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Stress Management in Healthcare

MAHEC

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When you feel stress, what is compromised or at risk for you? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deep career satisfaction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deep personal satisfaction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Happiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relationships
<input type="checkbox"/>	Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	Profit/productivity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hope	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dreams

Stages of Burnout <http://www.netce.com/studypoints.php?courseid=1167&viewall=true>

Enter the field - energy, enthusiasm, idealism then...

Work related stress, Job dissatisfaction, Mismatch between nature of job and nature of individual

1. Disappointment and Fatigue- emotional distance from patients, set back in personal priorities
2. Frustration and Indifference- cynicism, strained personal relationships
3. Sense of powerlessness and professional failure- decreased competency and caring, alienations of colleagues and patients, emotional coping
4. Isolation and Apathy- feeling of personal failure, isolation, absenteeism, breakdown in personal relationships
5. Burnout- emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, no sense of personal accomplishment, contemplation of leaving job

PERFECT STORM

Situation- organizational and structural setup

Culture- social setup

Individual

And... the nature of the stress reaction itself.

Creating unrealistic expectations, overwhelm of coping systems, lack of training/support, inconsistencies/gaps/mismatches, fatigue, disconnect from purpose/people/self-efficacy

Keys to Stress Management or Taking Back Control

- Know yourself- what grounds you, what drives you, what supports your best self, what challenges you
- Understand what stress really is
- Understand the human stress coping system- neurophysiology is wired in
- See stress management as energy management
- Develop "coping confidence" with tools and proactive strategies

You can keep playing whack-a-mole and reacting to everything thrown your way, or take the time to create proactive strategies that will support your best energy, focus, health, and happiness?

Leveraging energy is the key to optimizing and sustaining performance with resilience to cope with the inevitable stressors of life. Become more aware of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy levels and find ways to regularly renew energy expended. The ROI of this version of self-leadership is impressive and creates leaders who can affect cultural changes that support organizational and personal resilience.

3 steps to a proactive strategy:

1. **Build awareness** Create a dashboard and rituals to assess your current state so you can make adjustments throughout the day- prerequisite to more control (think monitoring plan)
2. **Cool Down to Power UP**® Learn some on-the-fly, in-the-moment techniques to self-adjust and shift from reactive to responsive. Create rituals to cool down your amygdala and power up your frontal lobe. (think rescue drugs, medication adjustments)
3. **Create long-term strategies** to both decrease future stress and build strength to deal with what life throws at us. Base those strategies on what really matters to you. (think prevention and care plans)

Start with your **Why** - the big picture. What do you most value?

What do you want your life to represent? How do you want people to experience you? What is your mission or purpose? This is what motivates you intrinsically. *This is your brand.*

Your Top 3-5 values: see values exercise at <http://www.cynthiaackrill.com/resources/>

Mission/Purpose

What **strengths** do you bring?

<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires.aspx> 1

Take the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire- it's free! There is a children's version as well— powerful and fun to do as a family or a team. If you have done [Strengthsfinder](#)¹ - feel free to write in those strengths as well.

Top 5 strengths:

What is your **best mindset, attitude?** (Think *who* you are when you are at your best?)

I am at my best when I am

From these create your **mantra, theme or GPS word**- a word or statement that reminds you of who you are at your best and opens you perspective to the bigger picture. Repeat it; write it. This keeps you mindful when challenges threaten to kick you into mindless survival mode. It reminds you of your goals, purpose, strengths and values so you can use them to guide your choices.

My GPS:

	ENERGIZERS		DRAINS	
	Personal	Organizational/ Cultural	Personal	Organizational/ Cultural
PHYSICAL Sleep/rest/hydration/ nutrition/conditioning				
MENTAL Focus (vs. distraction) flexibility/creativity/ stimulation/rest (for processing)				
EMOTIONAL Mood regulation/ health				
SPIRITUAL Meaning/purpose/ connection to others and your why				

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress isn't what happens to us. It's our physical and mental reaction to what happens to us. Whether we react depends on our perception of what is happening. Whenever our perception does not meet our expectations we feel stressed. Whenever our balance or 'homeostasis' is challenged we feel stressed.

REASONS GIVEN FOR LEAVING A NURSING JOB OR POSITION IN THE 2008 NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY OF REGISTERED NURSES

<http://www.netce.com/studypoints.php?courseid=1167&viewall=true> Table 6

Source: [72]

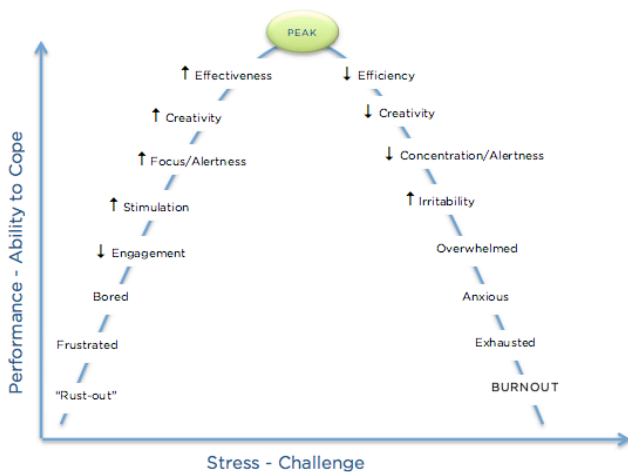
Specific Work-Related Reason	Percentage
Too many hours	27%
Low salary	22%
Inadequate staffing	21%
Lack of good management/leadership	13%
Lack of collaboration/communication	10%
Lack of advancement opportunities	8%

TOP CAUSES OF BURNOUT IN MD'S

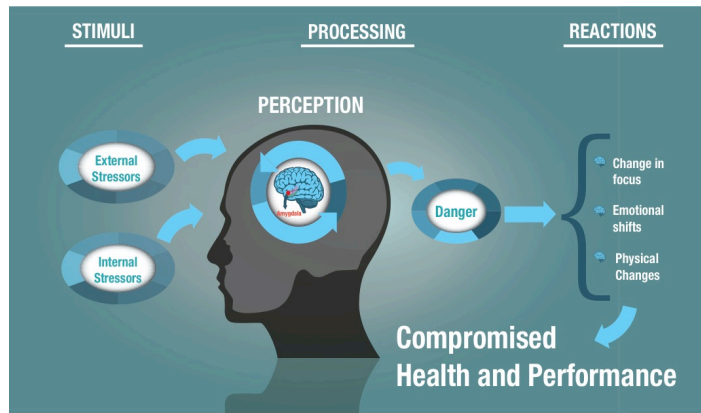
Too many bureaucratic tasks**
Spending too many hours at work
Income not high enough
Increasing computerization of practice
Impact of ACA
Feeling like just a cog in a wheel

Quick Coherence Technique <http://www.heartmath.com/quick-coherence-technique/>

1. **Heart Focus:** Focus your attention in the area of your heart, in the center of your chest.
2. **Heart Breathing:** As you focus on the area of your heart, imagine your breath flowing in and out through that area.
3. **Heart Feeling:** As you continue to breathe through the area of your heart, recall a positive feeling, a time when you felt good inside, and try to re-experience it. It could be feeling appreciation for the good things in your life, or the love and care you feel for someone.



Coherence is required for optimal, efficient physiological function. Coherence of values, mission, strengths, thoughts, and behaviors supports peak performance and is more energy efficient as well.



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5 Reasons for poor coping

1. **Increased stressor load:** increased work loads (staffing shortages), 24/7 lives, accelerating change, globalization, virtualization, out of touch with cycles of nature, constant distraction, information overload
2. **Unrealistic expectations** – time for an update?
3. **Nature of the stress reaction** itself:
 - a. Designed for different type of stress – no software upgrade
 - b. One-size-fits-all – hard to prioritize how to spend the energy (1400 chemical reactions)
 - c. Depends on perception- and perception is extremely malleable
 - d. Decreases self-awareness
 - e. Decreases access to best brainpower to cope
4. **Nature of the players-** yes, You! High achievers have learned to ignore the signs and symptoms of stress. In their focus on the goal or the patient, they have taken the bulb out of the check engine light, denying tiredness, hunger, anxiety until they reach overwhelm or pain. Then they lose faith in ability to cope and beat themselves up (brakes off the inner critic!), defeating self-efficacy.
5. **Organizational/cultural demands-** current culture actually rewards behaviors inconsistent with best brainpower or sustained performance. Martyrdom is erroneously heralded- take care of everyone else first. **But..self-care is NOT selfish!**

STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENCE

1. RAISE AWARENESS

How do you know when you are stressed?

Building the awareness muscle involves *disrupting your busy-ness* to check in physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually? The 5-5-5 breaths are perfect for this and for the next step. But you have to be disrupted, reminded to make this a habit. Finding the best method for this may take some trial and error. But first it takes commitment!

I know I am stressed when

Others know I am stressed when I

COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS	EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS
Memory problems Inability to concentrate Poor judgment Seeing only the negative Anxious or racing thoughts Constant worrying	Moodiness, restlessness Irritability or short temper Agitation, inability to relax Feeling overwhelmed Sense of disconnect, loneliness and isolation Depression or general unhappiness
PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS	BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS
Aches and pains- headaches, tension GI upset, Diarrhea or constipation Nausea, dizziness Chest pain, rapid heartbeat Loss of sex drive Frequent colds Lack of energy	Eating more or less Sleeping too much or too little Isolating yourself from others Neglecting responsibilities Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

Connect-the-dots Method© Place tiny dots of one color in 4 or more locations in your life. For example, put one your cell phone, your steering wheel, the refrigerator door, laptop/tablet. Whenever you see that dot- do the 5-5-5 breaths, asking yourself how you are physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. At first, just notice.

Other choices: cell phone alarms, habit change apps, stress apps, simply check with each doorway
 And always a good choice- an accountability partner- in the office or at home. Want to really commit?
 Ask your kids!

2. Learn a quick COOL DOWN TO POWER UP TECHNIQUE

Once you build awareness of when you are experiencing increasing stress, you need a technique to cool down your more reactive flight or fight brain and power up the executive control of your frontal lobe.

You can use breathwork, channel a positive emotion or gratitude, or use a mantra (repeated phrase) to restore your perspective to neutral. There are a number of ways that will help you pause to regain full access to your power to mindfully choose your responses instead of reactions.

5-5-5 BREATHWORK TECHNIQUE

Nice slow, soft, abdominal breaths.

You can put a hand on your belly and it should soften out as you inhale and your diaphragm pushes down on your abdominal contents. (It's ok for your belly to stick out! Close your eyes. ☺)

Breathe in to a count of 5, Hold 5, Breathe out to a count of 5

Then, after you have the pattern down, ask yourself HOW, WHAT, WHO.

Breath 1: **How** am I physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in this moment?

Breath 2: **What** do I need or what's needed now?

Breath 3: **Who** do I want to be?

*The key is to **practice this daily until it is easy and automatic**—a habit as strong as the stress reaction habit.*

When I feel the first signs of stress I will

In fact, I will practice that ___ times/day.

In the moment of recognizing you are stressed, asking yourself few questions will help you fire up the frontal lobe and more clearly identify the real challenge.

3. Create a LONG-RANGE, PROACTIVE STRATEGY to reduce future stress.

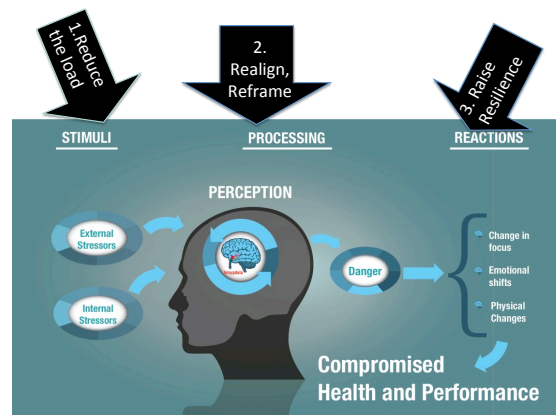
This is the prevention part of stress management—devising systems that set you up for less stressors and more resilience. This involves using your vision of a life with more ease, a life based in your values and purpose, and bringing accountability to the goals that would create that vision. The more you can create habits to support those goals, the easier life gets. This is self-leadership and the prerequisite to having the energy, brilliance, creativity, and sense of control that will empower you to lead others effectively.

Want to improve time management? Meet with yourself.

Where are YOU on your calendar? How can you feel more in control?

Questions to ask yourself:

- Am I using my **GPS** (goals, purpose, strengths and values) to create this calendar?
- Am I on my calendar? (Self-care, physical/mental/emotional/spiritual needs)
- Is there white space for creativity, critical thinking?
- Is there flexibility for adjustment?
- Am I looking forward to enough things on this calendar



i. REDUCE EXPOSURE TO STRESSORS, ENERGY DRAINS

What can you do to **reduce the stressor load**? **DELEGATE, DELETE, DEFER**

- Identify your stressors, the things that drain your energy most.
- Let go of unimportant/not urgent (Covey). *Use your values and purpose to prioritize.*
- Let go of items based on old stories - update your story about who you are.
- Go on a “should” diet!
- Create criteria to say, “No”
- Address information overload – make a plan for what you take in.
- Reduce distractions – choosing what not to do is as important as what to do!
- Clarify expectations, job descriptions, boundaries to reduce confusion, inefficiency, conflicts, resentment.
- Use your strengths- www.authentichappiness.com¹ - VIA Character Strengths
- Delegate your weaknesses...it's not only ok- it's smart!
- Delegate well
- Defer- Create an awesome someday/maybe list to revisit yearly

ii. REALIGN PERCEPTIONS/REFRAME STRESSORS

How can you **realign your perspective**? Use your mantra or GPS to mindfully put the stressors that remain into the bigger picture. Create habits of mindset. Repeat- keep bringing your attention to your

intention- this supports the creation of new neural pathways to make habits of your new thought patterns.

- Use your purpose/mission and values to assign how much energy to spend.
- Create reminders of these and your role in the “bigger picture.”
- Align your actions with your values = mindfulness.
- Learn to identify and speak your needs and feelings.
- Check data vs. expectations, story, context.
- Address your inner critic – thank it for getting you here, but ask it to step aside!
- Communicate clearly.
- Exercise your choice in mindset: 5 C’s and a G:
calm, clear, curious, courageous, and compassionate.....and grateful!
- Practice “What if?”
- Manage your emotions- trust your gut more, ask, “What’s needed now?”
- Use your body to find perspective- spinning mind vs. grounded core.
- Create a positive culture internally and externally

(See <http://www.positivityratio.com/single.php>¹ and www.heartmath.com¹)

The **3 WHAT, 1 WHO** questions to ask yourself:

- 1. What’s the DATA?**
- 2. What STORY or EXPECTATIONS am I adding?**
- 3. What’s really CALLED FOR NOW?**
- 4. And the powerful bonus: WHO do I want to BE right now?**

MINDFULNESS CHOICES - There are a thousand ways to skin this cat. The point is to choose something you are comfortable doing and practice it. The key is in the practice. It is not a destination, but a path.

I find for the more active thinker (translation- busy-brained, monkey-brained!) that guided and active versions are a good way to start.

Anytime you pause to become **aware of you state of being**, to **move from reaction to thoughtful pro-action** you are being mindful. This does not mean constantly analyzing—that is unhealthy and unproductive. It is more of a neutral (non-judgmental) observer state. It is always more powerful to check in somatically as well as mentally.

There are podcasts, CD’s, books, etc- *just pick something that feels pleasant so you will actually do it!*

- Breathwork – oldest, cheapest trick in the world! 4-7-8
- Guided visualization/imagery/meditation – you can download podcasts or buy these- really helpful for busy brains!
- Progressive relaxation – progressing tensing and relaxing muscle groups in order- this builds awareness of real relaxation. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFwCKKa--18>
- Relaxation response: original studies by Herbert Benson, MD at Harvard. Breath out repeating a single neutral word such as “one” for 10-20 minutes This has huge effects on your calm and performance! <http://www.relaxationresponse.org/steps/> List of scientific research: <http://www.relaxationresponse.org/publications/>
- Meditation – so many choices of types Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction by Jon Kabat-Zinn program is one of the best studied. It available as a program in many cities and at www.soundstrue.com. Meditation *does not* mean you need to leave your productive life and become a monk! It means you dedicate 5-30 minutes several times/week to calm with intention = **active relaxation** or inducing salutogenesis.
- S.T.O.P. – Stop whatever you are doing, Take a breath, Observe how you are, Proceed.
- I like “Loving Kindness” meditation: <http://bit.ly/qzSPB> sending out positive thoughts to the world (and yourself!)

- Adding Technology to ensure you are calming physiology-, emWave (HRV biofeedback), Alpha-Stim, EEG neurofeedback, other biofeedback, tons of apps: Inner balance, GPS for the Soul, Stress Tracker, MyBreath
- Mind/body exercises- yoga, tai chi, qi gong, etc.

iii. RAISE RESILIENCE – This raises **“coping confidence.”**

Life is full of stressors and we can increase our strengths and adaptability to meet the challenges. Choose habits that support your energy- physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The goal is to meet:

Critical universal needs- nutrition, hydration, oxygen, exercise, sleep/rest, play/stimulation, social connection

Individual needs- those things that particularly energize you
For example, a volunteer activity, a hobby, something that feeds you more than drains you

- Balance your energy renewing activities to meet your energy drains - be creative!
- Take care of your body- exercise, nutrition, sleep hygiene, preventive medical care, massage, etc.
- Practice **active relaxation** DAILY!!
- Train your physiology- Breathwork, Meditation, Biofeedback, Mind/body work,
- Connect with nature
- Connect with meaning
- Nurture your connections- intimate, social, community, spiritual
- What else do you need to be your best energized, grounded self?
- Forgive, laugh, play, love, celebrate!

Universal needs I would like to meet more consistently:

My individual needs:

Habits that would support my energy:

Body _____

Mind _____

Spirit _____

What am I really willing to commit to...to change my life? Think big, then go small, go long!

What am I willing to do to create less stress in the lives of others and the organization?

Remember, **this is all research** to find your best way of living and leading. Practice curiosity and self-compassion! Choose mindsets of resilience and never hesitate to ask for support!

I am always happy to answer any questions, take suggestions, or comments! I appreciate any ideas for finding others who might benefit from this message- please contact me with suggestions. We are all in this together!

If you would like more information or re-attention to your intention ☺, I would also love to have you sign up on my website: www.cynthiaackrill.com, connect on twitter @cackrill, or inquire about other learning opportunities. My purpose is to support you!

Thank you!!!
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