

Are you feeling overwhelmed and under-resourced?

## Stress Awareness & Management Presentation

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Employee Assistance Officer



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## Aims for the Session

- Overview of the Stress Response
  - Impact on Body, Mind and Behaviour
  - Stressors
  - Influence of personality type
- Restoring the balance
  - Stress Management Strategies
  - Diet
  - Exercise
  - Breathing
  - Relaxation techniques



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Is Stress a new phenomenon?



And you thought there was stress in your life !



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### To Deal with Stress .....

“Live in rooms full of light  
Avoid heavy food  
Be moderate in the drinking of wine  
Take massage, baths, exercise, and gymnastics  
Fight insomnia with gentle rocking or the sound of running water  
Change surroundings and take long journeys  
Strictly avoid frightening ideas  
Indulge in cheerful conversation and amusements  
Listen to music.”

A. Cornelius Celsus (Born 25 BC)



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### What is Stress

- Stress is the normal mental and physical response resulting from exposure to any demand or pressure in our lives.
- The greater the demand, the more intense the stress reaction.
- Prolonged or excessive stress can cause distress.

*Extract from Stress and Stress Management (CISM Network Ireland) leaflet*



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### Common signs of excessive stress

Can include:	
• Feeling overwhelmed	• Anger
• Loss of motivation, self-neglect	• Anxiety, Depression
• Dreading going to work	• Racing heart, breathlessness and rapid breathing
• Becoming withdrawn	• Feeling hot and flushed, excessive sweating
• Racing thoughts	• Dry mouth, churning stomach
• Confusion	• Diarrhoea and Digestive problems
• Difficulty making decisions	• Frequent desire to use toilet
• Poor concentration	• Muscle tension
• Poor memory	• Restlessness, tiredness, sleep difficulties, headaches
• Overeating, lost of appetite	



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## Did you know?

- 75% of health problems presenting to doctors in the U.S. are stress-related illnesses . . . . Statistics from U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
- Stress destroys the body's ability to repair itself and to fight disease



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## Fight or Flight



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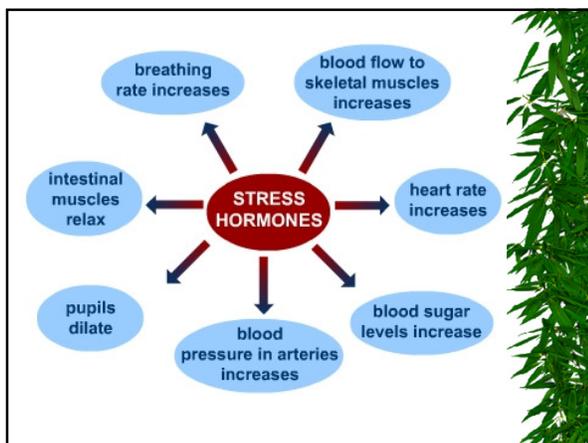
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## Stressors

- ☞ Stimuli which have the potential for causing you to respond with stress.
- ☞ Stressors remain neutral- your unique response to them and the stress they trigger in you, is dependent on your perception of the event.
- ☞ An event which is fun and exciting for one, can be dreaded and stressful for another.



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## Personality Type and Stress

- ☞ Personality type is a major contributor to a person's stress load
- ☞ It is rare that a person is exclusively one type - more likely to be a mixture of types, with a tendency towards one or the other
- ☞ Personality types are modifiable- the starting point is knowing what type you were to begin with:
  - Type A: Self- induced stress
  - Type B: Avoids excess stress



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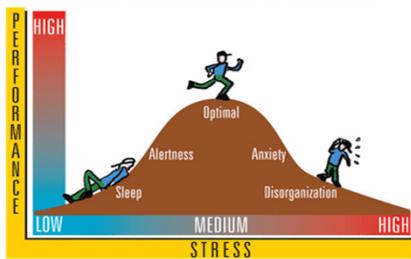
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## Stress Performance Connection



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## Optimum Level Stress Benefits

- ☞ Sharper focus
- ☞ Greater strength
- ☞ More speed
- ☞ Sharper hearing
- ☞ Greater determination
- ☞ Competitive
- ☞ Faster decision making
- ☞ Better short-term judgement



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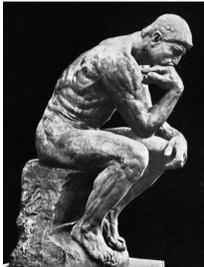
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## How our thinking affects a situation



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## How our thinking affects a situation

*"10% of our life depends on what happens to us"...*

*"90% of our life depends on how we react to it...."*

10:90 Principle.....Stephen Covey

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*“Men are disturbed not by things but by the views which they take of them”*

*Epictetus*  
First century A.D.



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## Where do we get our negative beliefs from ?

- ☞ Many of our beliefs are formed in our developmental years
- ☞ From care givers, relatives and friends
- ☞ From our own incorrect interpretations
- ☞ From experiences



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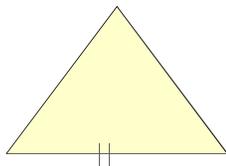
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## Cognition /Thinking

B = Beliefs and self talk



A = Situation

C = emotional reaction

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## Can You restore the balance?

- ☞ Stress management Vs. banishment
- ☞ Breathing
- ☞ Diet
- ☞ Relaxation techniques
- ☞ Mindfulness
- ☞ Exercise
- ☞ Rest and Sleep
- ☞ Humour



Stressors/Relaxation  
& Self care



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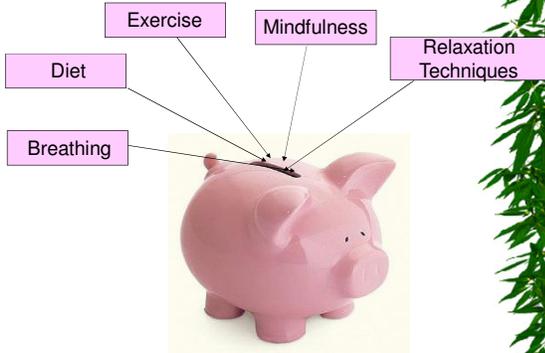
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### Self-care Tips



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## Stress Management Strategies

- ☞ Try to do something about the cause of stress and if you cannot remove the cause then cushion yourself from the effects
- ☞ Ways of coping with stress can either be helpful or unhelpful:
  - **Helpful** to confront the problem and look for a solution
  - **Unhelpful** to avoid the problem as this often leads to alcohol and/or substance abuse and sickness absence



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## Helpful Strategies

### The 3 D's- Deal, Delegate or Dump

- ✓ Deal with the problem
- ✓ Delegate it to someone else
- ✓ Dump the problem if it is not necessary to the task in hand

### Time Management

- ✓ 'To Do' List- precise, limited items
- ✓ Prioritise tasks- important and difficult first
- ✓ Recognise capabilities- can/can't cope with
- ✓ Recognise accomplishments- pat on back
- ✓ Make time for self- at least ½ hour daily



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## Unhelpful Strategies



-  Skipping breakfast/lunch/tea breaks etc. because of time restraints
-  Taking fewer holidays
-  Becoming a workaholic- relationship with work that excludes time for self and others in your life, where work competes with all other activities
-  Ignoring the symptoms of stress- burying your head in the sand only postpones the problems and may cause damage

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## The Importance and Value of Healthy Breathing

-  When we are calm, our breathing is deep and slow
-  When we are stressed, our breathing changes
-  Our posture affects our breathing
-  Proper breathing improves concentration and increases our energy levels



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## Phone Number??



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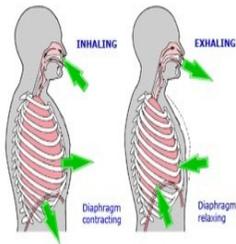
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## Abdominal Breathing



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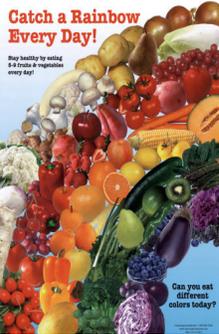
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## Your diet is important



- ☞ Eat Breakfast every day
- ☞ Eat every 3-4 hours – include some protein
- ☞ Avoid stimulants
- ☞ Stay hydrated
- ☞ Eat plenty of vegetables
- ☞ Get outside in the air

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## The benefits of exercise

- ☑ Helps prevent coronary heart disease
- ☑ Reduces high blood pressure
- ☑ Increases good cholesterol
- ☑ Improves digestion
- ☑ Keeps joints supple
- ☑ Reduces anxiety
- ☑ Helps us to sleep better
- ☑ Makes us more alert



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## A realistic approach to exercise

- ☑ *Choose exercise*
  - that you enjoy
  - that will increase your breathing
  - that is varied
  - that is not so competitive that it increases stress!
  - that you can fit into your already busy life



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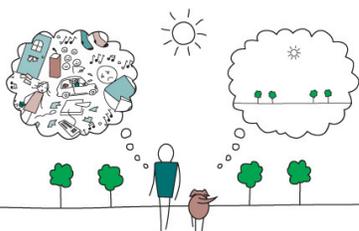
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Mind Full, or Mindful?

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## Mindfulness

- ☞ The past no longer exists
- ☞ The future is just a fantasy until it happens
- ☞ The one moment we actually can experience – the present moment – is the one we seem most to avoid



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## Awareness Exercise

- ☞ Notice your breathing
- ☞ Notice your posture
- ☞ Notice your clothes touching your body
- ☞ Notice sounds around
- ☞ Every time you drift into thinking – just return to noticing these sensations



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## The Relaxation Response

*“Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back your judgment will be surer”*

Leonardo DaVinci



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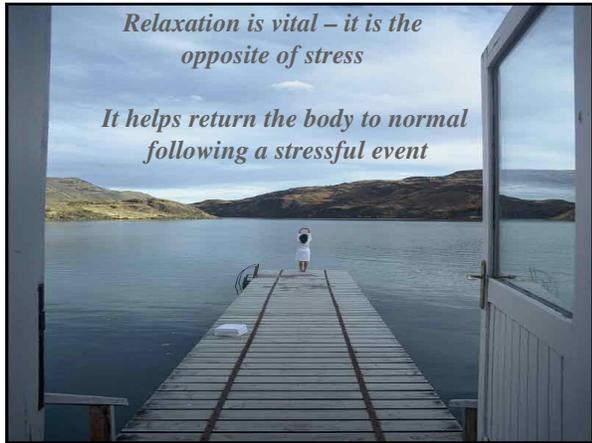
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### Conclusion

- ☐ Managing stress is a life long learning process
- ☐ It takes time and patience
- ☐ It is a gradual process of trial and error
- ☐ We all have a tendency to fall back into old habits
- ☐ The secret is to start taking better care of yourself now

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### Civil Service Employee Assistance Service

Headquarters:  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
St. Stephen's Green House  
Earlsfort Terrace  
Dublin 2

Tel: 0761 0000 30  
Email: [cseas@per.gov.ie](mailto:cseas@per.gov.ie)  
[www.cseas.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.gov.ie)

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*Thank you for your attention and participation today*

**.... And remember....  
Keep BREATHING.....**

*Maureen Byrne*  
Employee Assistance Officer



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