STRESS AND COPING IN THE WORKPLACE

Strategies and action steps that work!
WHO ARE YOU?

• Dr. Darrin Thorvaldson
• 1/7 of this crew!
• Chiropractor and a health and wellness educator
• 15 years in clinical practice
• Member of the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association, College of Chiropractic Sport Sciences (Canada)
• Professional focus on the neurology of chronic pain
YOU NEVER KNOW HOW FAR REACHING SOMETHING YOU MAY THINK, SAY OR DO TODAY, WILL AFFECT THE LIVES OF MILLIONS TOMORROW!

-B.J. Palmer, D.C.
WHAT IS STRESS?

• **STRESS**, in everyday terms, is a feeling that people have when they are overloaded and struggling to cope with demands.

• Anything that poses a real or perceived challenge or threat to a person's well-being can cause **STRESS**.

• **STRESS** elicits the “Flight-or-Fight” response in our body which is essential to our survival.

• However, if this mechanism is triggered too easily, or active too long, it can undermine a person's mental and physical health and become harmful.
**TYPES OF STRESS**

**PHYSICAL STRESSORS**  
Physical stressors may produce pain and impair work performance  
- Sitting at a desk  
- Sitting in a meeting  
- Smart phone use

**CHEMICAL STRESSORS**  
Chemical stressors may influence metabolism and tissue repair  
- Tobacco, alcohol, drugs  
- Environment  
- Your body’s own biochemicals

**MENTAL STRESSORS**  
Mental/emotional stressors may influence behaviour and cognition  
- Meetings, deadlines, results  
- Workplace atmosphere  
- Promotions and workloads
THE SCIENCE OF STRESS

What can it do to our bodies?
REFERENCES

- Fitz Rilson D. The anatomy and physiology of the muscle spindle, and its role in posture and movement: review. ICCA 1982; 24:144-50.

COPING MECHANISMS FOR STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Relaxation Techniques
2. Meeting Prep Techniques
3. Meeting Debrief Techniques
4. What if I Bring it Home?
Meditation decreases oxygen consumption, heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure, while increasing the intensity of alpha and delta brainwaves – the opposite to the physiological changes that occur during stress.

– Dr. Herbert Benson, Harvard Medical School
MEDITATION – MIND QUIETING EXERCISES

• Taking 10 minutes to meditate before tackling a difficult task can help anxious people focus and get the job done.

• Long-term, consistent meditation does seem to increase resiliency to stress.

• Meditation might not be good for everyone all the time!
  The varieties of contemplative experience: A mixed-methods study of meditation-related challenges in Western Buddhists; Lindahl, J., Fisher, N., Cooper, D., Rosen, R., Britton, W.; Published May 24, 2017; https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0176239
MEDITATION – MIND QUIETING EXERCISES

1. A Pure Environment. This refers to both the internal and external environments. This can be a quiet room, a place of worship, or a place with natural sounds such as a lake, a running creek, under some trees...

2. Absence of Internal Dialogue – Thoughtlessness. Quieting the mind requires the absence of internal dialogue. A quite mind is not thinking, it is being. DON'T JUDGE YOUR SUCCESS! Have no expectations. You are practicing. The more you practice the more skilled you will become at this.

3. A Concentration Focus. This can be a natural sound like water running or the trees rustling, it can be your own breathing, contracting and relaxing every muscle in your body, a single syllable word with a positive connotation like God, or Love, or Peace, or Free...If a distracting thought creeps in calmly return to the concentration focus you have chosen.

4. A Comfortable Position That Requires Wakefulness. The goal of meditation is a quite mind not sleep! Find a position, other than sleep, that you can comfortably remain in for 10-20 minutes. Release the tension from your muscles and the pen your hands. Maintain good posture; it is essential to muscle relaxation, proper breathing, blood, lymphatic and energy flow. This may be difficult at first but as you progress the tension will ease.

5. Deep, Slow, Diaphragmatic Breathing. Using your diaphragm, slowly inhale as much air as possible through your nose. Think of filling your stomach with air instead of your chest. Gently hold for 1-3 seconds then relax your diaphragm and slowly exhale as fully as possible through your mouth. If you are using a word or a sound for concentration focus, say the word or utter the sound as you exhale. Bring your belly button toward your spine as you exhale.
BINAURAL BEATS – MIND QUIETING EXERCISES

Binaural beats therapy is an emerging form of soundwave therapy in which the right and left ears listen to two slightly different frequency tones yet perceive the tone as one. This, in turn, has an affect on brainwaves and their physiological impact to the body.

- Can increase the level of Melatonin and DHEA as well as reduce the levels of Cortisol.


- Potential benefits of Binaural Beat Therapy include reduced stress, reduced anxiety, deeper meditation and improved psychomotor performance and mood

To listen to binaural beats, a person will need a pair of stereo headphones and a music system.

Avoid using binaural beats therapy while undertaking tasks that require alertness and full attention, such as driving.

Find a quiet and relaxing place to enjoy. Sessions are often preset to 10-20 minutes at a time depending on the goal for that day. Great APPs on your smart phone as well as found in Itunes

To get the full and maximal effect of binaural beats therapy, people should practice it for 10-20 minutes every day for 30 to 45 days.

Once you have completed this initial therapy, you should continue to use it regularly as part of a maintenance practice, such as meditation and yoga.
I was always prepared for success but that means that I have to be prepared for failure, too.

— Shel Silverstein
MEETING PREP – ESTABLISH YOUR GOAL AND POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

*Important for his strategy is it is **WRITTEN DOWN, NOT TYPED**. The reason for this is you can activate both the left and right hemispheres of the brain at the same time, which we believe does not happen when typing!

1. **Establish the goal of the meeting** – YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME
2. **Ask questions.** Put your goal through the test by asking good questions. Are you prepared?
3. **Identify obstacles.** Identify the obstacles you must overcome in order to achieve your goal.
4. **Identify the worst possible outcome.** Ask yourself if an you live with this result?
5. **List the benefits.** This is where you create enough **LEVERAGE** to convince yourself that you must absolutely reach your goal.

After completing this strategy, you may go into every meeting with confidence and calmness. You can then make good decisions, communicate authentically, address potential conflict and get what you want!
Understand that you are **50%** of every interaction and every relationship – **NOT MORE, NOT LESS** -- so be fully accountable for your part.
debriefing activities
MEETING DEBRIEF – IMPORTANT TO ASSESS COMPETENCE AND CREATE CLOSURE

• One of the most underrated development tools available is the debrief activity.

• Can improve individual and team performance by approximately 20% to 25% by using properly conducted debriefs.

• Two steps needed to get closure on an activity:
  1. **The Debrief**—a time for processing whereby you review, experience and extract key learning points.
  2. **The Commitment**—when you consciously make the effort to commit the information you have learned to memory and take the action needed in implementing the changes.

**MEETING DEBRIEF – CREATING CLOSURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were you successful in achieving your goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did anything surprise you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you do well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could you do differently?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do your best and let the rest go. You can’t be perfect, no matter how hard you try, so give yourself credit for making an effort, and try to stop stressing about the outcome.

-Lori Deschene
What if I can’t shut it off and I bring it home with me?
The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.

William James
BRAIN EXERCISES

• Tools you can use to influence thoughts and stress
• Just like strategies for gaining muscle mass, leanin out or losing weight are different for the body, brain exercises have different purposes based on the need
• These are some of my favourite tools I use in my office to help my patients improve on their health journeys!
• Journaling, writing down worries and reminders for the following day, gratitude journal
• An important technique when one is going through a particularly stressful time in life or experienced a stressful event.
• As a stress management and self-exploration tool, one must write in detail about feelings and cognitions related to stressful events, as one would discuss topics in therapy.
• When you journal, remember the simple acronym: WRITE!
  • W - What do you want to write about?
  • R - Review or reflect on it.
  • I - Investigate your thoughts and feelings through your writing.
  • T - Time yourself to ensure that you write for at least 5 minutes.
  • E - Exit strategically and with introspection.

Info provided by: 83 Benefits of Journaling for Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Management; Courtney Ackerman

Research:
Writing in a journal may also be as effective as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for reducing symptoms of depression in high-risk adolescents (Stice, Burton, Bearman, & Rohde, 2006).
Reduce physical symptoms, health problems, and anxiety in women (LaClaire, 2008).
Journaling can help college students who are vulnerable to depression reduce their brooding and rumination, two contributing factors of depressive symptoms (Gortner, Rude, & Pennebäcker, 2006).
Do you sometimes lie in bed repeating to yourself something important you need to remember to do the next day?

Thoughts like these can buzz around your head. Joined by other worries and reminders from your mental to-do list, this can lead to poor sleep, increased stress physiology and lead to anxiety type feelings.

Make a “To Do” list before going to bed. That way you know you won’t forget anything important and you can relax.

“To Do” list should be a maximum of 5 things you need to do the next day or remember for the next day. If the list is too long, it can be daunting.

Should be done on a regular basis to help form the habit. Repetition is the key to success!
GRATEFUL JOURNAL

• We think around 60,000 thoughts a day, of which roughly **85%** of them are negative.

• Thoughts can be the single most destructive influence in some one’s health, or the single most impactful!

• We can impact this process by retraining the brain to look for the good

• A grateful journal is a daily exercise in positivity

• **In clinical trial**, those who practiced Gratitude Writing reported a significant improvement in their mental health

*Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients? Evidence from a randomized controlled trial; Wong, Y.J., Owen, J., Gabana, N.T., Brown, J.W., McInnis, S., Toth, P., Gilman, L.; Journal of Psychotherapy Research, Pages 192-202 | Received 31 Jul 2015, Accepted 01 Mar 2016, Published online: 03 May 2016

• The brain is most influential last thing before you go to bed and first thing when you wake up

• Strategy: Every night write down the 3 things you are most grateful for.
ACTION STEPS
WRITE IT DOWN!
Everything will always be fine, as long as you are willing to do **whatever** it takes.

So the real question then isn’t 

“**WILL EVERYTHING BE OKAY?**”

It’s 

“**WILL YOU DO WHATEVER IT TAKES?**”

---

“The Laughing Empath”