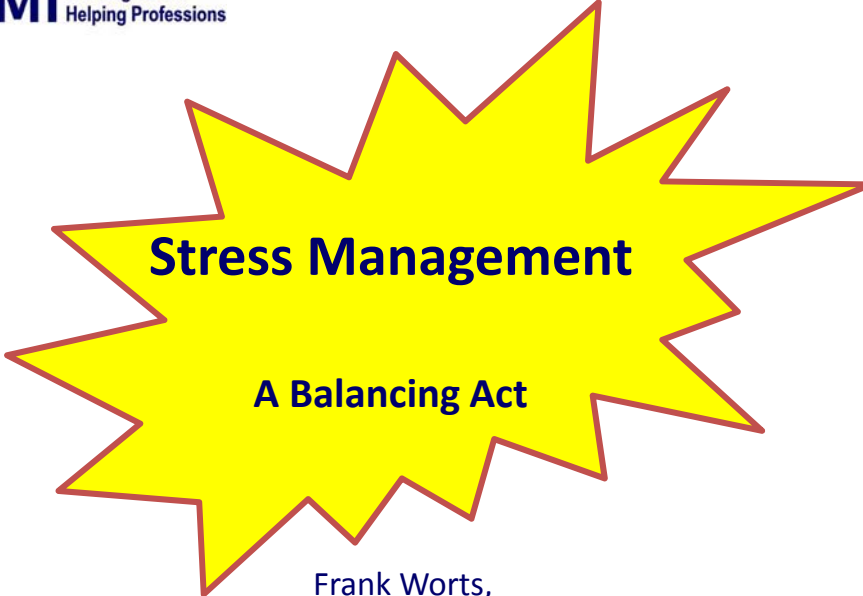


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Stress Management

A Balancing Act

Frank Worts,
PCMI Consultant

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Today's Goals

- Provide a functional way of thinking about stress.
- Facilitate more productive ways of managing stress.
- Explore the legitimacy of stress management in the workplace.

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Food for Thought

- Two men were walking along a crowded sidewalk in a downtown business area. Suddenly, one exclaimed, “Listen to the lovely sound of that cricket.” But the other could not hear the cricket. He asked his companion how he could detect the sound of a cricket amid the din of people and traffic...

Food for Thought

- ...The first man, who was a zoologist, had trained himself to listen to the voice of nature. But he didn't explain. He simply took a coin out of his pocket and dropped it to the sidewalk, whereupon a dozen people began to look about to find what was dropped. “We hear”, he said, “what we listen for.” - Dr. Kermit L. Long, American Clergyman and Author

There is no Magic

- There is no magic or simple solution to dealing with stress.
- It takes an investment in and commitment to doing things differently.
- In effect, one must train oneself to hear something different.

Prevalence

- “More than half of working adults - and 47% of all Americans - say they are concerned with the amount of stress in their lives.”

Stambor, Z. (2006). *Stressed Out Nation*. In *APA Monitor on Psychology*, Vol. 37, No. 4.

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Prevalence

- **Stress is up.** Most Americans are suffering from moderate to high stress, with 44 percent reporting that their stress levels have increased over the past five years.

Jan. 2011, APA Monitor on Psychology, Vol. 42. No. 1

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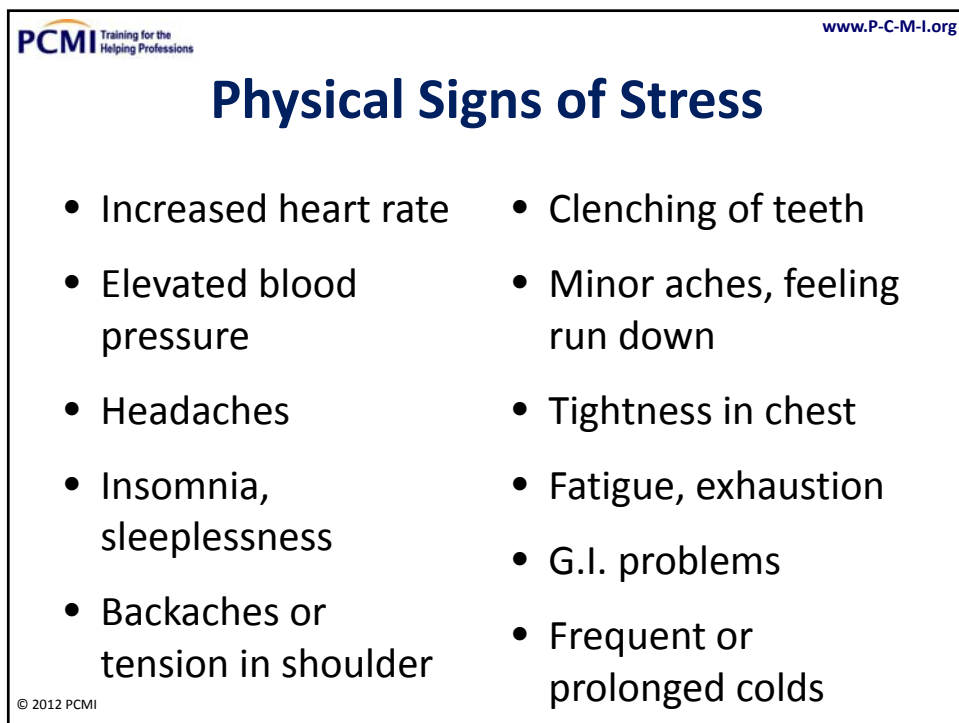
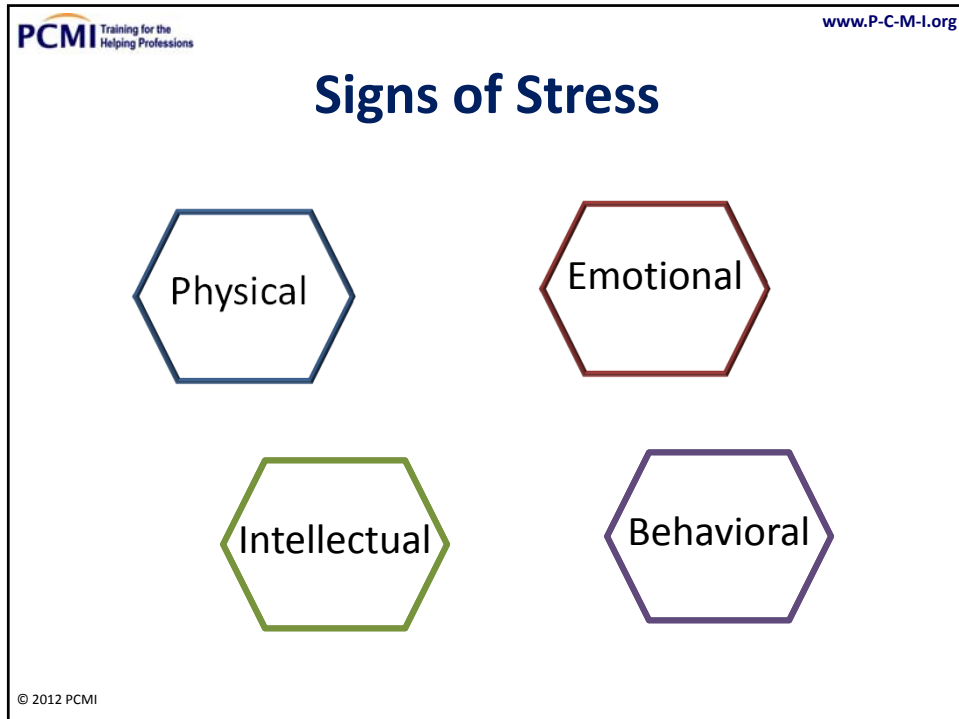
Top 5 Causes of Stress

Cause of Stress	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Money	73%	72%	71%	76%	75%
Work	74%	68%	69%	70%	70%
The economy	69%	63%	65%	67%	67%
Relationships (e.g., spouse, kids, girl/boyfriend)	59%	51%	55%	58%	58%
Family responsibilities	60%	58%	55%	58%	57%

<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2011/impact.aspx>

BASE: All respondents 2007 (n=1848); 2008 (n=1791); 2009 (n=1568); 2010 (n=1134); 2011 (n=1226)
Q625 Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.

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Emotional Signs of Stress

- Irritability, overreactions
- Feelings of jealousy
- Withdrawn
- Suspicious attitudes
- Diminished initiative
- Worrying, depression
- Angry, short temper
- Lack of interest & motivation
- Self-deprecating thoughts
- Negative attitude, cynical
- Reduced involvement in close relationships

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Intellectual Signs of Stress

- Forgetfulness
- Decreased fantasy life
- Inattention to detail
- Decreased creativity
- Care less attitude
- Preoccupation
- Decreased concentration
- Past rather than present orientation
- Thinking slower
- Reduced problem-solving skills

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Behavioral Signs of Stress

- Decreased productivity
- Excessive drinking or drug use
- Working harder with lower results
- Reduced outside interest
- Avoiding some tasks
- Errors in judging distances
- Resistance to new ideas
- Accident prone, too much risk taking
- Short temper
- Competing with others

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Measuring Stress

- Miller & Smith Stress Vulnerability Scale – A 20 question tool.
<http://www.muskingum.edu/~cal/database/general/stressquest.html>
<http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/academic/counseling/stressVulnerability.aspx>
- Occupational Stress Inventory – A comprehensive 140 question, validated tool.
 Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
<http://www4.parinc.com/Products/PermsLicensing.aspx?id=19>

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1= Almost Always, 2= Usually, 3= Sometimes, 4= Almost Never, 5= Never


1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I get seven to 8 hours of sleep at least four nights a week.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I give and receive affection regularly	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have at least one relative within fifty miles on whom I can rely.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I limit myself to less than half a pack of cigarettes a day (non-smoker = almost always).	1	2	3	4	5
7. I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week. (non-drinkers = almost always).	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am at the appropriate weight for my height.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses	1	2	3	4	5
10. I get strength from my religious/spiritual beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I regularly attend club or social activities.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have at least one friend in whom I confide about personal matters.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, and teeth).	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems - for example chores and money.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I do something for fun at least once a week.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I am able to organize my time effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or other caffeine-rich drinks) per day.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I take some quiet time for myself during the day.	1	2	3	4	5

Total Score = _____ - 20 = _____ points.

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When Stress Becomes Debilitating

- Significant stress
- Mild stress
- Constructive anxiety
- No stress



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No Stress

- There is no appreciable level of stress. Performance, judgment and health are not impacted at all.



Constructive Anxiety

- This is a very mild level of stress that can serve as positive motivation.
- It does not overwhelm.



Mild Anxiety

- This level of anxiety produces concern, but the situation creating the concern seems manageable.
- It does not overwhelm.



Significant Stress

- This level of stress has a negative impact on **performance**, judgment, and health.
- It can be quite overwhelming.



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Keeping Things in Balance

To bring into balance:

1. Reduce stressors
2. Increase coping mechanisms

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3 Dimensions to Balance

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Understanding Work Related Stressors

Related to occupational role:

1. Role overload – Extent to which demands exceed resources, and extent to which individual is able to accomplish expected work loads.
2. Role insufficiency – Extent to which training, education, skills, and experience match job requirements.


Understanding Work Related Stressors

3. Role ambiguity – Extent to which priorities, expectations, and evaluation criteria are clear to individual.
4. Role boundary – Extent to which individual experiences conflicting role demands and loyalties in the work setting.
5. Responsibility – Extent to which individual feels or has a great deal of responsibility for the performance and welfare of others.

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Role Overload

- Carol is an intake worker who has too much on her plate right now. She is used to a fast pace. Recently, however, she has been asked to fill in for another worker, and she has been assigned to take a course on using new software for her computer.




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Role Insufficiency

- The position for which Kenzo was originally hired has been eliminated. The agency offered him a new position that does not require the level of skill and knowledge of his original job.
- Because of the poor economy and high level of unemployment, he made the decision to take the new job. Since his move to the new position, his stress level has slowly gone up.



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Role Ambiguity

- Ellen was hired when her company was making an effort to increase its workforce diversity. Since being hired three weeks ago, she has had four different projects to which she has been assigned – none of them permanent. She has yet to receive a job description and does not know what her real role is within the department.



Role Boundary

- Margie has been hired as a temporary employee while two other individuals are out on leave. She does not know what she will be doing from day to day. Each day it seems as if she has a different supervisor, and is often given conflicting directions from each. She doesn't even know who she reports to, except for the "daily" supervisor.



Responsibility

- Judith feels a tremendous amount of responsibility. She supervises four new workers, all of whom work with frail community based elderly. Recently, she has been asked to spend two weeks working with monitors from the state government going over records. She is very concerned that she may not be giving her new employees the level of clinical supervision they need.




Break for Questions



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Understanding Personal Strains

- Physical strain – physical illness or poor self-care habits.
 - Examples: Poor eating habits - alcohol overuse - unplanned weight gains - etc. Chronic headaches – backaches - pain related to disease, etc.




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Understanding Personal Strains

- Interpersonal strain – difficulty with relationships and/or lack of opportunities to participate in meaningful relationships. –
 - Examples: Frequent quarrels with significant others - excessive dependency - not enough time to spend with friends - forced interactions with others not of one's choice, etc.



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Understanding Personal Strains

- Psychological strain – emotional/psychological problems faced by the individual.
 - Examples: Depression - lacking any sense of humor - high anxiety - excessive worrying - poor response to non-threatening situations, etc.



Coping Resources




- Recreation – Use of activities to derive pleasure and relaxation.
 - Good use of leisure time - takes time to relax - looks for activities that are satisfying - enjoys activities used in free time - engaged in activities that provide pleasure.



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Coping Resources

- Self-Care – Extent to which individual regularly engages in stress reduction activities.
 - Regular exercise - adequate sleep, careful about diet - use of relaxation techniques - avoidance of harmful substances (drugs, alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, etc.)






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Coping Resources

- Rational/Cognitive – Ability to use cognitive skills in the face of stress.
 - Systematic problem solving - recognizing consequences of choices - ability to identify important issues from unimportant ones - ability to focus attention, etc.



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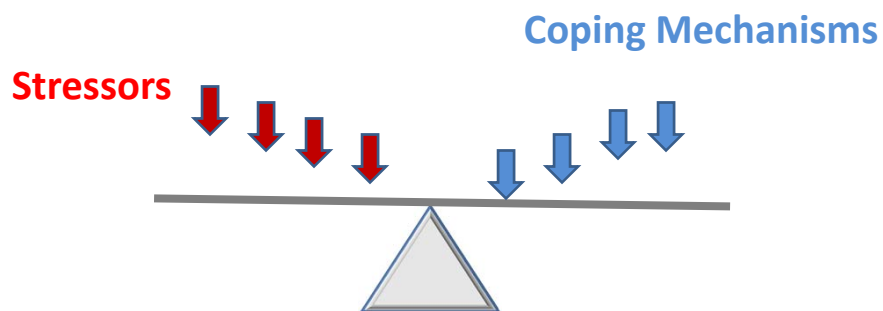
Coping Resources

- Social Support – The sense or perception of support and help from those around us.
 - At least one other person on whom we can count - feeling valued & loved by someone that we value - having sympathetic people with which to talk - feeling close to another.



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Keeping Things in Balance



To bring into balance:

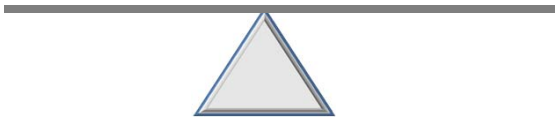

1. Reduce stressors
2. Increase coping mechanisms

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Remember Carol?

- **Fast pace**
- **Fill in for another worker**
- **Class for new software**
- Self-care – get more sleep
- Don't skip planned workout
- Have dinner with friend

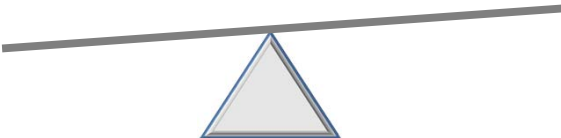

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Carol

If she reduces coping resources, the stressors will shift her balance in a **negative** way.

- **Fast pace**
- **Fill in for another worker**
- **Class for new software**
- Self-care – get more sleep
- Don't skip planned workout
- ~~Have dinner with friend~~

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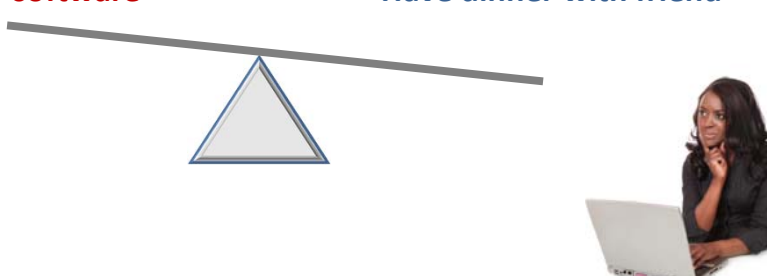
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Carol

If she reduces stressors, coping resources will shift her balance in a **positive** way.

- **Fast pace**
- **Fill in for another worker**
- ~~**Class for new software**~~

- Self-care – get more sleep
- Don't skip planned workout
- Have dinner with friend



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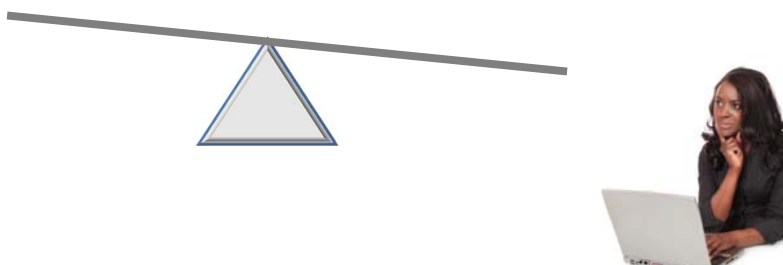
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Carol

If she adds a coping resources, it will shift her balance in a **positive** way.

- **Fast pace**
- **Fill in for another worker**
- **Class for new software**

- Eliminate crooked thinking
- Self-care – get more sleep
- Don't skip planned workout
- Have dinner with friend




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Stress As a Legitimate Concern in the Workplace

- From the supervisory perspective.
- From the worker perspective.
- The key is **PERFORMANCE**


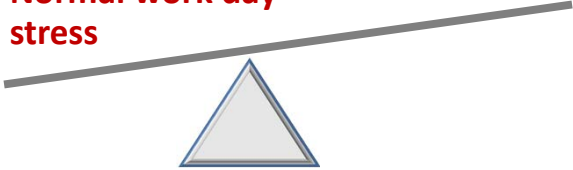


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Case #1 - Ruth

- **Two new employees to train & supervise**
- **Psychological strain of quitting smoking**
- **Normal work day stress**




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Ruth's Boss

- The issue is performance.
 - Increased rate of errors.
 - Less than desirable interactions with new employees



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Case #1 - Ruth

- **Commitment to take even more responsibility.**
- **Two new employees to train & supervise**
- **Psychological strain of quitting smoking**
- **Normal work day stress**



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Is it safe to talk about how stressed I am?



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- ~~Commitment to take even more responsibility.~~
- ~~Two new employees to train & supervise~~
- Psychological strain of quitting smoking
- Normal work day stress


- Self-care – For the next two weeks extend breaks by 5 minutes and take a walk.
- Eliminate crooked thinking: “I can’t do this right.”
- Have dinner with friend
- The boss checks in for the next two weeks, just to provide support.



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Final Questions




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- Send additional questions to:

Info@P-C-M-I.org
- Include the following in the message title:
NYSAAAA/NYSCA Stress Management



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