Managing Stress

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This session:
- Why bother? – some stats
- Good and harmful stress
- A bit of neuroscience
- Signs to notice
- What you can do
Stress – Statistics and the harsh reality

- 15.4 million work days lost to stress, anxiety or depression 2017/18
- Work place stress is at highest reported levels ever … and rising
- 1 in 4 people will experience a bout of mental ill-health every year
- 1 in 6 experience stress, depression or anxiety in any given week
- Suicide is the highest cause of death in men 20 – 49 in the UK

DON’T IGNORE IT. FOR YOURSELF OR YOUR COLLEAGUES

Not all stress is harmful

GOOD STRESS
- Is short lived
- Increases energy
- Can be exciting
- Is motivating
- Aids concentration and focus
- Aids in meeting deadlines
- Can boost memory
Harmful Stress

- It is often long lasting and can cause:
- weakened immune system
- high blood pressure
- fatigue
- depression or anxiety
- heart disease or stroke
- inflammation
- diabetes

Our brain ... A bit of neuroscience

Prefrontal cortex
- Conscious
  - Problem solving
  - Planning/organising
  - Information processing
  - Rationalising

Limbic System
- Unconscious
  - Control of emotions
  - Formation of memories
  - Arousal/stimulation
  - Basic drives
  - "Fight or flight" response
Our brains are struggling to catch up with CHANGE

Industrial Revolution, then personal computers, emails, smartphones, 24/7 communication, choice, CHANGE,

Homo Sapiens emerged

Brain unchanged since ice age

300,000 years ago 50,000 2019

Stressful event – What happens

Stress event…

• Adrenal Glands release a cocktail of adrenalin, cortisol and other hormones
• Blood vessels narrow, heart pumps faster, insulin production inhibited, body floods with glucose
• Preparation for life preservation of fight or flight (physical activity)
• High hormonal levels interfere with executive functionality of brain (prefrontal cortex)
Learn to notice, listen to your body

Harmful stress – beware these symptoms

Body
- headaches
- frequent infections
- back muscles
- muscular twitches
- fatigue
- skin irritations
- weakness

Mind
- worrying
- muddled thinking
- impaired judgement
- nightmares
- indecisiveness
- negativity
- hostile decisions

Emotions
- loss of confidence
- more fussy
- irritability
- depression
- anxiety
- alienation
- apprehension

Behavior
- accident prone
- loss of appetite
- loss of sex drive
- drinking more
- overeating
- smoking more
Proven methods of counteracting stress

• Take a break.
• Reframe the event(s).
• Increase exercise
• Create personal boundaries and stick to them!
• Create space for quiet time,
• Find a talking partner / counsellor / coach
• Try yoga / meditation and / or mindfulness
• If it is still persistent, speak to your doctor

Action / Further information

• Write down at least 2 things you will try differently from today
• Commit now to when you will start and tell someone else

For further information, Gill Hicks can be contacted via

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Stress – Beware:

Body
- headaches
- frequent infections
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- skin irritations
- breathlessness
- loss of confidence
- mood swings
- irritability
- depression
- anxiety
- confusion
- apprehension
- smoking more

Mind
- worrying
- muddled thinking
- impaired judgement
- nightmares
- indecisiveness
- negativity
- change to personality

Emotions
- stress prone
- loss of appetite
- loss of sex drive
- drinking more
- insomnia
- restlessness

Institute of Actuaries

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