

Stress and Vulnerability

DYK?...Some of us are more vulnerable than others due to our lifestyle, personality and access to support systems

What is Stress Actually?

- Stress is a physical and psychological response to circumstances in our environment that test our ability to cope
- Usually we think of these circumstances as negative but stress can be caused by positive change as well

Can Stress ever be good for you?

- Positive stress is known as **Eustress**
 - An example of positive stress is participating in an athletic activity and getting ‘pumped’ > this is a similar physical response to what happens to the body during negative stress.
- You get an adrenaline rush as you prepare to face, volley, tackle and so on. The exhilaration and adrenaline help energize you. However, positive stress is not persistent so it does not have the same negative impact that ongoing negative stress may have.
- Having some stress can help keep us alert and paying attention. An example of this would be caring enough about a test or exam to be focused rather than not caring.



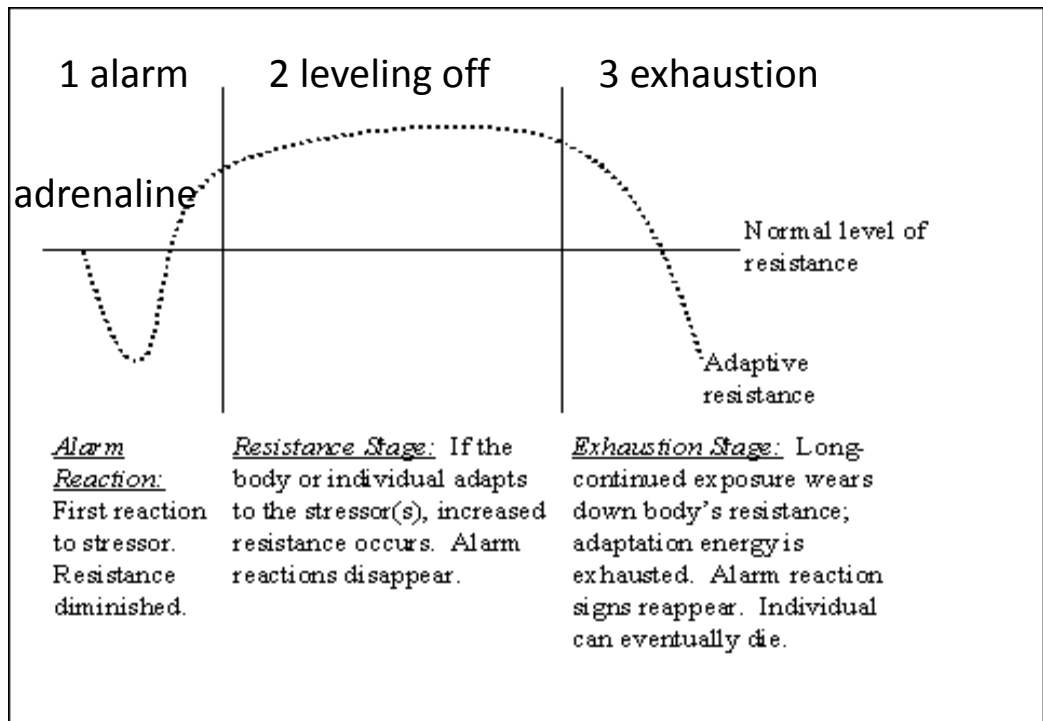
When can stress be bad for you?

- It can take a physical and psychological toll when it is ongoing.

General Adaptation Syndrome

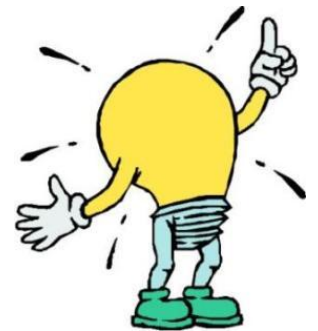
- Hans Selye, worked with animals and stress and found that regardless of the type of stress > the physical impact is the same. According to this research there are three phases or stages of stress.

There is a link between stress and physical illness



Causes of Stress

- Loss of important relationship, tragic events beyond our control, things that pose a long term threat (like job loss or abuse), catastrophic events , major positive changes (new girlfriend, new job, winning the lottery), physical concerns (illness) decisions between conflicting roles (duties as a daughter versus student versus employee)
- Stress is normal it is part of living... we all have it but how we deal with it differs



How Defenceless Are You to Stress?



Your Own Vulnerability and Stress

- If your score is below 25 you are less vulnerable
- If your score is above 25 you are vulnerable
- If your score is between 44 and 68 you are very vulnerable
- A score over 68 you are extremely vulnerable

- How can we **decrease** our vulnerability?
 - look back at the list and determine if there are areas that you can make improvements
 - Some of these things are out of our control – especially if you are a teenager as you are still dependent on a parent or guardian



Understanding & Coping with Stress

- Does it matter how stressed we are?
- **YES**
- People who cope better with stress are essentially more mentally healthy
- **So it is important to understand how to deal with stress...**



- **Stress Cognitive Appraisal** a 2 step process for assessing (evaluating) how bad a stressor is...
- **Step 1**
- The person assesses the degree of the threat (just how bad is this?)
- **Step 2**
- The person decides what ways they can deal with it and looking for balance is important
- If the **threat is high** and **ways to deal with it are low** >>>>>
 - This can be considered a high level of stress
- If the **threat is lower** and **there are ways to deal with it**>>>>
- This can be considered a lower or moderate level of stress

Negative versus Positive

- Negative ways to deal with stress often provide only short time relief. They do not solve the problem and in fact they may even add to it.



- Examples of negative ways to deal with stress include...

- Essentially then you are looking for **positive** ways to either minimize stress – remove it from your life when and if that is possible

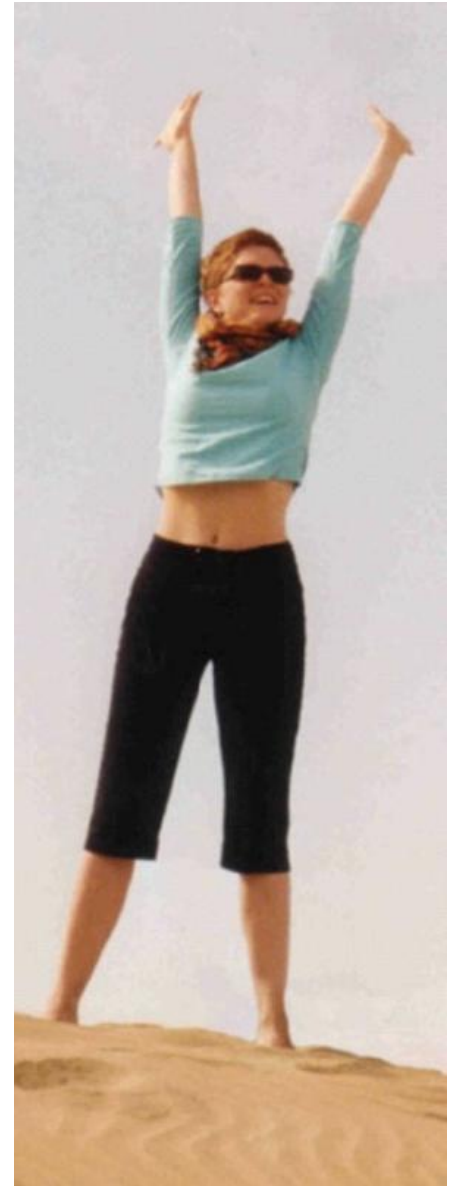
OR...

- If it is something you cannot remove then you need to look at ways to be able to deal with it better – because in this case the only control you have is over how you respond to the situation – this may require changing our mental, physical and or behavioural reactions to something

- Even small changes can make us feel like we have more control
- Having control is the key to lowering stress, it empowers us

Steven Covey... We each create our own weather

how we choose to look at a situation or respond is key



Causes of Stress Exercise

- Look at the handout...Causes of Stress.
- Choose **two** of the causes that might be affecting you the most. For each of those...
 1. Come up with ways to change the situation for the better.
 2. Are there any ways to get rid of the main sources of this stress?
 3. How can we / you change your mental or physical reaction to this?