

Reducing Stress and Preventing Burnout in Research Development

A NORDP Webinar

January 27, 2017

Presented by

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Learning Objectives

1. Understand stress and burnout and their contributors.
2. Explore a robust “tool-kit” for reducing stress and preventing burnout as Research Development professionals.
3. Identify key components for developing your own specific plan of action – immediate, short-term, and long-term – to reassign or reduce your stressors and reduce your stress.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

–Reinhold Niebuhr



Stress vs. Burnout

- Where on the spectrum of stressed to burned-out are you?
- A validated measure:
 - The Professional Quality of Life Scale – Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue ProQOL Version 5 (2009) © B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009; see www.proqol.org for more information. (In 2017, ownership has been transferred to the Center for Victims of Torture, which will continue to make the tool free and available for use.)
 - Relevant to Research Development, scores Compassion Satisfaction and Burnout.



Stress



- Stress: a state of strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances (stressors) that results in a predictable set of biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes.
- Chronic stress can lead to physical and psychological difficulties, including heart disease, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and overuse of addictive substances.
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/understanding-chronic-stress.aspx>
- In Research Development, continual deadline pressure can extend the stressful event almost indefinitely – ***if you let it.***
 - “Stress is not a function of events; it’s a function of the view you take of events.” Mindfulness in the Age of Complexity (an interview with Ellen Langer), Harvard Business Review, March 2014. <https://hbr.org/2014/03/mindfulness-in-the-age-of-complexity>

Burnout

- Burnout is physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress (APA).
- Burnout is work-related hopelessness and feelings of inefficacy (ProQOL.org).
- Contributors include: Lack of control; Unclear job expectations; Dysfunctional workplace dynamics; Mismatch in values; Poor job fit; Extremes of activity; Lack of social support (at work and/or home); Poor work-life balance.
- Burnout is to the extreme, a sense that there is no end and that any purported control is just an illusion; it is often past the “point of no return”.



What contributes to stress?

- Employer, manager or supervisor requirements and expectations – can you meet them? Can you control them?
- Whether your home and work “to-do” lists align with your core values – whatever brings you satisfaction.
- Whether you respond to and manage stress and stressors effectively.
- Personal/Individual characteristics and tendencies.
 - Are you a perfectionist?
 - Do you set and stick to boundaries? Are you a natural helper?
 - Do you effectively manage others’ expectations? How about your own?
 - Do you prioritize effectively? Do you ever prioritize yourself?
 - Do you seek and thrive on challenge?
 - Are you a procrastinator? (waitbutwhy)



Tools to control stressors

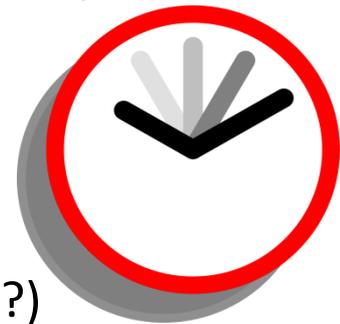
- **Anticipate and plan for stressful periods.**
 - Just because an activity is “life” doesn’t mean it’s helping you.
 - Consider your entire self and adjust both work and life demands.
 - *Take some time to recover.*
- **Manage interruptions.**
 - It takes double or triple the time of an interruption to regain full concentration.
 - Check emails on a set schedule; checking later in the morning allows you to focus first on your own priorities.
 - Schedule your calendar in a way that suits you; leave yourself breathing room.



Tools to control stressors (cont.)



- **Identify and take advantage of your options.**
 - Identify & evaluate work and personal responsibilities.
 - What is negotiable? What CAN you control?
 - Drop (***decide not to do them***) and/or re-prioritize them.
 - Seek reassignment of (punt!) draining responsibilities.
 - Ask for and deploy additional resources at work and/or at home. Who do you need to talk to? What should you say?
 - Compensation time, telecommuting or other scheduling flexibility?
 - Look for chances to add responsibilities that stimulate you. (Bolles, R.N., What Color Is Your Parachute?)



Tools to control stressors (cont.)

- **Leave work at work.**

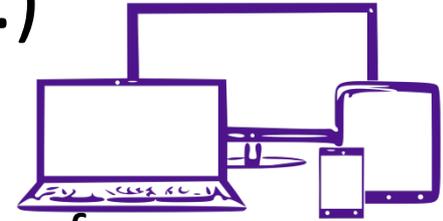
- Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time.
- Do work at work – don't "spite" it.

- **Set boundaries (in writing!) and stick to them.**

- Give yourself permission to say "no", or at least to say "yes" under circumstances of your choosing.

- **Manage others' expectations, as well as your own.**

- Keep your expectations as realistic as possible.
- Accept what you cannot change.
- Give the rationale and consequence, and then accept their decision.
"It is what it is."



Tools to control stressors (cont.)

- **Prioritize effectively.**

- “Don’t waste 100% of your energy on a 5% issue.” <http://pas.duke.edu/stress.php>
- Use the “Eisenhower Matrix” to effectively “do, decide when to do, delegate, or delete”.
- Critically evaluate not just single requests, but ongoing efforts. (Don’t confuse “busy” with “productive”!)
- Track your time on various activities to see what you’re really spending.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	DO NOW	DECIDE WHEN TO DO IT
NOT IMPORTANT	DELEGATE IT AWAY OR DECIDE WHEN TO DO IT	DELETE IT OR DELEGATE IT

- **Organize and plan.**

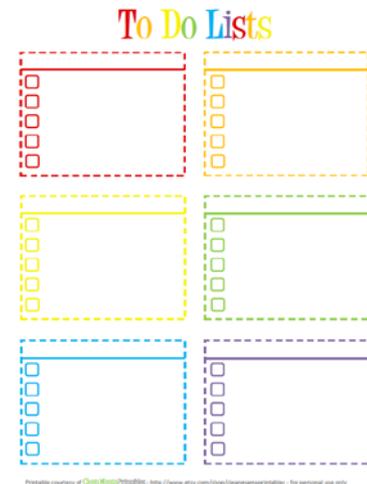
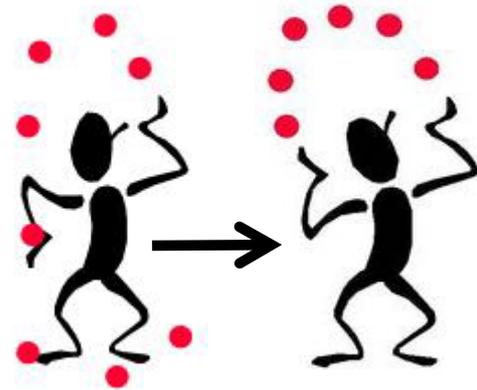
- Without a plan and priorities, it's easy to be pulled into others’ priorities or forget what needs to be done.
- Rather than “big lists”, create effective project-specific “next step” to-do lists that gather ALL to-dos.
- **PRIORITIZE AND USE THESE LISTS!**



Adapted in part from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/work-life-balance/art-20048134> and <http://waitbutwhy.com/2015/03/procrastination-matrix.html>

Make a better to-do list

- David Allen's five-stage process:
 - 1) Collect things that command your attention – gather ALL of the things that are in your brain – work, life, future ideas, etc. – and get them out of your brain, with each on its own piece of paper;
 - 2) Process what they mean and what to do about them (identify the **exact next step** for each);
 - 3) Organize the results; and
 - 4) Review them as options for what we choose to
 - 5) Do.
- Knowing you have a single location for a comprehensive “to-do” list allows your brain to stop reminding you about those things. (better sleep!)
- Commit to **get** David Allen's book or another of your choosing and **implement** it.



Tools to control YOU



- **Prioritize yourself.**

- Prioritize your own needs sometimes.
- *Take some time to recover.*

- **Eat a healthy diet.**

- A balance of fresh fruits and vegetables and lean protein enhances ability to retain knowledge. Include whole grains and complex carbohydrates.
- Use caffeine, alcohol, and refined sugars in moderation.
- Stay hydrated (dehydrated = irritable!)



- **Get enough sleep.**

- Sleep interrupted by your brain running wild? Build that comprehensive to-do list; put a note pad and pen by your bed to write down the things your brain doesn't want you to forget.
- Trouble falling asleep? Put away your phone; breathe slowly, count backwards; identify tension and relax it; too cold or hot?
- Adjust your sleeping environment (bed, curtains, orientation, etc.).



Tools to control YOU (cont.)



- **Seek professional help.**
 - Does your employer offer free counseling services?
 - Identify and consult with a Career Coach or Executive Coach.
- **Connect with other people.**
 - Spend more time with “nourishing” friends and less with those who leave you drained.
 - Vent your frustrations? Yes, but very carefully.
- **Re-discover a favorite pastime or uncover a new one.**
 - Volunteering can contribute to a greater sense of work-life balance.
 - Activities could represent time with friends and family and/or time alone – what’s missing for you?
 - Caution: Your activity may need to be as demanding as work.



• ***List five things you love to do and then do one of them!***



Tools to control YOU (cont.)

Two key ways to counter chronic stress's effects on the brain are exercise and mindfulness.

- **Exercise.**

- Research in rodents shows that endurance aerobic exercise leads to greater neurogeneration in the hippocampus than either strength training or high intensity interval training.
- Get active. Standing doesn't count as exercise but does burn more calories than sitting – get a sit-stand workstation.



- **Practice mindfulness – moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness (focusing on breath).**

- Balance our “planning” brain and creative brain, and improve our response to stressors.
- Allows us to “reset” & recover each day or throughout the day.
- “Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction”



Adapted in part from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/work-life-balance/art-20048134> ; Benson, H. “The Relaxation Response”, 1975 ; Kabat-Zinn, J. “Full Catastrophe Living”, 2013. Nokia et al., J. Physiology 2016;594(7):1855-73

Conclusion

- Stressful events and stressors are only part of the equation – how you react to, deal with, process, or pursue those stressors is equally if not more important.
- Identify and reduce, remove, or reassign stressors in your work and life.
- Bring available resources to bear, including exercise, good nutrition, hydration, and sleep.
- Practice mindfulness – moment-to-moment non-judgmental awareness – to reduce stress and improve satisfaction.
- What will YOU do? Identify immediate, short-term, and longer term goals for reducing your stress.



Questions?

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Online Resources – Stress and Burnout

- <http://waitbutwhy.com/2013/10/why-procrastinators-procrastinate.html>
- <http://waitbutwhy.com/2013/11/how-to-beat-procrastination.html>
- <http://waitbutwhy.com/2015/03/procrastination-matrix.html>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/high-octane-women/201104/overcoming-burnout>
- <http://misplacedbrit.com/depression/recovering-from-burnout-or-depression-an-a-z/>
- <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/preventing-burnout.htm>
- <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-symptoms-causes-and-effects.htm>
- <http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response>
- <https://hbr.org/2016/06/steps-to-take-when-youre-starting-to-feel-burned-out>
- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/art-20046642> (job burnout)
- <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/18/health/no-worries-wisdom-project/index.html>
- <http://pas.duke.edu/stress.php>
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>
- Professional Quality of Life Elements Theory and Measurement: Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Vicarious Traumatization and Vicarious Transformation
 - Website: http://www.proqol.org/Home_Page.php
 - Tool: http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_3-2012.pdf

Resources – Effects of stress on the brain

- Dias-Ferreira E, et al. Chronic stress causes frontostriatal reorganization and affects decision-making. *Science* 2009;325:621-625.
- Lucassen PJ, et al. Regulation of adult neurogenesis by stress, sleep disruption, exercise and inflammation: Implications for depression and antidepressant action. *European Neuropsychopharmacology* 2010; 20:1-17.
- Lucassen PJ, et al. Neuropathology of Stress. *Acta Neuropathol* 2014;127:109-135.
- McEwen BS, Gray JD, Nasca C. Recognizing resilience: learning from effects of stress on the brain. *Neurobiology of Stress* 2015;1:1-11.
- McEwen BS, McKittrick CR, Tamashiro KKK, Sakai, RR. The brain on stress: Insight from studies using the Visible Burrow System. *Physiology & Behavior* 2015;146:47-56.
- Sandi C, Pinelo-Neva MT. Stress and memory: behavioral effects and neurobiological mechanisms. *Neural Plasticity* 2007;2007: Article ID 78970.
- Schoenfeld TJ, Gould E. Stress, stress hormones, and adult neurogenesis. *Experimental Neurology* 2012;233:12-21.

Resources on mindfulness & work-life balance

- Alexandra Michel, Christine Bosch, Miriam Rexroth. Mindfulness as a cognitive-emotional segmentation strategy: An intervention promoting work-life balance. *J Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. Dec 2014; 87(4):733–754.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/joop.12072/full> (Univ. Heidelberg study)
- Kimberly Schaufenbuel. Bringing Mindfulness to the Workplace (a white paper). Executive Development, UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, 2014. http://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/~media/Files/documents/executive-development/unc-white-paper-bringing-mindfulness-to-the-workplace_final.pdf
- Sonnentag S, Fritz C. Recovery from job stress: The stressor-detachment model as an integrative framework. *J Organiz Behav* 2015;36:S72-S103.

Resources – Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

- <http://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>
- Jon Kabat-Zinn. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks, 2013. (ISBN-13: 978-0345536938)
- UCSD Center for Mindfulness website
<https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/Pages/default.aspx>
- UCSD Center for Mindfulness online resources (including links to audio and video guidance)
<https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/resources/Pages/default.aspx>
- Duke MBSR Program (10 weeks)
<https://www.dukeintegrativemedicine.org/programs-training/public/mindfulness-based-stress-reduction/>
- Duke Distance MBSR Program (8 weeks)
<https://www.dukeintegrativemedicine.org/programs-training/public/mindfulness-based-stressed-reduction-distance-learning/>
- Look at your own or nearby institutions for MBSR or mindfulness programs and offerings.