Making stress your best friend
This training is intended to help you:

- See how stress can be your “early warning system”
- Learn about resilience and stress hardiness
- Find out how stress can fire up your energy and creativity
Rethinking stress

• Understand it
• Manage it
• Make it work for you as often as possible
Stress: The body’s reaction to any change that requires you to make an adjustment or response

Types of stress

- **Acute stress** – Fight or flight
- **Chronic stress** – Day-to-day stress we often ignore
- **Eustress** – Motivating and exciting stress
- **Distress** – Stress that tends to be negative and unhelpful
Stress is a healthy part of life

- Distress: Apathy, Boredom, Poor attention
- Eustress: Best performance, Motivation, Excitement
- Distress: Overwhelm, Anxiety, Burn-out

Performance vs. Stress level graph showing the relationship between stress levels and performance.
The body’s stress response

- We perceive an event as “stressful”
- Body releases stress hormones
- Increased heart rate, breathing, awareness
- The perceived threat passes
- The body releases hormones to calm down
The problem with the stress response

- Our brains can’t tell the difference between a lion attack and a traffic jam
- The hormone release is the same, no matter how serious the threat
- We can experience intense physical symptoms just by thinking about something stressful
- Many people don’t know how to use their “brake pedals”
- If we don’t manage stress, we can stay in a state of fight-or-flight and this leads to health problems
Managing stress

Be curious and withhold judgment

• Accept stress as a part of life
• Recognize your own stress symptoms and where they fall on the curve – This is your “early warning system”
• Examine how you currently respond to stress – are you making it worse?
Making stress your friend

• How we think about stress has a greater impact than the stress itself
• People who had a lot of stress and believed stress was bad for their health had a 43% increase of dying \(^2\)
• When we believe stress is bad, it constricts blood vessels

Making stress your friend

- People who had a lot of stress but didn’t believe it was bad had the lowest risk of dying (even lower than those with little stress)\(^2\)
- When we believe our stress response is helpful, blood vessels stay relaxed

Physical symptoms

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Appetite changes
- Poor sleep
- Frequent colds and illnesses
- Low libido
- Skin breakouts
- Teeth grinding

Emotional and mental symptoms

- Mood changes
- Frustration
- Agitation
- Overwhelm
- Forgetfulness
- Disorganization
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Pessimism
- Trouble relaxing
- Trouble quieting your mind
- Low self-esteem
- Poor self-image

Behavioral symptoms

- Avoidance
- Withdrawal from others
- Procrastination
- Increased arguments
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- Eating more or less
Managing stress

Build resilience and stress hardiness

• Get plenty of sleep
• Eat well
• Move your body
• Surround yourself with supportive people
• Practice optimism
• Build self-confidence
• Take time for yourself

Managing stress

Pump the brakes

• Take deep, abdominal breaths
• Focus on a soothing word (such as “peace” or “calm”)
• Visualize a tranquil scene
• Practice yoga or tai chi
• Exercise
Managing stress

- Recognize your body is trying to help you
- Don’t think you have to feel “happy” about the situation
- Accept what you can’t control
- Pay attention to your thinking
- Choose empowering thoughts
Use stress for your benefit

Let it:

• Inform you
• Motivate you
• Energize you
• Promote creative thought and action, rather than fear and reaction
• Improve your self-esteem as you deal with life’s challenges
“Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.”

Hans Selye
Thank you for attending!

All calls are confidential, except as required by law.

Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however it is subject to change.