

Managing Stress & Developing Resilient Workplaces

Committed to Excellence through Supervision
 Module V: Promoting Safety and Resilience
 University of Iowa School of Social Work
 National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice

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Resilience

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What is “resilience”?

“...the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress, or increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002, p. 702)

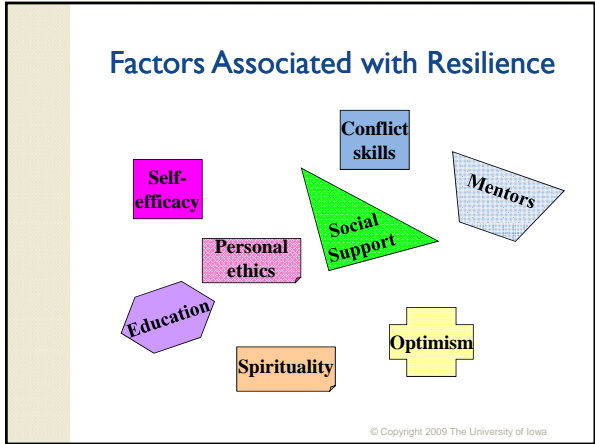
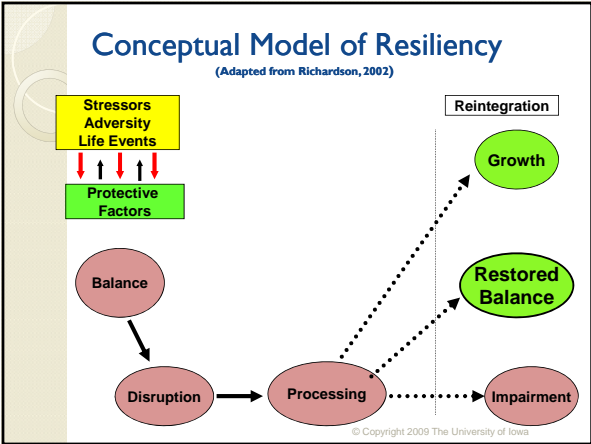
“...good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (Masten, 2001, p. 228)

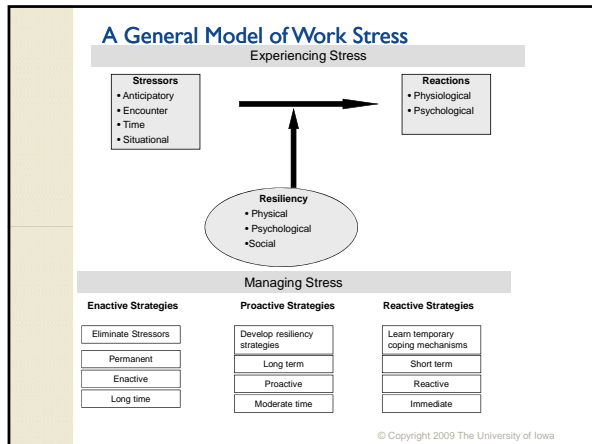
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Understanding Resilience...

1. Threats (risk, stressor, “pile up”)
2. Assets (resources)
3. Positive outcome/adjustment

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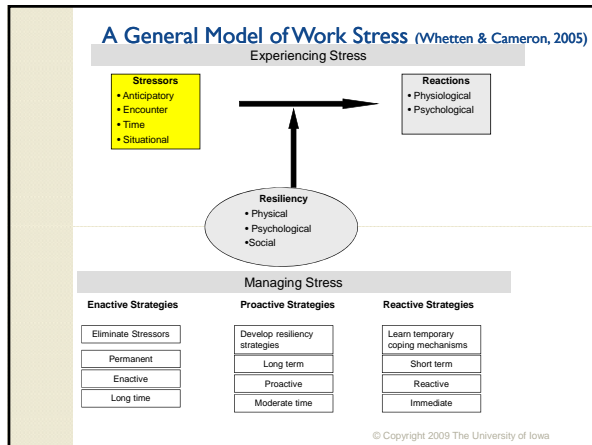


Exercise One: Self-Reflection

- **Self Assessment:**

How do I assess my own resilience?

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4 Key Sources of Workplace Stress

I. Time stressors:

- Work overload
- Lack of control of time available

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Sources of Workplace Stress...

2. Encounter (interpersonal) stressors

- Interaction conflicts
- Issue conflicts
- Not trusting supervisor/colleagues
- Emotional reactions to work issues
- Boundary problems with colleagues & clients
- Issues with supervisor

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Boundaries and Work

Definition:

A boundary is a “personal property line” that marks those things for which we, not others, are responsible.

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Boundaries and Work

- working for the approval of overcritical or perfectionist coworkers/superiors
- projecting your feelings or issues onto others, including those in authority
- yielding to others' expectations of who you are
- working too much overtime

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Boundaries and Work

Common boundary problems in the workplace:

- allowing someone to 'dump' their work or responsibilities on you
- misplaced priorities
- trying to change difficult coworkers

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Sources of Workplace Stress...

3. Situational stressors

- Unfavorable working conditions
- Rapid change
- Conflicting expectations (between worker & role)
- Lack of control over work

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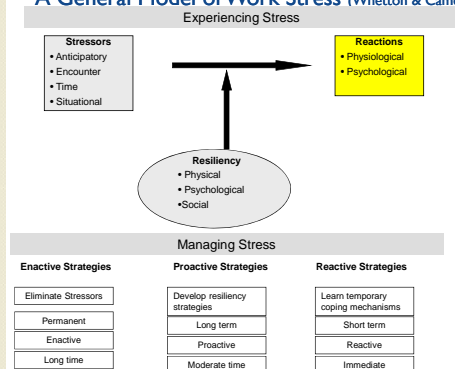
Sources of Workplace Stress...

4. Anticipatory stressors

- Unpleasant expectations
- Fear

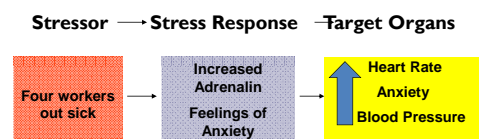
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A General Model of Work Stress (Whetton & Cameron, 2005)



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Physiologic Reactions to Stress



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Common Signs & Symptoms of Excessive Stress

COGNITIVE	PHYSICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confusion in thinking • difficulty making decisions • disorientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excessive sweating • dizzy spells • increased heart rate • elevated blood pressure • rapid breathing
EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emotional shock • anger • grief • depression • feeling overwhelmed • hopeless and/or helplessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in ordinary behavior • changes in eating • decreased personal hygiene • withdrawal from others • prolonged silence

Source: International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. 1998

Impact of Stress on Supervisor:

- Selectively perceive information/see only that which confirms biases
- Be intolerant of ambiguity; demand right answers
- Fixate on single approach to problem
- Overestimate how fast time is passing (often feel rushed)

Sources: Whetton and Cameron (2005) citing Auerbach (1998), Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981), and Weick (1993).

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Additional impacts on supervisors...

- Adopt a short-term perspective or crisis mentality
- Less ability to make fine distinctions; miss complexities and nuances
- Consult and listen to others less
- Rely on old habits
- Less creative problem solving

Sources: Whetton and Cameron (2005) citing Auerbach (1998), Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981), and Weick (1993).

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Exercise Two: Self-Reflection

- **Self Assessment:**

How am I doing in managing my own levels of stress?

What resilience factors do I need to draw upon to manage supervisory stressors more effectively?

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Where most discussions of workplace stress go (and stay)...BURNOUT



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"How can you be suffering from burnout? You've never really caught fire in this organization."

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Burnout

- Exhaustion, depersonalization, & reduced sense of accomplishment due to long-term involvement in demanding situation
- “...the loss of enthusiasm, excitement, and sense of mission in one’s work”

Source: Cherniss, 1980 (in Conrad et. al., 2006, p. 16)

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Burnout Symptoms

- irritability
- indifference
- disengagement
- isolation
- dread of going to work
- pessimism
- boredom
- poor work performance
- absenteeism
- fatigue

Sources: Canfield, 2005; Nelson-Gardell & Harris, 2003

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Compassion Fatigue

“In the early days, I waited eagerly to hear each family’s story, regarding each case as a new mystery to be solved. Now I hear myself say – only half-jokingly – ‘there are only three stories in therapy: ‘poor me’, ‘if it weren’t for you’, and, ‘please fix this child without changing us’.”

(Betty Carter, 1986)

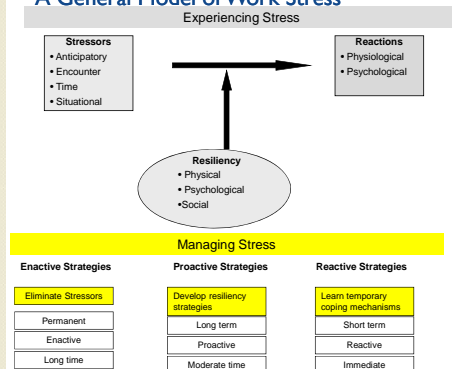
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Metaphor of the Well



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A General Model of Work Stress



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Signs in the Break Room

The Floggings Will Continue Until Morale Improves

NOTICE:

Due to budgetary constraints, the LIGHT at the end of the tunnel has been cancelled...

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Reactive Strategies (Coping)

- Vent
- Get support
- Humor
- Take a mini break
- Relaxation exercises

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Benefits of Relaxation

The opposite of the 'fight or flight' response:

- reduces heart rate
- decreases in respiration rate
- lowered blood pressure
- reduced muscle tension
- increased oxygen supply

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Exercise Three: Dr. Andrew Weil's 4-7-8 Breath Work

- **Breathe in through your nose to the count of 4**
- **Hold to the count of 7**
- **Breath out through your mouth to the count of 8**

Repeat 4 times (twice per day)

Source: Weil, A. & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2001).

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Enactive (Eliminating) Strategies

Type of Stressor	Elimination Strategy
Time	Coach time management; delegation
Encounter	Collaboration/team building Assist with conflict resolution Good boundaries (at work and with families)
Situational	Job or worksite redesign; leading positive change
Anticipatory	Goal setting; small wins; supervisor support

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Identifying Health Boundaries

- **Healthy boundaries are demonstrated by:**
 - **setting limits with others**
 - **being assertive: knowing what you need/want and effectively communicating it to others**
 - **saying no without feeling guilt or blame**

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Setting Boundaries

- stay clear about your priorities
- assess whether you are living your life according to them
- say no without anger or apology

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Setting Boundaries

- use the assertion ‘sandwich’ : *“I know you hate doing that, but I can’t take it on for you. I’m sure you’ll figure it out”*
- Seek balance---neither over or under-functioning
- remind others who hold you responsible for their feelings or actions that *they have choices*

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Supervising Worker/Client Boundaries

- Model healthy boundary setting
- Self disclosure is used for the purposes of the client—for joining, for empathy
- Teach them to stay out of the Rescue Triangle (see handout)

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Proactive (Preventing) Strategies for Promoting Resilience

PHYSIOLOGICAL RESILIENCY	PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCY	SOCIAL RESILIENCY

Adapted from: Whetten & Cameron, 2005

Proactive Strategies for Promoting Resilience

PHYSIOLOGICAL RESILIENCY	PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCY	SOCIAL RESILIENCY
Nutrition, Rest Exercise	Hardy personality, spirituality, balanced lifestyle	Promote supportive social relations
Healthy workplace	Small wins approach	Assign mentors
Health promotion activities	Leave policies Encourage balance	Assign partners/team assignments
Vacations Limiting overtime hours	Strength-based developmental approach to workers	Welcome humor in workplace

Adapted from: Whetten & Cameron, 2005

Nurturing Resilience

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Workplace Resilience Factors

- **Work environments that acknowledge reality of work and support self-care**
- **Forums for discussion and strategy sharing**
- **Buddy system: formal/informal**
- **Continuing educational opportunities**

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AIA MODEL -ACTION

1. Have you taken all the *action* you can take?
2. Have you considered all options for things you can do?
3. Are there more choices available to you?

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AIA MODEL - INSIGHT

1. Have you got all the *insight* you can in order to gain understanding?
2. Will further discussion and assessment be useful?
3. Is there more information you need, more people to access?

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AIA MODEL - ACCEPTANCE

1. If no more action can be taken or insight gained, move to *acceptance*.
2. *Surrender, stop fighting what will be and go with it.*
3. Don't take it personally.
4. Use your energy for the tasks ahead.

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Exercise Five: Peer Consultation

- Choose a partner
- Using the AIA model, identify two concrete strategies to improve your stress management
- Identify one essential workplace characteristic that results in a positive, supportive work environment

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• Thought for the Day:

Handle every stressful situation like a dog. If you can't eat it or play with it, just pee on it and walk away...

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