Coping with Stress, Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms: Evidence-based Strategies that Work

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Objectives

• Discuss common symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression.

• Highlight CBSB strategies, guided imagery and other resources for preventing and dealing with stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms
From a Small Coal Mining Town to Buckeye Nation: My Story
What Does The Evidence Tell Us?

People across the U.S. today are Stressed, Anxious & Depressed!

One out of 4 individuals have a mental health problem, yet less than 25% receive treatment.

Depression, anxiety and stress are poor predictors of health, wellness and academic outcomes.
Common Symptoms of Depressive Disorders

- Sadness
- Hopelessness: #1 predictor of suicide
- Fatigue
- Withdrawal
- Loss of pleasure/interest in activities
- Decrease in sleep, appetite and concentration
- Aches or pain; frequent headaches
- Anger/irritability
- Drug and alcohol use is common
- Comorbidity with anxiety is common
Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

- The onset of depression during the winter months, when there is less natural sunlight
- The depression generally lifts during spring and summer
- SAD may be effectively treated with light therapy, but half of those with SAD do not get better with light therapy alone
- Antidepressant medication and psychotherapy can reduce symptoms, either alone or in combination with light therapy
The “Blues” versus Depression

• Feeling sad or down, but the feelings pass in a few days and DO NOT interfere with functioning

• Depression is a common yet serious illness that interferes with normal functioning

• Most people with depression need treatment to get better

• People do get better; there is hope
Causes of Depression

- The cause is usually multifactorial, including:
  - biological (changes in chemistry of the brain, such as imbalances in serotonin, dopamine, and/or norepinephrine or excess cortisol)
  - genetic
  - environmental (e.g., stressful situations)
  - depressogenic cognition
  - physical
  - drug related
Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety

- Cognitive
  • Forgetfulness, rumination, poor judgment, decreased attention

- Behavioral
  • Anxious tapping, restless leg, aggression, trembling, or closing eyes

- Physiologic
  • Tachycardia, tachypnea, diaphoresis, increased blood pressure, palpitations, chest tightness, muscle tension, GI upset, headaches

- Subjective
  • Irritability, helplessness, hopelessness, anger, decreased motivation, fear, images of bodily harm
A Key Starting Point!

Symptoms of stress, anxiety and/or depression that are interfering with functioning need immediate attention and intervention

Get help if the symptoms that you are experiencing are interfering with your ability to function!
The Effect of Stress on the Cardiovascular System

Acute Mental Stress

Central and autonomic nervous system activity

↑ Catecholamines
↑ Heart rate
↑ Blood pressure
↓ Plasma volume
↑ Coronary vessel constriction
↑ Platelet activity

PHYSIOLOGIC RESPONSES

CARDIAC EFFECTS

PATHOLOGIC RESULT

CARDIAC EVENT

↑ Electrical instability
↑ Demand
↓ Supply

V-fib/V-tach
Ischemia
Plaque rupture
Coronary thrombosis

Sudden Cardiac Death

Myocardial Infarction

BACKGROUND FACTORS
- Atherosclerosis
- Prior MI
- Poor LV function
What Causes You Stress?
Stress can be Positive
Responses to Stress
How do you feel physically when you are stressed?
How do you feel emotionally when you are stressed?
Too Much Negative Stress can Interfere with your Functioning
Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress
Cognitive-Behavior Therapy/ Skills Building

• Active components of cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) include reducing negative thoughts (cognitive restructuring), increasing pleasurable activities (behavioral activation), and improving assertiveness and problem-solving skills (homework/putting the skills into practice is key)
STRESSOR (Antecedent or Activator event)

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NEGATIVE THOUGHT TO STOP (Belief)

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REPLACE THE NEGATIVE WITH A POSITIVE THOUGHT

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POSITIVE EMOTION & BEHAVIOR (Consequence)
Write down an example of your own automatic negative thoughts

• Hint: Think back to a recent time you felt stressed, depressed, or angry.

• What was the trigger? (you couldn’t control that)
• Your automatic thought?
• Your feeling?
• Your general way of behaving when you feel that way?
• How could you have stopped the negative thought and turned it around to feel better?
Catching your automatic negative thoughts

• When you notice your mood has changed or intensified, or is going in a negative direction or you are noticing bodily sensations associated with negative emotions, ask:

What was just going through my mind?
Thought stopping skills

• Visualize a stop sign
• Rubber band on the wrist/ snap
• Visualize watching the negative image on TV and change the channel
• Use imagery skills to switch to a pleasant image
Problem Solving Skills

• What is the problem?
• What are the possible causes of the problem?
• What are 2-3 solutions to the problem?
• Pick the best one and ACT on it!
Program your Brain with Positive Thoughts
Positive Thoughts

IN
Thoughts

OUT
Thoughts
Practice Positive Self Talk

• I did that well.
• I’m not going to give up.
• I’m going to stay calm.
• This won’t last forever.
Staying “In the Present Moment”
THE OSU HEALTH ATHLETE PROGRAM

The consequences of not staying in the present moment and multi-tasking
Positive Ways to Deal with Stress

Take Care of Yourself
Get Help When Needed
Physical Activity Helps Stress, Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms
At Least 30 Minutes Most Days

30 min
Benefits of Exercise

Physical

Emotional

Mental

Feeling Good!
Choose an activity that you enjoy
Strategies for Preventing and Dealing with Stress, Anxiety & Depression

• Engage in physical activity (at least 30 minutes 5 days a week)
• Break your routine if rutted
• Eat healthy: light and often; avoid “junk food”
• Manage your energy: build in frequent recovery breaks throughout the day; sit less; stand more
• Stay in the present moment (The Present by Spencer Johnson is a great book to help)
• Get enough sleep (evidence supports at least 7 hours)
• Build cognitive-behavioral skills: Think positive because how you think affects how you feel and how you behave
• Practice guided imagery
Strategies for Preventing and Dealing with Stress, Anxiety & Depression

• Balance work and personal life: take time to enjoy things you like to do
• Read 5 to 10 minutes every morning in a positive book
• Check and monitor Vitamin D level
• Socialize regularly with family/friends
• Have an attitude of gratitude- write your blessings down
• Laugh more often
• Take 5 deep breaths when feeling early symptoms of stress
• Make a plan for how to deal with what is causing stress
• Talk to someone you trust about how you feel
Strategies for Preventing and Dealing with Stress, Anxiety & Depression

• See the cup half full instead of half empty
• Take one bite of the chocolate elephant or bundle of carrots at a time
• Know your limits; do not feel guilty about saying “no!”
• Stay aligned with and pursue your dreams and passions!
• Seek help if symptoms persist more than 2 weeks and interfere with functioning; There is hope; depression and anxiety are very treatable and everyone has these issues at some time in their lives
Stay Optimistic and Aligned with your Dreams
Know Your Resources

• Know your resources at OSU and in the community (e.g., stress management tools, guided imagery)
• Contact the OSU Employee Assistance Program for the Beating the Blues on-line CBT Depression Program
• If in imminent danger of hurting self, go to the nearest ER immediately or call 911.
• If feeling suicidal, contact someone who can help NOW
  Call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255); National 24/7 suicide hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
• Prevention & mental health promotion is KEY; Practice CBSB
osuhealthplan.com/members/ohio-state-employee-assistance-program-eap/osu-eap-tools
Guided and Mental Imagery

Time to Relax