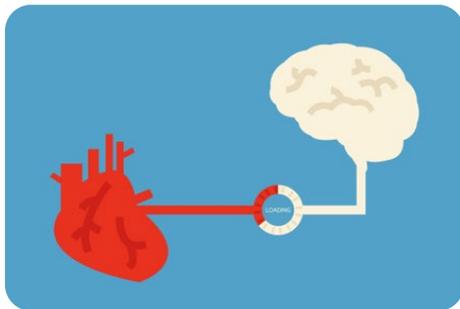


Mental Health Overview

What is mental health?

- Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.
- It affects how we feel, think, and act.
- Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

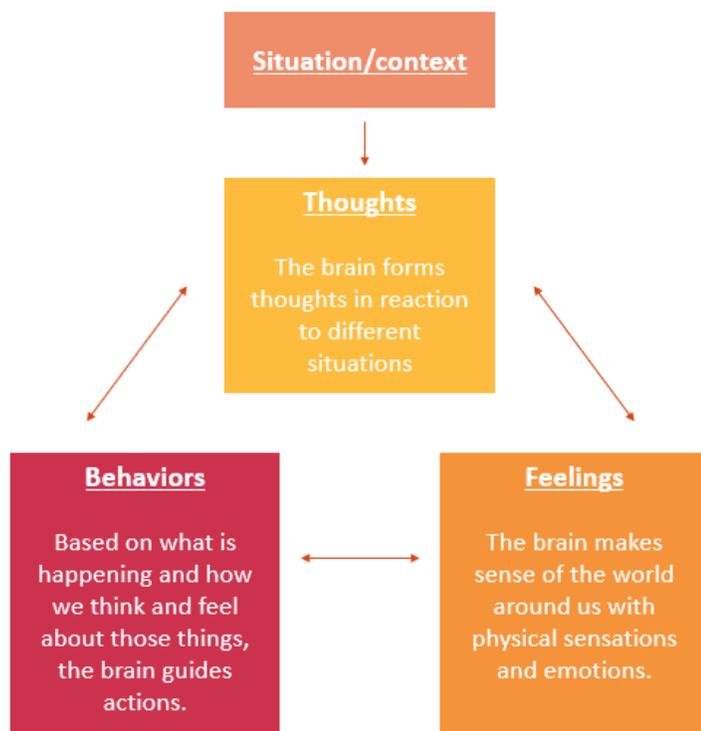


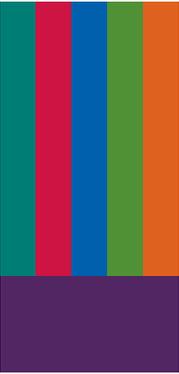
Why focus on mental health?

- Heart health and brain health are connected.
- It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.
- Stress can be a barrier to healthcare and heart healthy activities

The brain and our habits

- The brain is always changing.
- While all parts of the brain work together, each part of the brain is responsible for a specific function.
- The brain controls how we think, behave and feel while also considering the situation and context.
- Our thoughts, feelings and behaviors are connected.
- Repetition makes the connections in our brain stronger over time.

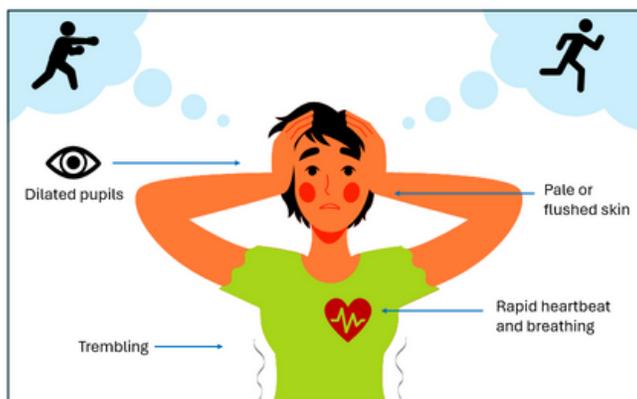




Understanding Our Stress

It is important that we try to manage our stress before it becomes a long-term problem. The first step is to become aware of the signs of stress. Ask yourself: What are my typical sources of stress? Do I notice any patterns? Check the symptoms of stress that you experience.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hostility | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability | <input type="checkbox"/> Tics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resentment | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear/worries | <input type="checkbox"/> Over-eating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Neck aches | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Skin rashes | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic diarrhea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ulcers | <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle Spasms | <input type="checkbox"/> Low energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical weakness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping too much | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle tension | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal from others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/sadness | <input type="checkbox"/> Indigestion | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor memory/
concentration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking/drug Use | <input type="checkbox"/> Constipation | |



Long-term stress is associated with poor self-care and unhealthy behaviors, health problems, and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Activities that help us manage stress



Being active, eating well and getting enough sleep



Enjoying hobbies and pleasurable activities



Practicing relaxation activities

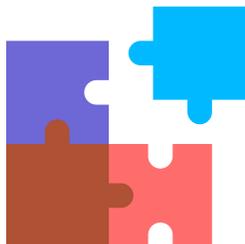


Connecting with family, friends, co-workers and neighbors



Coping with Stress

Matching coping strategies to the situation



1. Define what causes you stress
2. Identify what is controllable and what is uncontrollable
3. Identify more helpful coping strategies for each aspect.
4. Set goals and priorities

1

What is causing you stress?

2

In order to determine the most helpful way of coping with a situation, we need to first determine what aspects of our stress we can control and can't control. Write these down in the columns

 **Controllable Situations**

 **Uncontrollable Situations**

3

Here is a list of helpful ways of coping with controllable and uncontrollable situations. It is important to use helpful coping strategies because if we don't, we may deal with our stress in a way that may be bad for our physical and emotional health. Less helpful coping strategies include eating poorly, not exercising, drug abuse, etc., and can lead to more stress.

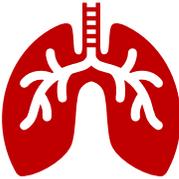
CONTROLLABLE	UNCONTROLLABLE
<p>YOU CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek information • Set goals • Make decision • Resolve conflicts • Request help • Focus on activities 	<p>YOU CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think positively • Exercise, massage, walk • Meditate, relax • Accept negative emotions • Talk with friends • Enjoy your hobbies

4

What next steps will you take to deal with stress in the future?



10 Relaxation Exercises to Reduce Stress

1. **Meditate:** Sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Focus your attention on reciting -- out loud or silently -- a positive mantra such as "I feel at peace" or "I love myself." Place one hand on your belly to sync the mantra with your breaths. Let any distracting thoughts float by like clouds.
2. **Breathe deeply:** Take a 5-minute break and focus on your breathing. Sit up straight, eyes closed, with a hand on your belly. Slowly inhale through your nose, feeling the breath start in your abdomen and work its way to the top of your head. Reverse the process as you exhale through your mouth.
 
3. **Be present:** Take 5 minutes and focus on only one behavior with awareness. Notice how the air feels on your face when you're walking and how your feet feel hitting the ground. Enjoy the texture and taste of each bite of food. When you spend time in the moment and focus on your senses, you should feel less tense.
4. **Reach out:** Your social circle is one of your best tools for handling stress. Talk to others -- preferably face to face, or at least on the phone. Share what's going on. You can get a fresh perspective while keeping your connection strong.
 
5. **Tune into your body:** Mentally scan your body to get a sense of how stress affects it each day. Lie on your back or sit with your feet on the floor. Start at your toes and work your way up to your scalp, noticing how your body feels.
6. **Decompress:** Place a warm heat wrap around your neck and shoulders for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and relax your face, neck, chest, and back muscles. Remove the wrap and use a tennis ball or foam roller to massage away tension.
7. **Laugh out loud:** A good belly laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It lowers cortisol, your body's stress hormone, and boosts brain chemicals called endorphins, which help your mood. Lighten up by tuning in to your favorite sitcom or video, reading the comics, or chatting with someone who makes you smile.
 

8. **Crank up the tunes:** Listening to soothing music can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety. Create a playlist of songs or nature sounds (the ocean, a bubbling brook, birds chirping), and allow your mind to focus on the different melodies, instruments, or singers in the piece. You also can blow off steam by rocking out to more upbeat tunes -- or singing at the top of your lungs!



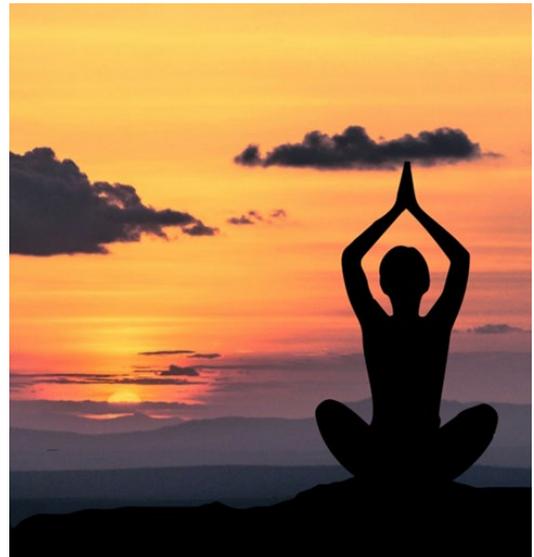
9. **Get moving:** You don't have to run in order to get a runner's high. All forms of exercise, including yoga and walking, can ease depression and anxiety by helping the brain release feel-good chemicals and by giving your body a chance to practice dealing with stress. You can go for a quick walk around the block, take the stairs up and down a few flights, or do some stretching exercises like head rolls and shoulder shrugs.
10. **Celebrate:** Don't forget to celebrate accomplishments like mastering a new task at work or a new hobby.

Increasing awareness of physical tension and stress in our body

Body Scan Activity

Close your eyes and turn your focus to your body. I want you to slowly conduct a body scan from your toes to your head, including high tension areas like abdomen, shoulders, back, and neck. Make note of those places where you feel tension. And now, as you identify those places where you feel tension, I want you to imagine letting go. Just allow those areas of your body to relax.....

When you are ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the group.



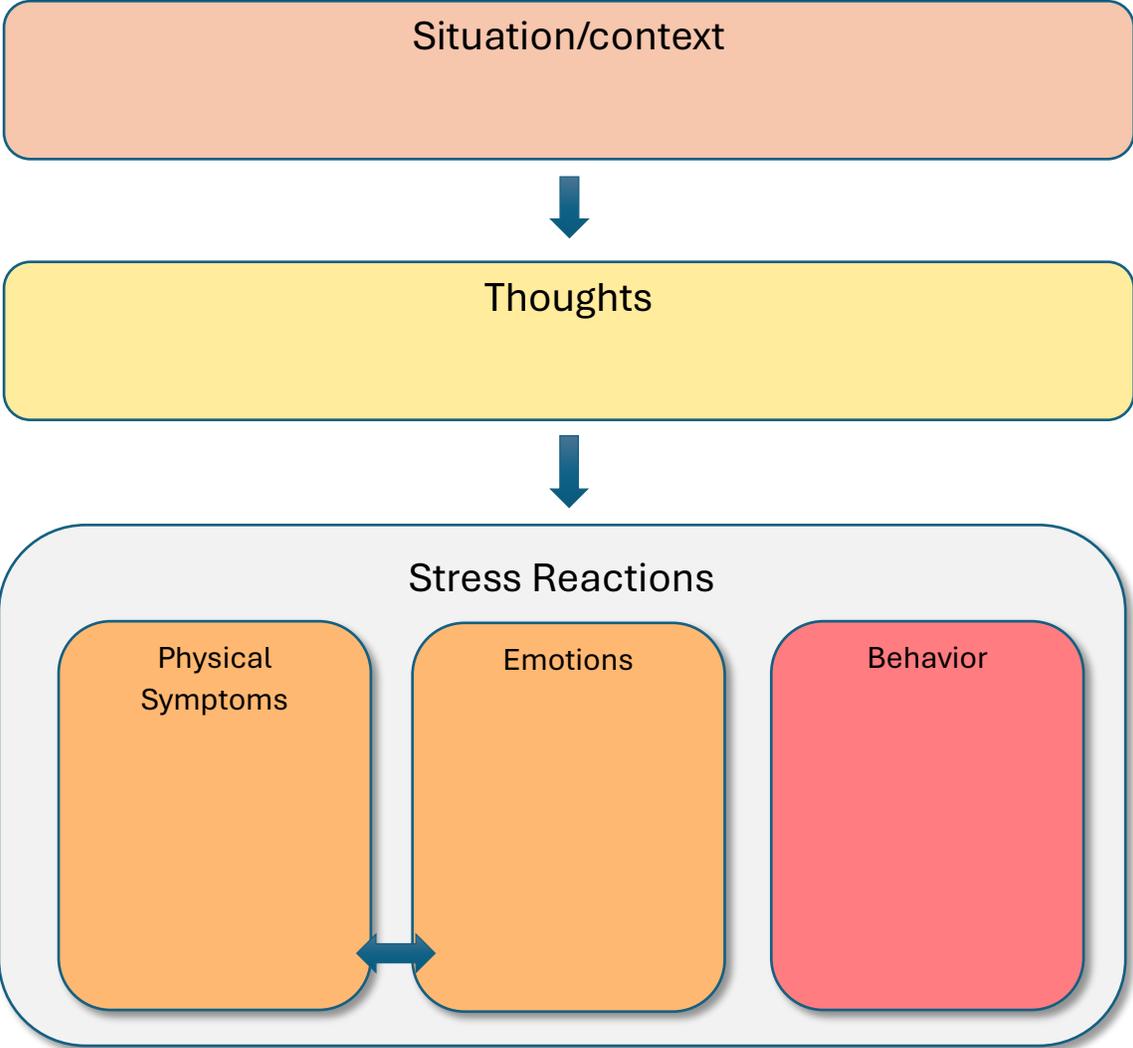
Discussion:

- What are your typical sources of tension?
- In what part of your body are you most likely to feel this tension?
- When are you most likely to feel tense?
- When are you most and least aware of bodily tension?

Weekly Promise – Week 2

The situation/context influences our thinking. And our thoughts can have a significant impact on how we feel (physically and emotionally) as well as how we behave.

1. Here’s a blank diagram you can try to fill out yourself!



2. Practice your relaxation exercise and rate your tension before and after (0 = no tension, 10 = very tense). Record on the table below.

(fill in days)							
Before relaxation							
After relaxation							