

R U STRESSED?



**Come get D-Stressed
-- and Learn about Stress and
Workers' Compensation**

Scary Stats

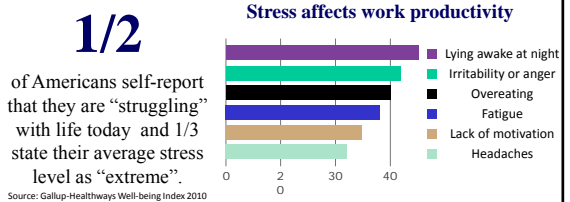
- ◆ According to the APA, Job stress costs US businesses \$300 Billion related to:
 - Medical
 - Legal
 - Insurance costs
 - Loss of productivity
 - Absenteeism
 - Turnover

How are you managing it?



Can you do better?

Let's start with the big picture: The impact of stress on health



And drives health care costs up 46%.

Source: Journal of Occupational Environmental Medicine

Dr. Michael Lacroix,
Licensed Psychologist (FL)
Director, Behavioral Health Services
Coventry Workers Comp Services
Associate Medical Director, Aetna
Disability



More generally, we know that:

- 50 – 80% of all reported medical illnesses have a stress-related component¹
- People with high rates of medical service use have 4x the prevalence of depression and anxiety¹
- Depression costs \$51 billion a year in absenteeism, \$26 billion in direct cost²

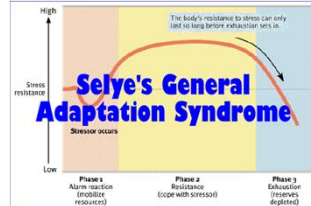
¹Healthy People, "Mental Health and Mental Disorders" (chapter 18), NIH and SAMHSA, January 2013.
²"Mental Illness: Facts and Numbers," National Alliance on Mental Illness, October 2013.

Outline

- ◆ The science of Stress
- ◆ The signs of stress
- ◆ Stress appraisal
- ◆ Strategies for managing stress

Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome

- ◆ In the 30's Selye showed that animals present a very similar series of reactions to stress, which he broke into three stages:
- ◆ Selye identified the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis as the system mediating the stress response



- ◆ **What this means to you:** There are psychological consequences of stress at every stage.
- ◆ GAS may be a useful "context": Use this as a framework for looking at the broader impact of the stressor

Stress is a normal part of responding to the demands of living

- ◆ Having stress is not bad, in itself. What is bad is experiencing excessive or prolonged stress.
- ◆ Survival mechanism
- ◆ Protects the person
- ◆ Generates fight reaction
- ◆ Generates flight reaction
- ◆ Enables rapid reactions to a changing situation
- ◆ Enhances survival thinking
- ◆ Enables perceptual focusing to eliminate distractions



Stage 1: Alarm

- ◆ Physiological and psychological resources are mobilized to fight the stressor
- ◆ Adrenaline is produced to bring about the "fight or flight" response
- ◆ Even early on, there can be negative psychological consequences



A bit of history: Hans Selye (1907-1982)

- ◆ Father of stress
- ◆ Borrowed "stress" from physics
- ◆ Initially defined stress as the **non-specific response** of an organism to **any** demand placed upon it
- ◆ Later narrowed stress to refer to the consequences of the **failure** of a human or animal to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats, whether actual or imagined.
- ◆ In Selye's terminology, "stress" refers to the **reaction** of the organism, and "stressor" to the perceived **threat**



Stage 2: Resistance

- ◆ The coping stage
- ◆ Can go on for some time
- ◆ If the stressor persists, the body needs to start coping, but this cannot be kept up indefinitely as resources become depleted



Stage 3: Exhaustion

- ◆ The body's resources are depleted as it cannot maintain normal functioning.
- ◆ Negative health consequences include adrenal gland and immune system functions, and illnesses including ulcers, depression, diabetes, digestive and cardiovascular diseases, etc.



"Stress" nowadays



- ◆ Now used generally as a catch-all for any perceived difficulties in life.
- ◆ It covers a huge range of phenomena from mild irritation to the kind of severe problems that might result in a real breakdown of health
- ◆ Signs of excessive stress may be
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Cognitive
 - Behavioral

It doesn't have to be all bad:

Selye (1975) distinguished between:

- ◆ Eustress (from the Greek for "good stress), where stress enhances functioning, such as through challenging work or strength training, and
- ◆ Distress, Persistent stress that is not resolved through coping or adaptation, and may lead to anxiety or withdrawal (depression) behavior.

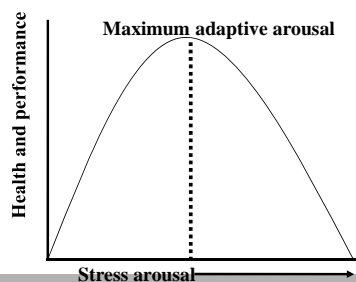
Physical Signs of Excessive Stress

- ◆ Dry mouth
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Racing heart
- ◆ Chills
- ◆ Gastro-intestinal distress
- ◆ Sweating
- ◆ Muscle tremors
- ◆ Elevated blood pressure



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Stress is not really all bad: Stress Curve



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Emotional Signs of Excessive Stress

- ◆ Emotional shock
- ◆ Sadness / Depression
- ◆ Frustration
- ◆ Anger / Rage
- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Feeling overwhelmed
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Fear
- ◆ Phobic reactions
- ◆ Withdrawal



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Cognitive Signs of Excessive Stress

- ◆ Mental confusion
- ◆ Inability to concentrate
- ◆ Poor attention span
- ◆ Difficulties in problem solving
- ◆ Memory disruptions
- ◆ Impaired decision making
- ◆ Time distortions



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Bottom line: Reality is perception:

- ◆ Stress often has less to do with the event or the situation than with our **perception of the meaning** of the event or situation
- ◆ **Conclusion:** How we change people's perceptions is going to be a major key to stress management



Behavioral Signs of Excessive Stress

- ◆ Hypervigilance
- ◆ Intrusive thoughts
- ◆ Sleep disturbance; distressing dreams
- ◆ Appetite / weight disturbance
- ◆ Avoidance of workplace
- ◆ Social withdrawal
- ◆ Strained relationships



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How do we change perceptions?

HOW DO WE GET PSYCHOLOGICAL
DISTANCE FROM THE EVENTS THAT
"STRESS US OUT"?

And now for the Psychology lesson...

- ◆ Lazarus and others argued that in order for a psychosocial situation to be stressful, it must be **appraised** as such.
- ◆ Cognitive processes of appraisal are central in determining whether a situation is potentially threatening, constitutes a harm/loss, a challenge, or is benign.



Stress Management Strategies

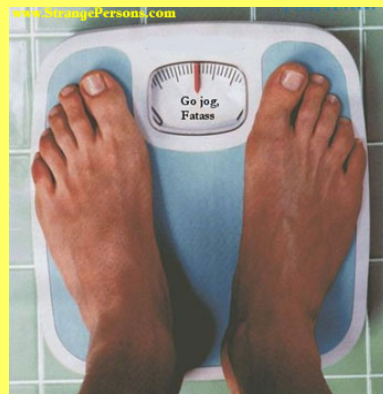
- ◆ Humor

A Prayer for the Stressed



Lord,
Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I cannot accept,
and the wisdom to hide the bodies of those people
I had to kill today because they ticked me off.

How we create a lot of our own stress!



And also, help me to be careful
Of the toes I step on today,
As they may be connected to the behind
That I may have to kiss tomorrow.

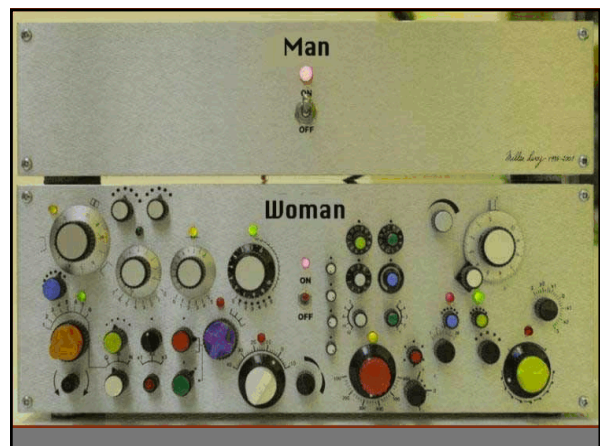
Help me to always give 100% at work....
12% on Monday
23% on Tuesday
40% on Wednesday
20% on Thursday
5% on Fridays

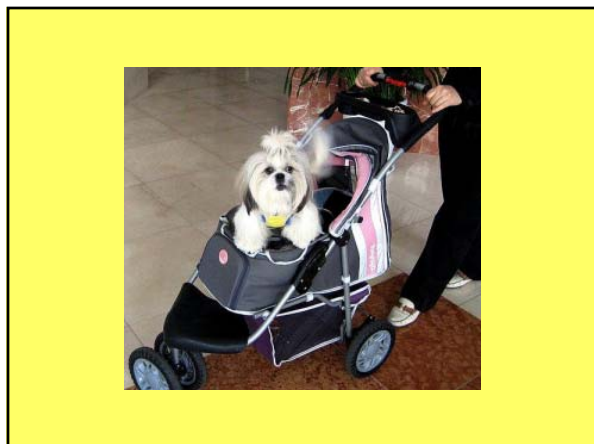
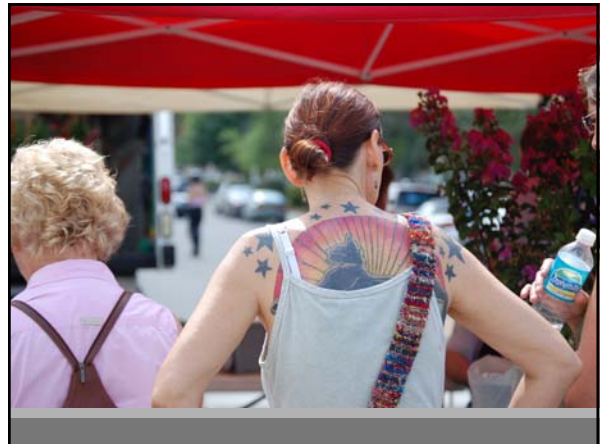
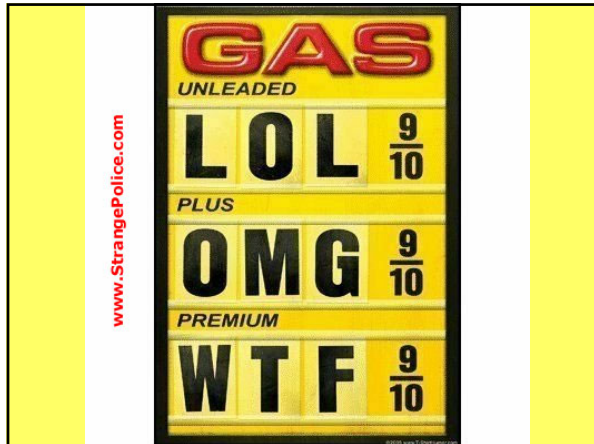


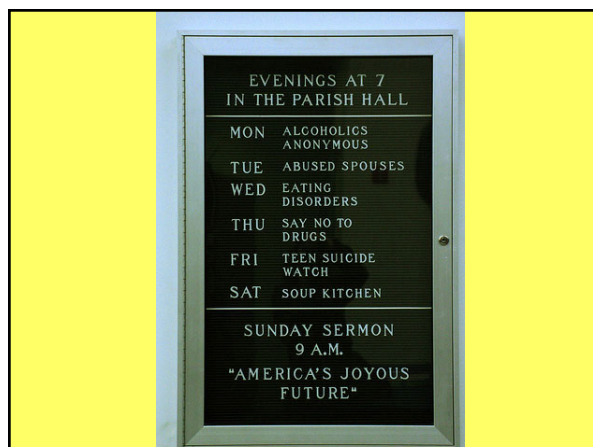
And help me to remember.....

When I'm having a really bad day,
and it seems that people are trying to tick me off,
that it takes 42 muscles to frown, but
only 4 to extend my middle finger and tell them to bite me!

Amen







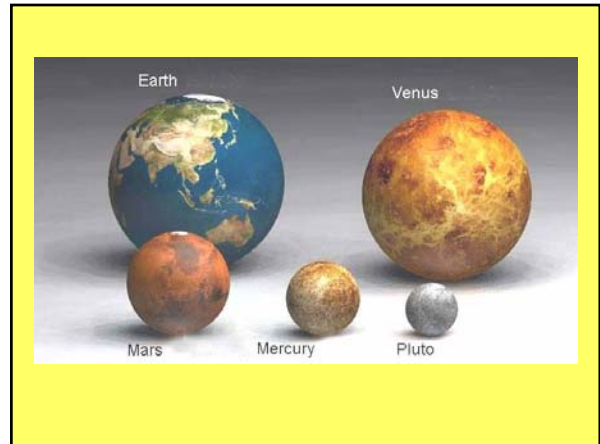


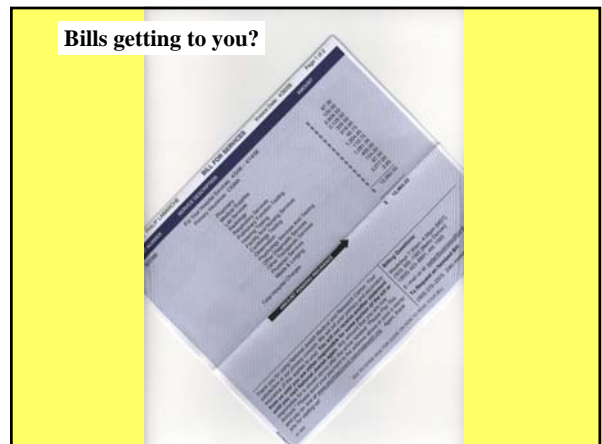
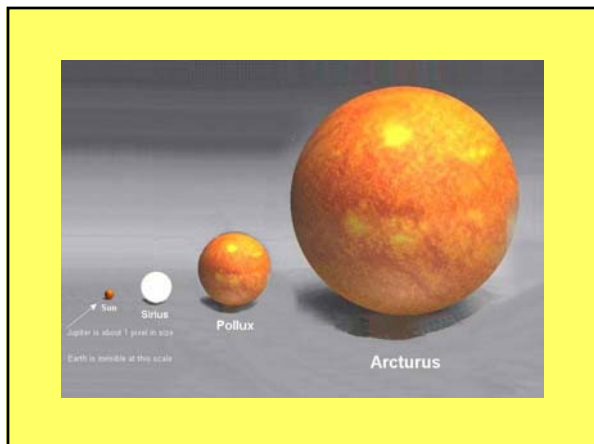
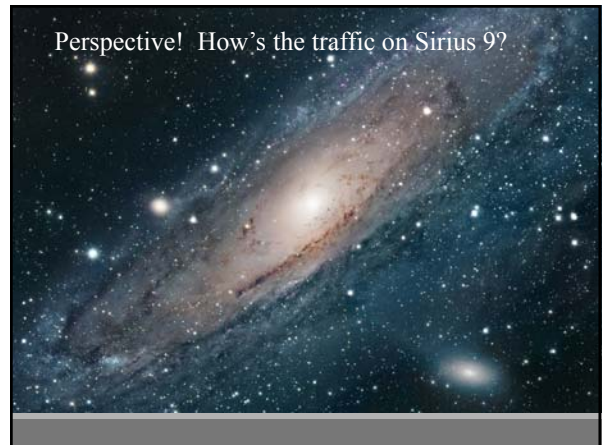
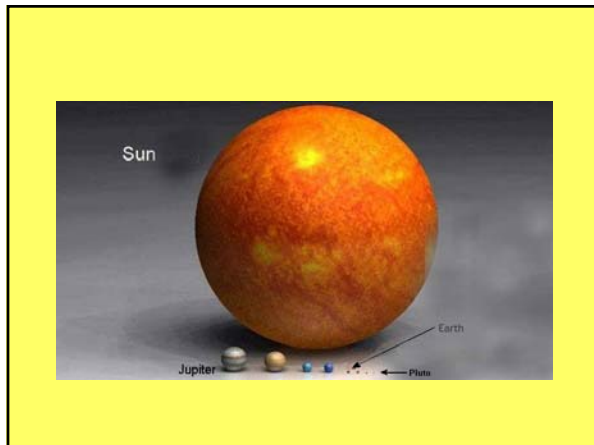
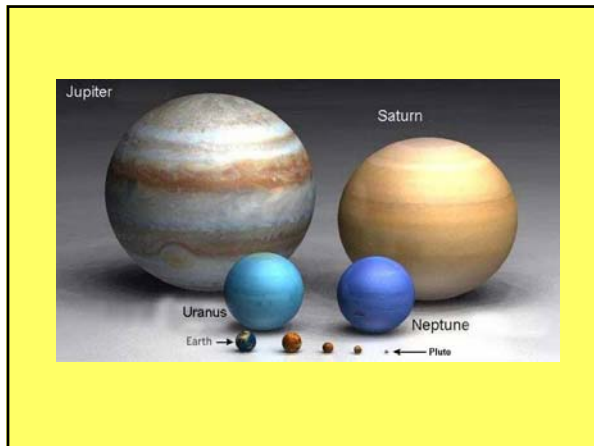


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Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Perspective





There but for the grace of God



Time Pressure getting to you?



What are you doing to save time?

Oh no! Not another blemish!



How big a hurry are you really in?



What do you mean you can't see it?



There's no time pressure down here!



How many multivitamins should you take?

Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Perspective
- ◆ Language shapes thoughts, which generate stress and drive behavior

PERSPECTIVE

- ◆ Eleanor Roosevelt:
 - ◆ “Everything eventually comes to an end.”
- ◆ My friend Al

Words we tell ourselves

- ◆ “Terrible”
- ◆ “Awful”
- ◆ “Nightmare”
- ◆ “I can’t stand it!”
- ◆ “This is Killing me!”
- ◆ “I can’t”
- ◆ What are your stress-producing thoughts?

PERSPECTIVE

- ◆ Eleanor Roosevelt
 - “Everything eventually comes to and end.”
- ◆ When did you last think about any of these?

Alternatives

- ◆ “Uncomfortable”
- ◆ “Annoying”
- ◆ “Difficult”
- ◆ “Inconvenient”
- ◆ “Disappointing”
- ◆ “I can”
- ◆ What might work better for you?

Language Tells You about Your Thoughts

- ◆ "I am disabled"
- ◆ "I can't work any more"
- ◆ "I can't take it any more"
- ◆ "My pain controls my life now"
- ◆ "I have nothing to live for anymore"
- ◆ "This is the worst thing that ever happened to me"
- ◆ "My children hate me"
- ◆ "Everybody hates me"
- ◆ "I'll never get promoted"
- ◆ "I'll never be normal again"
- ◆ "This is the absolute end of me"



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Cognitions: The CBT Approach



- ◆ CBT is an approach to making changes in our lives that focuses on Cognition (our thoughts) and on Behavior (our actions).
- ◆ Bottom line: **"You feel the way you think."**
- ◆ But CBT also looks at behavior because the way you act is often determined by how you feel. And in turn, the way you act can have a positive or a negative impact on your feelings.
- ◆ **CBT is about the interaction between thoughts, feelings, and actions.**
- ◆ CBT involves identifying thoughts, beliefs, and meanings that are activated by feelings, and assigning more accurate, less extreme meanings.

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Language opens the door to changing your thinking

- ◆ It tells you how you perceive your stressors
- ◆ Language is also the vehicle for changing those perceptions
- ◆ **It doesn't get more important than this!**



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CBT Focuses on Basic Errors in Thinking

- ◆ Thinking errors have been compared to computer viruses: they introduce distortions that prevent us from dealing with information effectively, they cause us to jump to incorrect conclusions, with an impact on how we feel and how we behave, and on how others then impact back on us.
- ◆ Some common thinking errors:
 - ◆ **Catastrophizing:** Turning molehills into mountains
 - ◆ **All-or-nothing (Black and White) thinking:** Extreme thinking that can lead to extreme emotions and extreme behaviors
 - ◆ **Mind-reading:** When you believe you know what others are thinking



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"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."

William James

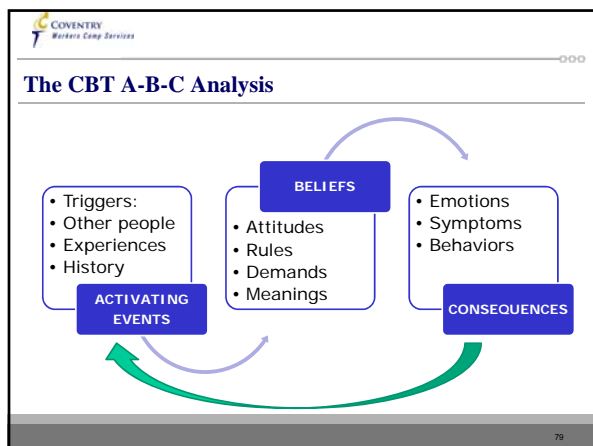
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More Thinking Errors

- ◆ **Overygeneralizing:** Drawing global conclusions from individual events ("always ... never")
- ◆ **"Musturbatory" thinking:** Beliefs rooted in "should" and "must"
- ◆ **Disqualifying the positive:** Transforming positive events into neutral, or negative events in your mind
- ◆ **Low frustration tolerance:** Equating uncomfortable with unbearable
- ◆ **Personalizing:** The tendency to personalize, to believe that random events are all about you



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A-B-C exercise

Think of a historical situation, something that happened to you some time ago and that you interpreted negatively, and that you remember well. Complete the boxes: What triggered your reaction? What are the thoughts / beliefs / rules / demands / images / meanings that you attributed to the trigger? What kind of thinking error was this? And what were the consequences of your thoughts – feelings – actions sequence?

| A. Activating Event | |
|--|--|
| B. Belief / Meaning / Thoughts re: event | |
| C. Behavior / Emotional consequences | |
| Thinking error | |
| Consequences | |

Combating faulty thinking

- ◆ The key strategy: Behaving like a Scientist:
 - Identify A-B-C's
 - Test validity of beliefs
- ◆ Describe the problem
- ◆ What is the belief / thought / theory related to that problem?
- ◆ What testable predictions would we make from that belief?
- ◆ Is there another competing belief / theory?
- ◆ If so, what predictions would we make from that belief?
- ◆ How would we test the (competing) predictions?
- ◆ What's the evidence?
- ◆ What do we conclude?

Combating faulty thinking exercise

Let's take that same situation. Now, consider how you might address these thoughts / beliefs / fears in the future so as to dial down your frustration and theirs, keep the anger (or whatever) under control, and come up with more effective outcomes.

| A. Activating Event | |
|--|--|
| B. Belief / Meaning / Thoughts re: event | |
| C. Behavioral / Emotional consequences | |
| Thinking error | |
| Dispute: Question and examine B and generate alternatives and evidence | |
| Effects of alternative thoughts / beliefs | |

◆ As imperfect humans, we are all prone to errors in thinking – there is no shame in that. You don't have to have a clinical diagnosis to find yourself over-generalizing, personalizing, or catastrophizing from innocuous comments made by a friend.

◆ One of the great strengths of CBT is that, while it can be used as a general psychotherapeutic strategy in formal therapy situations, the concepts and techniques are simple enough that they can be used by most people who simply want to make improvements in their lives. You don't need a clinical diagnosis to want to have a less stressful relationship with your brother, or to use some of the techniques described above.

Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Perspective
- ◆ Language / Thought
- ◆ Optimizing your time

What Can You Do To Take Control of Your Time



What Would Work Better For You?

Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Perspective
- ◆ Language / Thought
- ◆ Optimizing your time
- ◆ Learning to say NO

Can You Schedule Yourself Better?



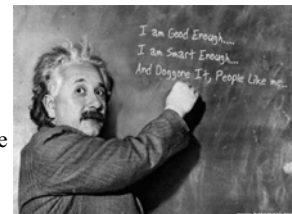
Stop procrastinating!

- ◆ Check your motives
- ◆ Task triage
- ◆ Set realistic deadlines
- ◆ One task at a time
- ◆ Reward yourself when something gets done!



"I'm Entitled too!"

- ◆ "Because I'm good enough,
- ◆ I'm smart enough,
- ◆ And doggone it, People like me!"



Self-Examination Question:

What are the beliefs that you have that are limiting you from making changes?

And don't forget about exercise!

- ◆ Releases endorphins
- ◆ Improves mood
- ◆ Boosts energy levels
- ◆ Promotes better sleep
- ◆ Improves your sex life
- ◆ Combats chronic diseases
- ◆ Has a protective effect on the brain and mental functioning
- ◆ **Can be done at no cost!**



Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Perspective
- ◆ Language Thought
- ◆ Optimizing Time
- ◆ Learning to say NO
- ◆ Physical Strategies

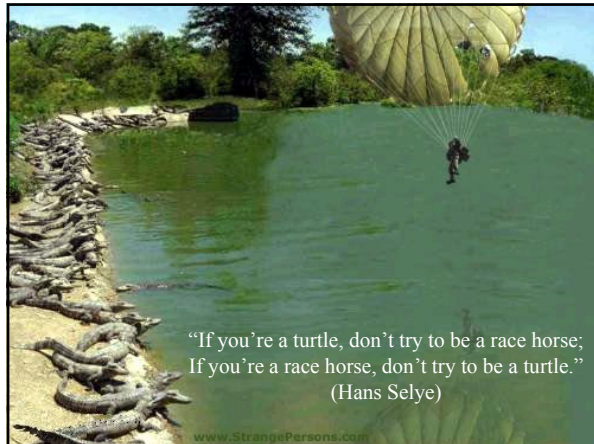
Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Perspective
- ◆ Language Thought
- ◆ Optimizing Time
- ◆ Learning to say NO
- ◆ Physical strategies
- ◆ Centering: Scheduling Pleasant Thoughts, Places, and People

Relaxation

- ◆ Mindfulness
- ◆ Jacobsen Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- ◆ Visualization techniques
- ◆ Breathing exercises
- ◆ Meditation
- ◆ Yoga
- ◆ Tai Chi
- ◆ Massage
- ◆ Biofeedback-assisted relaxation





What Centers You?



What Soothes You?



What Balances You?

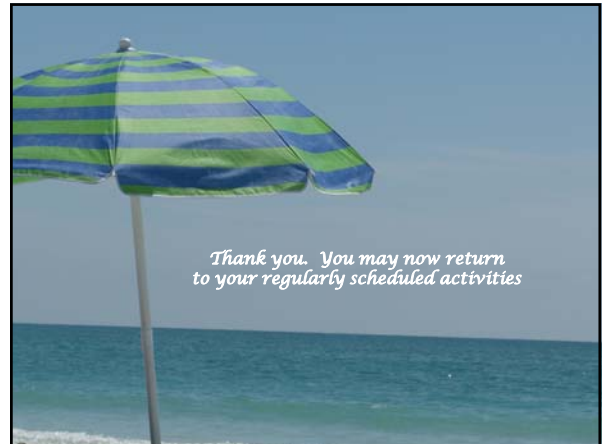


What Recharges You?



What's Fun For You?





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Long-term stress management strategies

- ◆ Work-Life balance
- ◆ Practice makes perfect
- ◆ Stress inoculation

