Managing Stress in the Workplace: Helping Others Deal with Stress
Objectives

• Define stress

• Understand the causes of stress

• Learn managerial strategies for minimizing the effects of stress in the workplace

• Identify tips for recognizing your own stress signals and taking care of yourself
What is Stress?

Stress:

• Your body’s reaction to an event that stimulates you
• Stress isn’t always a bad thing
What Causes Stress?

- **External Stressors** — Environmental factors or events
- **Internal Stressors** — Specific behaviors, ways of thinking, traits or lifestyle choices
How Stress Affects Us

• Work performance decreases
• Relationships suffer
• Lifestyle becomes unbalanced
• Physical symptoms appear
• Health problems arise or worsen
• Feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety become apparent and even overwhelming
Causes of Stress in the Workplace

- Change
- Conflicting priorities
- Time management issues
- Conflict among staff
- Disruptions/distractions
- Problems at home
- Ineffective communication
Change

- Recognize that change—good or bad—causes stress
- Stay one step ahead
- Be sensitive to employees’ concerns
- Remind employees that they have control
- Be flexible
- Maintain a positive attitude
Time Management Issues

• Plan ahead
• Make lists
• Delegate effectively
• Use calendars and planners
• Avoid information overload
• Keep meetings to a minimum and on track
Conflicting Priorities

• Make chain of command clear
• Define goals
• Avoid vague directives
Conflict Among Staff

• Address conflicts before they escalate
• Practice good listening skills
• Respect differences
• Avoid judging
• Focus on the outcome, not the problem
• Emphasize teamwork
• Consider a mediator
Disruptions/Distractions

• Accept that disruptions happen
• Turn them to your advantage
• Be flexible
• Schedule uninterrupted time
• Pick certain times each day to return messages and e-mails
Problems at Home

- Child care
- Adult care
- Finances
- Health
- Relationships
- Offer help
Communication

• Keep the lines of communication open
• Give your support
• Ask for feedback
• Keep a sense of humor
• Be a good communicator
Avoiding Burnout

- Offer positive feedback and constructive criticism
- Provide recognition
- Give ample direction
- Set goals
- Limit overtime
- Be flexible
- Emphasize downtime
- Make time for fun
More Proactive Strategies

- Empathy
- Selection and placement of manpower
- Job analysis and design
- Counseling and training
- Resources available
Recognizing Dangerous Stress Levels

- Changes in work performance
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Withdrawal
- Talk of suicide
- Poor concentration
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns or behavior
- Giving away possessions, or discussion of will and funeral arrangements
- Other abnormal behaviors or changes
Recognizing Your Own Stress Signals

- Do I often feel out of control?
- Do I feel constant pressure to achieve?
- Do I have difficulty concentrating?
- Do I have feelings of depression, anxiety, helplessness or panic?
- Do I have difficulty falling asleep or do I wake frequently during the night?
- Do I suffer from frequent headaches?
- Have I experienced a significant loss of or increase in appetite?
- Do I cry (or feel the desire to cry) often?
- Do I feel faint or dizzy for no apparent reason?
- Do I experience shortness of breath or feel tightness in my chest without exertion?
- Do I regularly feel the need to smoke or have a drink to relax?
- Do I feel unusually tired?
- Do I experience frequent nausea?
Taking Care of Yourself

• Set aside time for yourself every day
• Take an occasional “mental health” day
• Eat a balanced diet
• Take a multi-vitamin
• Drink plenty of water
• Exercise regularly
• Schedule regular physicals
• Get enough sleep
• Make a date with yourself
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