Learning Objectives

1. Define the stress response
2. Understand the body-brain concepts related to stress
3. Recognize compassion fatigue triggers and early warning signs
Why Is It Important?

• **Stressors and crisis continue to rise**
  • The helping professions work with the most vulnerable
  • Roles and responsibilities, expectations and demands of clients, administration, society continue to rise
  • Needs continue to increase as resources decrease; overworked; increase caseloads, etc.
Exercise: Silent Witness*

• Write down three (3) negative effects from your work as a caregiver on an index card.

• For two minutes circulate about the group allowing others to see your card.

What is to give light must endure burning.

- Viktor Frankl

Viktor Frankl

*Man’s Search for Meaning, 1946*
Exercise

• Write down your response to the following questions:
  • “Is your job stressful?”
  • “What are the causes?”
  • “What are the effects (upon our co-workers)?”
  • “What are you doing that is helping?”
Stress Defined

- In survey after survey, Americans today identify stress as their number one health concern.
- More than 50% of adults in the U.S. report high stress on a daily basis.
- Untreated, stress can seriously affect health, work performance, relationships, and general well-being.
- Stress is the term used to define the body's automatic physiologic reaction to circumstances that require behavioral adjustments.
  - Stress refers to the *response* you have when facing circumstances that force you to act, change, or adjust in some way to maintain or to keep things balanced
  - Stress becomes a problem only when an individual believes *control* is lost over the identifying stressor(s)
    - Stress may be created through positive events
    - Environmental situations
    - Perception of individual
    - Personal characteristics
Stress Response

- Also called the fight-or-flight response, as identified by Dr. Walter B. Cannon of the Harvard Medical School almost one hundred years ago.

- Is a profound set of involuntary physiological changes that occur whenever we are faced with a changing situation.

- Prepares the body for a physical reaction to a threat - to fight or flee.

- Confronted by this threat - physical or emotional, real or imagined - the hypothalamus causes the sympathetic nervous system to release epinephrine and norepinephrine (also known as adrenaline and noradrenaline) and other related hormones.

- When released into the body, these messengers propel you into a state of arousal.
How does stress affect the nervous system?

• The sympathetic nervous system is responsible for stress responses
• The parasympathetic nervous system readies the body for rest and relaxation.
Perceived Threat:

- Internal appraisal of danger
- Sympathetic Nervous System
Perceived Threat

**Physiological**
- Heart Rate
- Breathing Rate
- Breathing Volume
- Centralized Circulation
- Energy
- DIS-EASE
- Muscle Tension

**Brain Mechanics**
- Basal Ganglia & Thalamic Fx
- Neo-cortical Fx
- Frontal Lobe Activity
- Executive Fx
- Fine Motor Control
- Emotional Regulation
- Temporal Lobe Activity
- Language (Wernicke’s)
- Speech (Broca’s)
- Anterior Cingulate

**Other Effects**
- Obsession
- Compulsion
- Speed & Agility
- Strength
- Constricted Thoughts & Behaviors
- Fatigue

**(Gentry, 2013)**

**Fight or Flight**
Cause and Effect

**Causes:**
- Paperwork
- Demands
- Lack of resources
- Negative environment
- Constant changes
- Resistant clients

**Past learning**

**Perceived threat**

**Sympathetic dominance**

**Effects:**
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Somatization
- Self Rx
- Isolation

(Gentry, 2013)
Compassion Fatigue = Secondary Traumatization + Burnout

(Figley, 1995)
Compassion Fatigue

• According to Zimering (2003) *compassion fatigue* is indirect exposure to a trauma through a firsthand account or narrative of a traumatic event. The survivor’s account and the clinician’s subsequent cognitive or emotional representation of the event may result in symptoms and reactions that parallel PTSD.
## Secondary Traumatic Stress Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arousal (Criterion D)</th>
<th>Avoidance (Criterion C)</th>
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- **Arousal (Criterion D)**
  - Fear/Anxiety
  - Obsessive Thoughts
  - Sleep Problems
  - Irritability/Easily angered
  - Impulsive
  - Dis-ease
  - Increased Perceived Threats

- **Avoidance (Criterion C)**
  - Compulsive Behavior
  - Poor Concentration
  - Weight +/-
  - Somatization (Digestive; Hypertension)
  - Immune Problems
  - Chronic Fatigue
Burnout

• *Burnout* is often defined as a response to prolonged exposure to demanding interpersonal situations and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

• High emotional involvement without adequate social support or feelings of personal work accomplishments (i.e., job satisfaction) may leave the helping professional vulnerable to burnout.
Healing Compassion Fatigue

1. Relaxation- PERCEIVED THREAT; when listening to clients; when remembering experiences

2. Building & Maintaining Relationships – getting support; allowing others to confront when symptomatic; telling on ourselves when we breach integrity; accountability

3. Sharing Narratives – painful work experiences
Part Two
Learning Objectives

1. Identify three (3) stress management techniques
2. Recognize the effects of stress among helping professionals
3. Identify seven (7) essential mental activities for optimum mental health
Seven Essential Activities for Optimum Mental Health

The Healthy Mind Platter

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Relaxation Response

• A state of relaxed, passive attention to a repetitive or absorbing stimulus that turns off the “inner dialogue” thereby decreasing arousal of the sympathetic nervous system.

• When eliciting the relaxation response:
  • Your metabolism decreases
  • Your heart beats slower and your muscles relax
  • Your breathing becomes slower
  • Your blood pressure decreases
  • Your levels of nitric oxide are increased

• If practiced regularly, it can have lasting effects
Techniques Used to Elicit the Relaxation Response

- Meditation
- Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Imagery/Visualization
- Yoga Stretching
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Mindfulness
- Prayer
- Repetitive Movement
Relaxation through Meditation

- Four (4) key elements common to meditative approaches that help people to relax:

  1. Being in a quiet place
  2. Getting in a comfortable position
  3. Having an object to dwell on, such as your breathing or a phrase that you continually repeat silently to yourself
  4. Having a passive attitude in which you let go of your day-to-day concerns by no longer thinking about them
Meditation
Thank You