

Training program for “coping” abilities

Definition of stress



Stress is a mental phenomenon resulted following facing a complex, difficult, painful or extremely important task. It has an important subjective component.

The same situational context may trigger various emotional responses to different people. The way we feel is not determined by the situation, but the way we interpret the situation. If circumstances determined our feeling, it would mean that in the same situation, all people would feel the same. Each person is responsible for their own emotions, so we may decide how to act in more or less pleasant situations.

The stress factors are the inner or outer situations that may require our reactions to adapt. Some stress factors may be changed (by changing the negative signification of a situation), others may be diminished, accepted or tolerated.

We are often tempted to think that we may change things and people as we like, but it is not always possible. What we can really change is our behavior towards the others, how we relate to things, events or people, as well as our interpretation.

Stress Factors

- + Illness;
- + School – communication with schoolmates, teachers, too many/complex tasks;
- + Family – communication in the family, divorce, death, conflict or violence in a family;
- + Friends – conflicts with friends or lack of friendship;
- + Own person – lack of self-confidence; discontent;
- + Poor finances
- + Unemployment
- + Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- + Natural disasters

Physical reactions to stress:

- Headaches
- Increase or loss of appetite
- Indigestion
- Insomnia
- Muscular cramps
- Malaise

- Fatigue
- Frequent cold
- Allergies

Cognitive reactions to stress:

- Diminished focus
- Mental blockage
- Recall difficulties
- Loss of creativity
- Diminished flexibility of thinking
- Diminished capacity in decision making
- Negative thinking

Emotional reactions to stress:

- Emotional instability
- Lack of emotional expression
- High irascibility
- Diminished interest in past favorite activities
- Indifference towards friends
- Distrust
- Diminished capacity of relaxation
- Feeling of neglect
- Feeling of personal failure
- Inability to carry out on time any task
- Lack of confidence in the future

Behavioral reactions to stress:

- Aggressiveness
- Low output in any activity
- Bad time management
- Overconcern towards some activities
- Excessive use of tobacco and alcohol
- Sleep disorder
- Personal isolation

Stress coping refers to the individual's ability to reduce, overcome or stand any situation exceeding the automatic body response. Although stress coping includes real sources (cognitive, emotional, social, physical, etc.), it is mostly based on the assessment of personal resources to cope with any difficult or threatening situation. Most of times the existing resources are considered as insufficient, fact which determines stress.

Some of the individual features which may protect from stress are self-esteem, optimism, self-valorization, assertiveness and realistic assessment of the activity results.

Coping mechanisms

- Positive re-assessment.

Example: 1. locate the problem and brainstorm solutions. 2. Write self-statements to counteract negative thoughts. 3. Finish each day by visualizing its best parts. 4. Learn to accept disappointment as a normal part of life

- Asking for outside help
- Problem solving

Example: There are four basic steps in solving a problem:

- Defining the problem.
- Generating alternatives.
- Evaluating and selecting alternatives.
- Implementing solutions
- Research of information
- Relaxation techniques

Example:

- Meditate
- Breathe Deeply
- Slow down. When you spend time in the moment and focus on your senses, you should feel less tense.
- Reach Out. Share what's going on. You can get a fresh perspective while keeping your connection strong.
- Tune In to 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.
- Humour

Responses to stressing situations:

- Direct reaction to the situation;
- Information on the situation;
- Non-involvement
- Denial

Stress management

1. Identification of stress factors
 - Anticipation
 - Action Plan
2. Identification of emotional, behavioral, physiological and cognitive reactions:
 - Avoidance of (self) blame for the event
 - Identification of negative tendencies in the event assessment and person
 - Providing a positive signification to the event
3. Development of stress management behaviour
 - Forming the assertive behaviour
 - Solving the problems and situations and decision making
 - Relaxation methods
4. Social Support
 - Asking for help
 - Developing and maintaining friendships
5. Lifestyle
 - Healthy nutritional behaviour
 - Practicing relaxation techniques
 - Practicing physical exercises
 - Giving up smoking and alcohol
6. Developing self-esteem



- Setting up realistic goals;
- Setting up personal priorities and limits;
- Doing pleasant activities

7. Time Management

- Setting up priority activities for limited periods of time (day/week)
- Planning them
- Review the consequences of their delay
- Carry out activities one by one
- Pause between activities
- Reward yourself after each completed activity.