables and serve with any additional toppings, like sunflower seeds or lean protein.

Health Benefits:

- ✓ Foods high in vitamin B, including quinoa, have a calming effect on the body, improving mood and decreasing feelings of stress and anxiety.
- ✓ Red bell peppers are high in vitamins A, C and folate, which give you more energy and help to repair cell damage caused by stress.
- ✓ Sunflower seeds contain high levels of vitamin E and folate, which help to enhance your mood and increase energy

