Stress management in dentistry
Objectives

• You will be able to identify stress in yourself and others
• You will be able to manage stress
Looking at:

• Identifying stress
• Identifying your stressors
• Stress management techniques
What is stress?

How would you define stress?

• “Stress is the adverse reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them” (Health and Safety Executive)
Common misconceptions: stress and pressure

• Under pressure
  – Subjective feeling of tension or being ‘het up’
  – Not damaging like stress
  – Often called positive stress or Eustress
  – Often seen as desirable
Pressure/performance Curve
What does stress look like for the individual? How do you know when you are stressed?

Backache, Breathing difficulties, Feeling tense, Worrying about things, Panic attacks, Lack of concentration at home and work, Impaired sleep, Feeling depressed, Bouts of crying, Poor appetite, Overeating, Palpitations, High blood pressure, Heart disease
Adverse reactions: The practice

What does stress look like for the practice?
How does the practice team know when it is stressed?

Absenteeism, Increased incident rate, Inter-personal aggression, Poor quality control, Low productivity, High turnover, Reduced morale, Complaints, Litigation.

Presenteeism
Causes of stress

Exercise: What causes you stress at work?
5 Top stressors in dentistry

- Running behind schedule
- Causing pain
- Heavy workload
- Late patients
- Anxious patients (Moore & Brodsgaard 2003)
Patient behaviour

• Most stressful of the healthcare professions (Freeman et al 1995)
• Patient behaviour (Gale 1988)
• Transfer of their emotions (Freeman et al 1995)
• 80% adults have some fear (ADHS 2008)
• Dentists relate better & more friendly to middle class patient (Carson et al 2004)
• Economic pressure (Gale 1988)
HSE risk factors

- Relationships
- Support
- Change
- Control
- Role
- Demands
How do demands lead to stress?

• The fight/flight response

  – Body is made up of sympathetic and parasympathetic NS
  – See a threat
  – Sympathetic nervous system
  – Adrenaline secretion
  – Ready for action
Why do individuals differ?

- Life style
- Personality
- Thinking style
- Coping mechanisms
“Eat less and exercise more? That’s the most ridiculous fad diet I’ve heard of yet!”
Lifestyle

• Alcohol and smoking
  – No smoking. Dopamine rebound
  – 14 units for women / 21 for men

• Diet
  – Healthy and balanced. Drink water. Avoid stimulants

• Exercise
  – Appropriate

• Relaxation
  – Taking time
### Would you pass a fitness test?

Add up how many activities you did which lasted at least 30 minutes over the last four weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Vigorous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking at least 2 miles</td>
<td>Steady pace</td>
<td>Fast walking / hill walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework/DIY</td>
<td>Decorating / Spring cleaning</td>
<td>Lifting / carrying heavy loads / cement mixing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/Recreation</td>
<td>Gentle tennis / swimming / gardening / cycling on the flat</td>
<td>Squash / running / cycling / aerobics / football / boxing / martial arts / spinning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Yoga / stretching / pilates / dance / chi kung / tai chi / aqua dance</td>
<td>Aerobics / cycling / climbing / mountain biking / jogging / running / orienteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity level</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12 or more occasions of vigorous activity (16-34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12 or more occasions of mix of moderate and vigorous activity (35-54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 or more occasions of moderate activity (55 – 74)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5-11 occasions of moderate and vigorous activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-4 occasions of moderate and vigorous activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personality

• Two key elements of personality
  – Type A/B
  – Locus of control
  – Type A common in dentists (Rada & Johnson-Leong 2004)
Type A/B

• Type A
  – Hard driven
  – Ambitious
  – Competitive
  – Impatient

• Type B
  – Laid back
  – Patient

• Continuum

• Type B = Less stress
"I'm learning how to relax, doctor — but I want to relax better and faster! I want to be on the cutting edge of relaxation!"
Managing Type A

– Listen actively
– Talk less/ more slowly
– Do one thing at a time
– Question the need to hurry
– Initiate outside interests
– Say no to the unachievable
– Create time for yourself
– Break up the day with breathers
Locus of Control

- **Internal**
  - Feel they have control over events
  - Try and change events

- **External**
  - Feel events have control - fate
  - Less likely to try and change events

- **Internal = Less stress**
Managing LOC

• Ask
  – Can I change the situation?
  – If yes, how?
  – If no, can anyone else?
  – If yes, who?
  – If no...accept it.

“Grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference”

St Francis D’Assisi
Thinking style

• Recognising a demand or stressor
  – Primary appraisal
    - Irrelevant
    - Positive
    - Stressful
  – Secondary appraisal
    - Ability to cope
    - Lack ability to cope
Thinking style

Thinking errors

- Minimising and maximising
  - Minimise the impact of the positive and maximise negative
  “I broke that tooth during extraction so I am a poor dentist”
  Think: focus on the positive
  “I managed to extract that difficult broken tooth”

- All or nothing
  - Everything is good or bad
  “I am great at my job” or “I am terrible at my job”
  Think: in shades of grey

- Predicting
  - Predicting the negative
  “I am not going to be able to do it properly”
  Think: Reserve judgment
Thinking style

– Labelling
  - Attributing negative labels
    “I am a loser” instead of “That did not go well”
    Think: Now not always

– Over generalising
  - If something bad happens, assuming it will always
    “I made a mistake therefore I will always make mistakes”
    Think: Now not always ............and learn

– Should Must Can’t
  - Constantly reminding self of things should, must and can’t do = feel a failure
    Think: Focus on Have, Did, Can and Action plan
Thinking style

– Personalization
  - Mentally assuming responsibility for all that goes wrong
    “We are underperforming, it must be my fault”
    Think: Reality check & How can I improve it

– Unreal ideal
  - Comparison to an unfair ideal
    “Ghandi stayed calm, why can’t I”
    Think: Aim but be realistic
Challenging thinking errors

Recognising
– Spend a few minutes a day capturing your thoughts around events that have bothered you on paper and identifying thinking errors

Challenge them!
Exercise: Challenging thinking errors

– Think of an everyday event that bothered you
– How did you feel? Anxious, upset etc
– Why did you feel like this, what thoughts led to these emotions?
– Are any of these thinking errors – label them?
– Challenge them
Coping style

Exercise: How do you cope?

We all have different ways of coping with stressors. Some of us seek support from friends, some of us treat ourselves e.g. by going shopping, some of us exercise to work it out of our system. What do you do?

Think of a stressor you have faced in the last month, what was it?

What did you do to cope?
Coping style

• Style
  – Proactive
  – Avoidant
  – Emotional discharge
Proactive

• Let’s deal with this
Avoidant

“It’s a special hearing aid. It filters out criticism and amplifies compliments.”
Emotional discharge

“I learned about stress management from my kids. Every night after work, I drink as much chocolate milk as my stomach will hold, eat handfuls of sugary cereal straight from the box, then run around the house in my underwear squealing like a monkey.”
Objective setting

• Set yourself three SMART objectives to help you manage stress. Examples:

• Reducing stressors – e.g. talk to your boss (colleague) about it or sort it out yourself

• Increasing your ability to cope – e.g. taking more exercise, more time to relax

• Managing your style - following managing elements of type A advice, of Locus of control advice, keeping a thinking errors diary
"This is my favorite relaxation tape. It’s the sound of ocean waves crashing against the shore, snatching my boss’s body off his beach chair and carrying him out to sea."

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Relaxation techniques

• Many techniques
• Simple, quick & effective
• “Rapid induction techniques”
• The 3 things induction
• 7:11 technique
7:11 Technique
7:11 Technique

- Get comfortable.
- Clear your eyes and focus on your breathing. Close eyes if you want.
- Breathe in slowly & deeply counting up to 7
- Breathe out slowly counting up to 11
- Repeat
7:11 Technique

• You will notice that the in-breath seems more stimulating & out-breath seems more relaxing
• In-breath stimulates sympathetic system
• Out-breath stimulates the parasympathetic making us feel more relaxed
• How did that feel?
• 7:11 occupies mind counting while parasympathetic system acts -(CBT)
7:11 Technique

• Get comfortable. You can close your eyes.
• Breathe in slowly and deeply counting up to 7
• Breathe out slowly counting up to 11
• Repeat.
7:11 Technique with patients

• Explain why and how before you start
The 3 things technique
Pressure/performance Curve
Dealing with stress

- Can you avoid the stressor?
- Can you minimise the stressor? Training?
- Can you handle the stressor differently? e.g. time allocated, time of treatment, break first?
- Try relaxation techniques- they really do work
Pressure/performance Curve

- Boredom
- Peak performance
- Exhaustion

Performance vs. Pressure
Dealing with stress

• Try relaxation techniques- they really do work