



Stress Inoculation Training Program



Transformational Safety

Your Preferred Partner Toward
Optimal Organizational Mental
Health Solutions

Stress Inoculation Training Program

Participant Handbook

Contact us +61 411252534

Your Name:.....

Welcome

Thank you for choosing to participate in this Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) program. This is a new training experience where you will encounter opportunities to identify what is “stressing you out”, and then specifically design your own inoculation program to help you to avoid the worst effects of stress in your life.



Our material is designed to be user-friendly, educational, and a bit of fun at the same time. We provide materials for participants which include take-home reference sheets and exercises, which you can use to strengthen and sustain your own stress inoculation efforts.



Remember we are here to help you on this journey, and have every confidence that you shall find this experience both insightful and useful.

Grahame Smith

David G Broadbent

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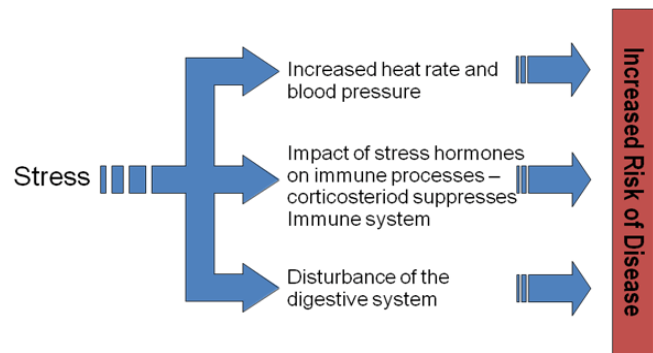
Our Purpose

- ☑ Is to help you train yourself to cope with stressful situations by learning more useful and positive behaviour patterns
- ☑ Is to demonstrate how SIT is similar to promoting disease resistance through immunizations
- ☑ Is to demonstrate to you how SIT is highly effective toward reducing distress, and improving your ability to cope with harmful stress!
- ☑ Is to help you improve your resilience, through identifying your effective management of past experience with stressors in your life
- ☑ Is to help you to deal with harmful stressors in a gradual manner
- ☑ Is to provide skills & opportunities to build tolerance to current & future stressors
- ☑ Is to optimize your stress tolerance through changing your individual beliefs about your performance in stressful situations, and your ability to deal with distress
- ☑ To promote hope, self-confidence, self-control, & to enhance personal responsibility in managing harmful stress.



What is Stress Inoculation?



Stress Inoculation Therapy (SIT) is a method intended to help you prepare yourself in advance to handle stressful life events successfully, and with a minimum of upset. The use of the term "inoculation" in SIT is based on the idea that we are inoculating or preparing ourselves to become resistant to the effects of stressors in a manner similar to how a vaccination works to make patients resistant to the effects of particular diseases. Take a look at the consequences of allowing yourself to "live" too long with harmful stress. It causes too much "damage" to you, and those around you. It stands to reason that anything that might give you a degree of vaccination against harmful stress demands your attention. At least we think so. Makes a lot of sense doesn't it?



As an SIT participant, this Handbook is provided to assist provide valuable information about stressful situations and the general nature of stress, the negative outcomes you may be vulnerable to experience when confronted with stress, and steps you can take to avoid those negative outcomes. At the conclusion of your stress inoculation efforts, you should feel like you may anticipate some of the "bad stuff" that could occur during a harmful stress event, and have a workable and practical plan in place for helping yourself avoid too much of this "bad stuff".

Stress inoculation has three phases:

1. In the initial conceptualization phase, the SIT trainer educates the participant about the general nature of stress, and explains important concepts such as appraisal and cognitive distortion that play a key role in shaping stress reactions. The idea that people often and quite inadvertently make their stress worse through the unconscious operation of bad coping habits is conveyed. Finally, the SIT trainer works to develop a clear understanding of the nature of the stressors the participant is confronting.
An integral component of the SIT conceptualization stage is the idea that stressors are actually creative opportunities and puzzles to be solved, rather than mere obstacles. Participants are assisted to differentiate between aspects of their stressors, and their stress-induced reactions, that are changeable and aspects that cannot change, so that coping efforts can be adjusted accordingly. Acceptance-based coping is actually appropriate for aspects of situations that cannot be altered, while more active interventions are appropriate for more changeable stressors.
2. The second phase of SIT training focuses on skills acquisition and rehearsal. In this program we aim to introduce participants to a range of stress inoculation techniques that have been found to be useful across a wide variety of situations.

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3. In the final SIT phase, application and follow through, the SIT trainer provides the participant with opportunities to practice their new stress inoculation coping skills. The participant may be encouraged to use a variety of simulation methods to help increase the realism of “practice”, including visualization exercises, modelling and vicarious learning, role playing of feared or stressful situations, and simple repetitious behavioural practice of coping routines until they become over-learned and easy to put into practice, in other words the “new” stress inoculation techniques have become autonomic and normal.

Where has Stress Inoculation come from?



Stress inoculation training (SIT) was developed back in the early 1980's by world renowned psychologist Donald Meichenbaum. Dr. Meichenbaum is a leading expert on the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). His work with trauma victims over the years covers the entire gamut of age groups, from children to the elderly. Meichenbaum holds the prestigious title of Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Waterloo, located in Ontario, Canada.

Dr Meichenbaum noticed that even people who had experienced some of the worst horrors of trauma, could take a journey toward recovery and wellness by being reintroduced to a range of successful coping techniques, coupled with greater levels of awareness and education about their experiences. Thus, Stress Inoculation Training might be thought of as one of the exposure therapies from a standard psychology standpoint.

What became self-evident, though it took a while, was that if SIT could show such positive results within a community of patients experiencing acute PTSD, then surely it would also benefit those persons with less severe stress exposures. That is exactly where SIT has come from, and has contributed to healthier lives for millions of people globally who have experienced an SIT program.

What You need to Know-The How

The Conceptualization Phase - Phase 1

Understanding stress and what you can do about it



The Random House Dictionary defines stress as, “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension,” and, “a situation, occurrence, or factor causing this.” The word “stress” actually comes from a Latin word meaning, “distress.” Stress is often very specific in relation how it is both perceived by individuals and also how it actually affects people. Typically, we interpret stress as a negative experience, however at times it can be viewed as a

positive experience and can help a person to achieve a goal or meet deadline for example.

If you have ever experienced excessive stress (harmful stress) then you will well be aware that the effects are extremely unpleasant. No matter what you may wish to do the stress response looms like a brick wall barring your progress. You may find yourself in a situation where you know exactly what you should do, and yet this feeling of stress makes you feel totally out of control. Your stomach may churn uncomfortably (butterflies), your mouth may go very dry, your breathing may become rapid and appear to be uneven, you may feel your heart begin to pump so hard it actually hurts your chest. Also, you may begin to sweat profusely and blush, tremble, or feel dizzy. In essence you feel you are going to be physically ill and going to pass out. Your memory may begin to fail you and your mind may incessantly focus upon all the negative possibilities (although they rarely come true), and by doing this just keep feeding those feelings which are contributing to your stress.

Harmful stress may strike anybody at any time. It is no respecter of age, education, social class, intelligence, or ability. One of the most distressing factors associated with excessive stress it feels as though you can't do anything about it. No matter how often you may tell yourself to "keep calm", "stay cool", or "act naturally"; you don't calm down, cool off, or begin to act in what you would consider a normal manner.

Consider for a moment a couple of situations where you might find yourself behaving in an anxious or stressed-out manner:

1. Objectively Real Threats



Firstly, visualize that you are walking down a lonely dark, quiet street. Suddenly from within the shadows a large salivating Doberman jumps out and comes menacingly towards you. It then just stands there growling and you have no idea what it shall do next?

Your initial reaction, although you may not be aware of it, is called the "startle" response. This will be experienced as a lurching sensation in the pit of your stomach, as the first spurt of adrenalin arrives. In a fraction of a second your entire body will have been switched into the "fight" or "flight" mode. If you decide to fight or to run, then your body should be well primed to fight very hard or run very fast. If you are unable to escape your attacker, either by fighting or running, yet are forced to continue confronting him, then you may find your anxiety levels just continuing to increase with no apparent way of reducing them. Such a situation may lead to an exponential (rapidly rising) increase in all or some of the symptoms described previously.

2. Subjectively real threats (phobias)

A phobia (the word is derived from the Greek for 'fearing') is considered to be an "irrational" fear because no objective threat appears to be involved. The degree of stress in these situations is often very high, and this fact, added to the apparent illogical nature of the response, leads many people to believe they are going crazy. Frequently, they are so ashamed of their behaviour that they go to great lengths to hide it, even from close relatives. This is so unfortunate, as it has been estimated that upwards of twenty percent (20%) of us shall have some form of phobia throughout our life. Think about it, that's one in five. Far more common that we think –and something that most people can sort out with just a little bit of help and support.

It should always be reiterated that phobic anxiety is not some tell-tale sign of a psychiatric condition (in the vast majority of cases). It is just an example of a totally normal stress response, which has attached itself to a stimulus which would not normally lead to excessive harmful stress. Just as this type of behaviour is a learned behaviour it is equally possible to "unlearn" it. All we have to do is to learn, all over again, how to relax effectively. Once we are able to adequately relax, we gradually expose our self to the stimulus which was contributing to the excessive anxiety; a little at a time. With patience and perseverance, it is quite possible to learn all over again that what was leading to the high anxiety was "irrational" and need no longer be feared. The result is that these "irrational" stimuli no longer lead to the symptoms associated with excessive anxiety and you are once again able to travel your normal path.

THE NATION'S TOP TEN PHOBIAS

- 1 Arachnophobia – spiders
- 2 Social phobia – social or public situations
- 3 Aerophobia – flying
- 4 Agoraphobia – open or public spaces
- 5 Claustrophobia – enclosed spaces
- 6 Emetophobia – vomiting
- 7 Acrophobia (vertigo) – heights
- 8 Cancerphobia – developing cancer
- 9 Brontophobia – thunderstorms
- 10 Necrophobia – death (your own and others')



These are just two of the more common understandings about harmful stress that can often occur quite suddenly. There are also many more insidious stressors that just seem to sneak up on us over time. This can mean, that in addition to experiencing the more sudden stressors above, we may find ourselves also having to deal with low-grade stressors that are just bubbling away under the surface all of the time. Think of it as having a low-grade infection, that you just can't seem to shift. You know you are far from your best, yet you just can't seem to make any headway against it?

Unfortunately, the body's autonomic nervous system often does a pretty poor job of distinguishing between these different forms of harmful stress. If you're stressed-out over a "domestic" at home, a traffic jam on your way to work, or an influx of bills coming in all at once, for example, your body may still react as if you're facing a life-or-death situation. This means that your body shall have to deal with all sorts of extreme chemical and other biological changes – that really puts your internal engine under enormous strain.



As you repeatedly experience the stress response in your daily life, it can raise your blood pressure, suppress your immune system, increase your risk of heart attack and stroke, speed up the aging process and leave you vulnerable to a host of other mental and emotional problems.

Many health problems are caused or exacerbated by stress, including:

- Pain of any kind
- Heart disease
- Digestive problems
- Sleep problems
- Depression
- Weight problems
- Auto immune diseases
- Skin conditions, such as eczema



Signs and symptoms of harmful stress overload

The following table lists some of the common warning signs and symptoms of chronic stress. The more signs and symptoms you notice in yourself, the closer you may be to stress overload.

Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memory problems• Inability to concentrate• Poor judgment• Seeing only the negative• Anxious or racing thoughts• Constant worrying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moodiness• Irritability or short temper• Agitation, inability to relax• Feeling overwhelmed• Sense of loneliness and isolation• Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioural Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aches and pains• Diarrhoea or constipation• Nausea, dizziness• Chest pain, rapid heartbeat• Loss of sex drive• Frequent colds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eating more or less• Sleeping too much or too little• Isolating yourself from others• Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities• Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax• Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

It is worth keeping in mind that the signs and symptoms of harmful stress overload can also be caused by other psychological and/or medical problems. So, if you're experiencing any of the warning signs of harmful stress, it's important to see your doctor to help determine if your symptoms are stress-related, or due to a possible underlying physical condition?

On the following page you can see quite clearly just some of the bodily symptoms that exposure to harmful stress can contribute to. You really owe it to yourself, and those that you care for, to do all that you can to reduce the likelihood of these effects.

The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a difficult relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you or forces you to adjust can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to university, or receiving a promotion at work.

Of course, not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated; for example, when you worry excessively about something that may or may not happen, or have irrational, pessimistic thoughts about life.

Common external causes of stress

- Major life changes
- Work or school
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial problems
- Being too busy
- Children and family

Common internal causes of stress

- Chronic worry
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations/Perfectionism
- Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility
- All-or-nothing attitude

What causes excessive stress depends, at least in part, on your perception of it. Something that's stressful to you may not be a worry at all for someone else; they may even enjoy it. For example, your morning commute may make you anxious and tense because you worry that traffic will make you late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more than enough time and enjoy listening to music while they drive. Another more confronting example might be the "bungee jump". Someone is quite willing to pay good money for the opportunity to be highly stressed and jump of a bridge attached to a rubber band? Their best friend is terrified by the very thought. Yet the physical experience is exactly the same – just the perception of the psychological experience is totally opposite.



Here are some more examples of our individual differences when understand stress.

Everyone experiences stress differently

Lisa is terrified of getting up in front of people to perform or speak, while her best friend, **Jane**, lives for the spotlight.

Greg thrives under pressure and performs best when he has a tight deadline, while his co-worker, **Brett**, shuts down when work demands escalate.

Jenny enjoys helping her elderly parents. Her sister, **Connie**, helps out as well but finds the demands of caretaking very stressful.

Alan doesn't hesitate to send food back or complain about bad service when eating out, while his wife, **Natalie**, finds it much too stressful to complain.

What determines your ability to manage stress?

We're all different. Some people seem to be able to roll with the punches, while others tend to fall-over in the face of far smaller obstacles or frustrations. Some people even seem to get a kick out of the excitement and challenge of a high-stress lifestyle. Something must be happening here?


Your ability to tolerate stress depends on many factors, including the quality of your relationships and support network, your life experiences, your emotional intelligence (EQ), genetic pre-disposition, and other stuff. We actually don't know "everything" yet?

Factors that are thought to influence your stress tolerance.













- 🌻 Your support network - Social engagement is the body's most evolved strategy for responding to stress so it's no surprise that people with a strong network of supportive friends and family members are better able to cope with life's stressors. On the flip side, the lonelier and isolated you are, the less opportunity you have to utilize social engagement and the greater your vulnerability to stress.
- 🌻 Your exercise levels - Your physical and mental health are intrinsically linked, so the better you take care of your body, the greater resilience you'll have against the symptoms of stress. Exercising regularly (for 30 minutes or more on most days) can lift your mood and help relieve stress, anxiety, anger, and frustration. It can also serve as a distraction to your worries, allowing you to find some quiet time and break out of the cycle of negative thoughts that feed stress and anxiety. We might think of this as "moving meditation".
- 🌻 Your diet - The food you eat can also have a profound effect on your mood and how well you cope with life's stressors. Eating a diet full of processed and convenience food, refined carbohydrates, and sugary snacks can worsen symptoms of stress while eating some diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables, high-quality protein, and healthy fats, especially omega-3 fatty acids, can help you better cope with life's ups and downs.
- 🌻 Your sense of control - It may be easier to take stress in your stride if you have confidence in yourself and your ability to influence events and persevere through challenges. If you feel like things are out of your control, you're likely to have less tolerance for stress. The fancy term for this is sometime called "locus of control".
- 🌻 Your attitude and outlook – Optimistic people are often more stress-hardy. They tend to embrace challenges, have a strong sense of humour, and accept that change is a part of life.
- 🌻 Your ability to deal with your emotions – You're extremely vulnerable to stress if you don't know how to calm and soothe yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, or overwhelmed by a situation. The ability to bring your emotions into balance helps you bounce back from adversity and is a skill that can be learned at any age. This is a key element within any effective stress inoculation training program.
- 🌻 Your knowledge and preparation – The more you know about a stressful situation, including how long it will last and what to expect, the easier it is to cope. For example, if you go into surgery with a realistic picture of what to expect post-op, a painful recovery will be less traumatic than if you were expecting to bounce back immediately.

So, What Is Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) Going To Mean For You?

SIT is a flexible, individually tailored, all-around form of cognitive-behavioural therapy. Given the wide array of stressors that we all so often experience, it provides a set of clinically proven guidelines for assisting stressed-out individuals, rather than a specific "treatment formula". As has been suggested previously, a central concept underlying SIT is that of "inoculation" or "immunization," which has been used extensively both in medicine and in social and psychological environments.












SIT enhances your own coping skill set, and shall empower you to use your already existing coping skills in a much more outcome focused way. To achieve this, we shall use an overlapping three-phase intervention approach.

-  We shall provide you with an opportunity to embark on a collective journey where we identify the causes of personal stress.
-  We shall use pre-and post-training questionnaires to identify and rate the stress types people are experiencing, and to measure the success of stress reduction techniques.
-  We help you to use imagery-based reconstruction of stressful incidents where you can measure your reactions.
-  We can also use situational assessments to identify stress related situations, and at the same time help you make observations of your behaviour during these times.
-  We encourage you to tell your story, in a group environment, so people can compare their journeys and build useful stress reduction techniques.
-  We assist you to break down global stressors into specific stressful situations.
-  We help you to appreciate the differences between changeable and unchangeable aspects of stressful situations.
-  We help you to establish short-term, intermediate, and long-term behaviourally based specifiable stress reduction goals.
-  We help you to develop self-monitoring systems when you encounter stressful situations, which include self-appraisal, internal self-talk, feelings, and behaviours.
-  We help you to identify the degree in which your coping difficulties are a result of a lack of or loss of skills or are perhaps the result of "performance difficulties".
-  Collaboratively develop with you the reframing of your distress.
-  We help you to debunk myths concerning stress, and coping successes and failures.

Skills Acquisition and Rehearsal Phase - Phase 2:

In the skills acquisition and rehearsal phase

-  We shall help you ascertain your preferred method of managing harmful stress. We then explore with you how these coping efforts can be employed in the present stressful situation. We also examine what factors may be blocking your coping efforts.
-  We shall help you to develop coping skills that either modify, avoid, and minimize the impact of stressors. Each participant is encouraged to use skills that meet their specific needs. Importantly we aim to help you to break complex stressful problems (mountains) into more manageable smaller problems (mole-hills) that can be solved one-step at a time.
-  We shall assist you to explore and practice a variety of stress reduction skills.
-  We shall assist you to engage in problem-solving activities, by identifying possibilities for change, considering and ranking alternative solutions, and then practicing these stress inoculation methods in a group setting.
-  We aim to show you how to use social supports effectively to reduce stress in your life.
-  We help you to develop an extensive range of coping responses in order to facilitate gradual mastery of stress.
-  We aim to provide to you problem focused coping skills when confronted by unchangeable and sometimes uncontrollable stressors.
-  We will teach you to learn how to relax, reduce stress through deep breathing and muscle relaxation & developing a toolbox of positive coping thoughts.

- 
- 🌟 Use coping modelling (either live or video models) to develop skill sets. This will involve engaging in collaborative discussion, rehearsal, and feedback of coping skills. We help you to practice skills in imaginary scenarios, and then in real life situations.
 - 🌟 We help you to rehearse from less to more difficult stressful situations that is... to climb up the steps of increasing strength of stressful situations.
 - 🌟 Use self-instructional training to help you to develop internal peacekeepers to self-regulate coping responses.
 - 🌟 We encourage you to verbally commit to employ specific coping efforts and skills.
 - 🌟 As a group we shall discuss possible barriers and obstacles to using effective coping behaviours.

**OVERALL, WE WANT YOU TO BE ABLE TO DEVELOP
CONFIDENCE TO HANDLE ANY SITUATION!**

Stress Inoculation Training-Phase 3: Application and follow-through

- 🌟 We help you to apply skills to specific stressful situations, to also help you to plan, anticipate and prepare for potential and actual difficulties in coping with stress
 - We help you to learn to Coach thyself
 - To Assess you own progress
 - To develop follow up plans
- 🌟 We help you to employ relapse prevention procedures where we help you to Identify high-risk situations, to anticipate possible stressful reactions, and to rehearse coping skills.
- 🌟 We encourage you to ask and challenge where, how, and why you will use your chosen coping efforts.
- 🌟 We get you to use reflective thinking by reviewing both your successful and unsuccessful coping efforts. Where necessary using retraining to so you can master those things that are evoking a stressful response in your life.



The Why - Understanding Stress



We help you to understand stress types



To identify effects of stress in behavioural, emotional, physical, and psychological areas



To ascertain the specific effects of stress on individual performance and productivity



From your experiences through life list ten (10) things that stress you; then their causes and; then list how they affect your thinking and your emotions (see table next page).

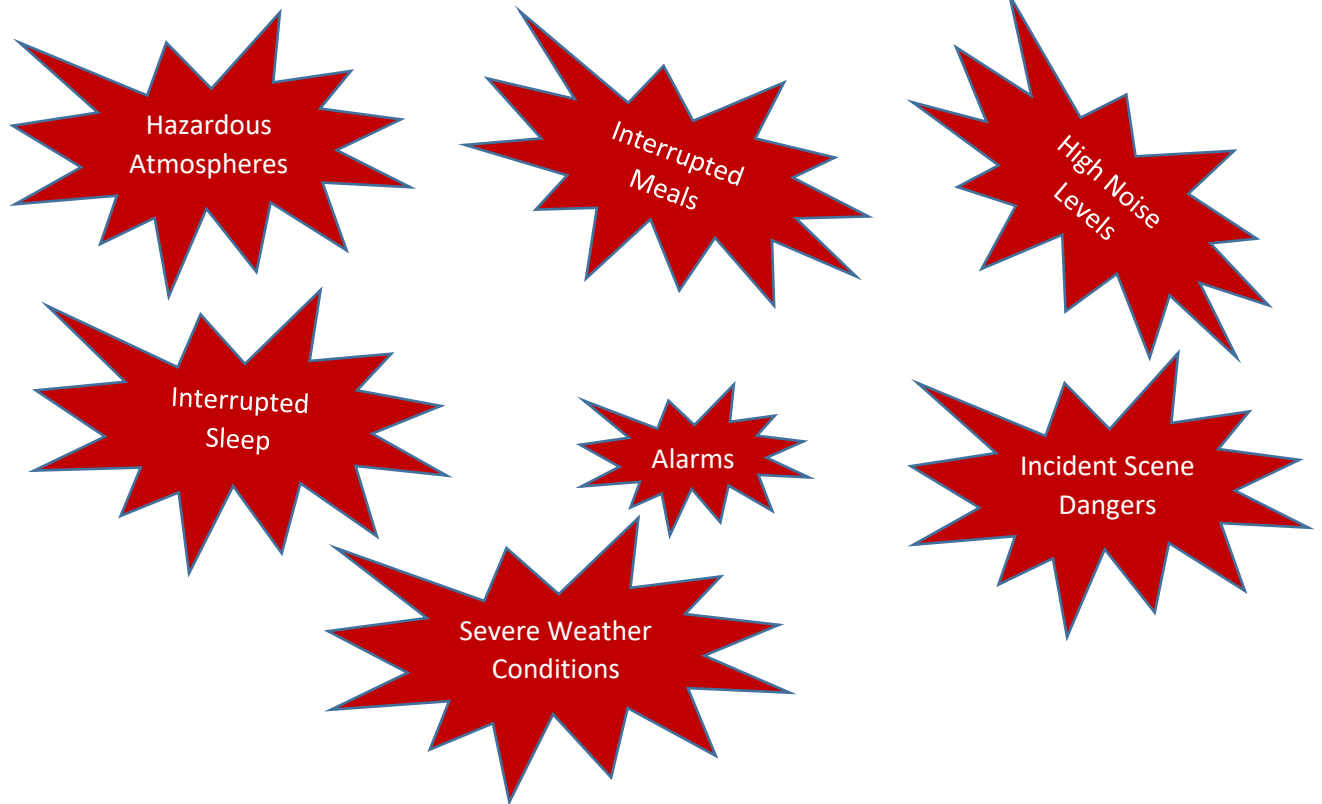


The Stress Awareness (WHY) Exercise

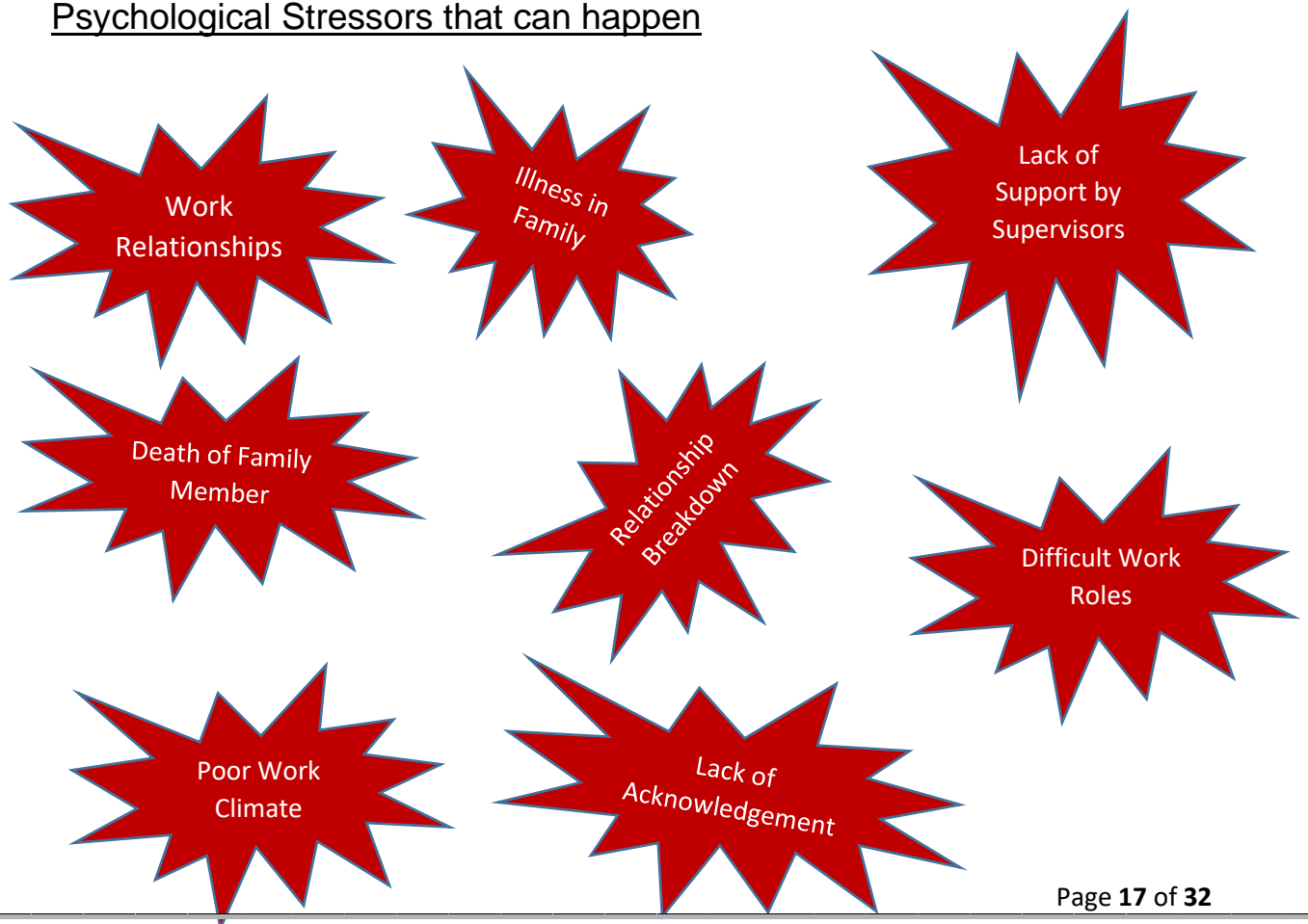
Stressors	Causes	Affects
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		

Now compare what you have listed with the following diagrams and see what you can add to your list.

Physical and Environmental Stressors that can happen



Psychological Stressors that can happen



Incident Stressors that can happen



In essence Stressful incidents challenge our capacity as individuals to deal with stress either from day to day or from week to week.

Sometimes people react to difficult situations negatively by.

- 🧑‍🚒 Alcohol abuse
- 🧑‍🚒 Depression
- 🧑‍🚒 Inability to function normally
- 🧑‍🚒 Negative attitude towards life and work

It is important to recognise

- 🧑‍🚒 Symptoms can occur in anyone
- 🧑‍🚒 A routine incident can trigger negative reactions from a past incident.
- 🧑‍🚒 Stress can also be cumulative.
- 🧑‍🚒 Sometimes chronic stress is called burnout.

- This is often difficult to trace to any one incident

So, What Are the Stress Effects on Us

Well they start off by causing emotional reactions.

People who suffer from complex stress can experience:

- 🧠 Anxiety
- 🧠 Denial/disbelief
- 🧠 Frustration/anger and the need to control
- 🧠 Inability to function logically
- 🧠 Remorse
- 🧠 Grief
- 🧠 Mental Confusion
- 🧠 Acceptance and action
- 🧠 Stress stages occur within minutes, hours, days, or even months after an event.

Not all symptoms have to occur and if they do will not always occur in order.

Ultimately prolonged stress can cause physical reactions which can include tense muscles, headaches, digestive difficulties, irritable bowel syndrome, high blood pressure and heart problems.



So, what have you tried in the past to manage your stress?

List them on the next page along with any positive outcomes for you.



The Stress Effects Exercise

Stressors	What have I tried to manage them?	Any positive Affects
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

So, what next? Examine the diagram on the next page. It provides a blue print for personal change!



Building Resilience through Knowledge and Application

- 1. Learn relaxation skills**
- 2. Identify specific stressors**
- 3. Develop a plan to respond differently**
- 4. Write up your blueprint plan and practice**
- 5. Coach self through the situation**
- 6. Positively assess own performance**
- 7. Plan and execute improvements**

Blueprint Skill Development Phase- The Tools!

Learning Relaxation Skills

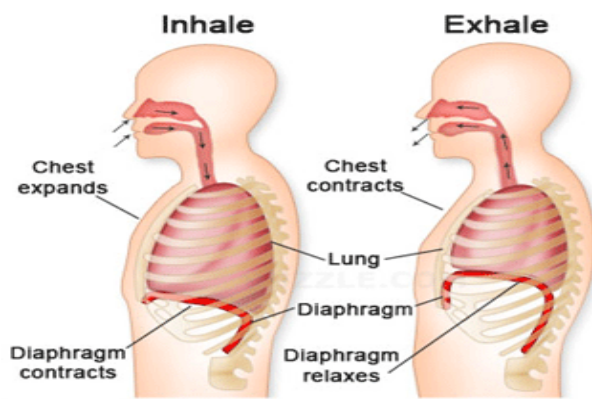
- 🧠 Here we develop, learn and use new relaxation strategies! They include Deep Breathing & Muscle Relaxation
- 🧠 Ultimately, they need to be practiced daily until you master the techniques!
- 🧠 Once you master them, they become quick, easy habits which allow you to relax deeply!

Relaxation Skill 1- Deep Breathing

Why Should We?

- 🧠 High Carbon Di-oxide (CO₂) levels can increase a person's state of anxiety. Good breathing lowers CO₂ levels in your blood stream
- 🧠 Good breathing provides more oxygen to the blood stream that results in endorphin release. The result is deeper relaxation!
- 🧠 This relaxation strategy is great to be used anywhere and at any time!

So, let's Give it go



- Slowly inhale through your nose. Expand your abdomen before permitting air to fill your lungs. See the steps in your mind as you breath in as you climb each step. Each step is numbered 1-7. See the numbers as you climb, breathing slowly as climb.
- Once you climb to step 7 wait there for a second or 2. Now turn around and climb down slowly releasing the air from your abdomen and your lungs till you get to zero. Push the last of your air out through your mouth.
- Repeat slowly for 3 to 5 minutes.

Enjoy the relaxed sensation!

Relaxation Skill 2- Progressive Muscle Relaxation¹

Why Should We?

Progressive Muscle Relaxation reduces tension & is not compatible with stress. Often, we are unaware of our tension and stress levels and as such it gets stored in our muscles, tendons and joints causing headaches and pain.



So, our Goal is to relax every major muscle group, from head to toe, through tensing and then releasing the muscles.



This system may be used in a variety of operational settings and situations with excellent success!

You may use and practice this skill sitting or lying down. Each muscle is tensed from 5 to 10 seconds and then relaxed for 10 to 20 seconds. If the muscle group remains tense, the exercise may be repeated for the muscle group to induce relaxation.

The major muscle groups are-



arms, & hands;



head, face, shoulders;



chest, stomach & lower back



thighs, calves, buttocks and feet

Practice twice daily for 10 to 15 minutes.



So, let's give it go and see how it



feels!

Find a quiet, warm place where you won't be disturbed. Choose a time of day when you do not feel pressured to do anything else. Lie down on your back, or sit in a well-supported chair if you find that more comfortable. Once you have learned the exercises, close your eyes while you do them. You are going to work on each of your muscle groups. With each group of muscles, first tense the muscles as much as you can, then relax them fully. Breathe in when you tense the muscles and breathe out when you relax.

To start with, concentrate on your breathing for a few minutes. Breathe slowly and calmly, using the breathing techniques shown above. Each time you breathe out say words to yourself such as 'peace' or 'relax'. Then start the muscle exercises, working around the different muscle groups in your body.



Hands - clench one hand tightly for a few seconds as you breathe in. You should feel your forearm muscles tense; then relax as you breathe out. Repeat with the other hand.



Arms - bend an elbow and tense all the muscles in the arm for a few seconds as you breathe in; then relax as you breathe out. Repeat the same with the other arm.



Shoulders - raise your shoulders as high as you can as you breathe in; then relax as you breathe out.



Neck - press your head back as hard as is comfortable and roll it slowly from side to side; then relax.

¹ Progressive Muscular Relaxation very deliberately tenses and releases muscle groups throughout the body. If you have any underlying pain conditions you are advised to discuss the use of Progressive Muscular relaxation with your treating medical practitioner prior to application.

- 🌻 Face - try to frown and lower your eyebrows as hard as you can for a few seconds; then relax. Then raise your eyebrows (as if you were startled) as hard as you can; then relax. Then clench your jaw for a few seconds; then relax.
- 🌻 Chest - take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds; then relax and go back to normal breathing.
- 🌻 Stomach - tense the stomach muscles as tightly as possible; then relax.
- 🌻 Buttocks - squeeze the buttocks together as much as possible; then relax.
- 🌻 Legs - with your legs flat on the floor, bend your feet and toes towards your face as hard as you can; then relax. Then bend them away from your face for a few seconds; then relax.

Then repeat the whole routine 3-4 times. Each time you relax a group of muscles, notice how they feel when relaxed compared to when they are tense. There may be groups of muscles that feel particularly tense, often the shoulders or jaw muscles. Make sure they feel properly relaxed by the time you have finished. If you practise these exercises every day you will find that they reduce your overall level of tension.

Relaxation Skill 3- Mindfulness

Why Should We?

It's a busy world. You fold the laundry while keeping one eye on the kids and another on the television. You plan your day while listening to the radio and commuting to work, and then plan your weekend. But in the rush to accomplish all these necessary tasks, you may find yourself losing your connection with the present moment. So, focussed on what you have to get done, you actually lose the "understanding", of where you actually are.

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment - and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness is now being examined scientifically and has been found to be a key element in happiness.

Mindfulness meditation builds upon concentration practices.

Here's how it works:

- 🌻 Go with the flow. In mindfulness meditation, once you establish concentration, you observe the flow of inner thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations without judging them as good or bad.
- 🌻 Pay attention. You also notice external sensations such as sounds, sights, and touch that make up your moment-to-moment experience. The challenge is not to latch onto a particular idea, emotion, or sensation, or to get caught in thinking about the past or the future. Instead you watch what comes and goes in your mind, and discover which mental habits produce a feeling of well-being or suffering.
- 🌻 Stay with it. At times, this process may not seem relaxing at all, but over time it provides a key to greater happiness and self-awareness as you become comfortable with a wider and wider range of your experiences.

Practice acceptance

Above all, mindfulness practice involves accepting whatever arises in your awareness at each moment. It involves being kind and forgiving toward yourself.

Some tips to keep in mind:

Gently redirect. If your mind wanders into planning, daydream, or criticism, notice where it has gone and gently redirect it to sensations in the present.

Try and try again. If you miss your intended meditation session, you simply start again.

By *practicing accepting* your experience during meditation, it becomes easier to accept whatever comes your way during the rest of your day.

Mindfulness Exercise No 1



This exercise teaches basic mindfulness meditation.

1. Sit on a straight-backed chair or cross-legged on the floor.
2. Focus on an aspect of your breathing, such as the sensations of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth, or your belly rising and falling as you inhale and exhale.
3. Once you've narrowed your concentration in this way, begin to widen your focus. Become aware of sounds, sensations, and your ideas.
4. Embrace and consider each thought or sensation without judging it good or bad. If your mind starts to race, return your focus to your breathing. Then expand your awareness again.

Mindfulness Exercise No 2

A less formal approach to mindfulness can also help you to stay in the present and fully participate in your life. You can choose any task or moment to practice informal mindfulness, whether you are eating, showering, walking, touching a partner, or playing with a child or grandchild. Attending to these points will help:




1. Start by bringing your attention to the sensations in your body
2. Breathe in through your nose, allowing the air downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully.
3. Now breathe out through your mouth
4. Notice the sensations of each inhalation and exhalation
5. Proceed with the task at hand slowly and with full deliberation
6. Engage your senses fully. Notice each sight, touch, and sound so that you savour every sensation.

When you notice that your mind has wandered from the task at hand, gently bring your attention back to the sensations of the moment.

Coaching







Is a process to help you to prepare so you can overcome the effects of what stresses you.

Why Should We

-  We all talk to ourselves!
-  We Need to harness this self-talk and utilize it in a constructive fashion to help, and not hinder, our efforts to reduce stress and to cope with stressors!
-  We Need to counter negative thinking & bad self-talk and replace with positive talk!

Try using these coaching statements or develop ones for yourself!





Some general self-coaching statements you could use

-  I can handle these symptoms!
-  This too will pass!
-  I'll ride this through- I don't need to let this get to me
-  I can take all the time I need to let go and to relax...
-  This is not dangerous!
-  So, what!!











Your Self-coaching statements- Make a list of what you see value in
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Go back to your Stress Awareness (WHY) Exercise and view your list of what stresses you.

Now consider these additional coaching statements - they can help you to prepare to face the stressor.





-  What do I have to do?
-  I can develop a plan to cope!
-  What I see as being nervous, may be readiness to deal with stressor
-  “Don’t worry” Worry usually does not help me at all!

So Now We Deal with the Stressor - By Using Our Coaching Self-Talk

-  Take 1 step at a time!
-  I can handle the situation!
-  Relax, I’m doing okay!
-  Take a slow deep breath
-  This nervousness is what I anticipated. It is a reminder to use my relaxation strategies.
-  When fear occurs, pause for a moment...
-  Focus on the present. What do I need to do?
-  I cannot remove all anxiety and fear. I need to keep it manageable...
-  What is the actual specific stressor that you face?
-  If more than one, then choose one to start with

Name your choices and write them here in the Table
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Blueprint Marker No Three - Develop a Plan to Cope

-  View the stressful situation as a chance to try new skills!
-  Identify stress self-talk
-  Replace negative thoughts with positive thinking
-  Determine when you will use relaxation strategies



So, Let's Develop Your Inoculation Plan

Consider the following and fill in the boxes:



- a) Identify Specific Stressor _____
- b) Describe the upsetting feeling/emotion/body reaction which you are most likely to experience when facing this stressor? _____
- c) Write down any stress producing thoughts when you encounter this stressor? _____

Stressor	Feelings/Emotions/Body reactions	Generated Thoughts
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		



My Stress Inoculation Plan



What can you say to self to help cope when you first notice that you are becoming upset?



What can you say to yourself to help you cope while you are in the middle of dealing with the stressor?

Make a list of what you see value in

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.



My Stress Immunization Plan



What can you say to yourself to help cope after you have dealt with the stressor?






Fill in your Personal Stress Immunization Plan for the identified stressor(s)




Stressors	Self-Talk Choices
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

Putting it all into Practice

SIT Rehearsal






-  Write down your action plan
-  Take time to mentally visualize & go through the steps to effectively implement your plan
-  Actually, face your stressors and use your acquired skills and plan!

Summary and Planning Ahead: Now Execute Your Plan





-  Prepare yourself as situation approaches
-  Use breathing and relaxation techniques
-  Utilize positive & constructive coaching statements!

Rewarding Yourself after the Plan







Positive Coaching & Self-Talk

-  I did it! It worked!
-  It was not as bad as I expected...
-  I can't wait to tell someone
-  I'm improving each time I practice!
-  Now choose something you like doing as a reward for carrying out your plan.





Evaluate Your Plan!

-  What did you do that you liked?
-  What would you like to improve?
-  What did you learn from the experience?
-  Be kind, supportive and positive in your self-assessment!

Implement Changes

-  Repeat the previous steps
-  Identify stressors, & develop plan
-  Rehearse
-  Implement
-  Evaluate plan
-  Make improvements

Review-You can learn to master stress!

-  Inoculation Training builds strength, tolerance and confidence!
-  Use relaxation strategies & coping/coaching skills often!
-  Develop & implement Personal Plan
-  Revise and refine personal action plan

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