Cumulative Stress:
What to do when it just keeps piling on

AGENDA
What’s the Goal?
Sources of Stress
Impact of Stress
Mitigate Negative Impact

Stress:
a state of having too much expected of you,
of being under pressure or strain,
of being barely able to cope with some external
demand which is both excessive and prolonged.

Resiliency:
the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties (Oxford Dictionary)
an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change (Webster Dictionary)
the ability of a person to adjust to or recover readily from illness, adversity, major life changes, etc. (Dictionary.com)

Sources of Stress
› Physical
  – Irregular lifestyle
  – Physical overload
  – Environmental toxicity
  – Smoking/alcohol/drug use
  – Improper diet
  – Lack of physical activity
  – Lack of sleep
  – Health challenges
› Mental
  – Insecurity
  – Negative emotions
  – Mental overload
  – Confusion
  – Rejection on a social level
  – Family problems
  – Boredom
  – Thought processes

Stress-Building Beliefs
• All or Nothing
• Over-Generalization
• Disqualifying the Positive
• Jumping to Conclusions
• “Should” Statements
• Personalization

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Signs of Cumulative Stress

- Physical symptoms: overtiredness, diarrhea, constipation, headaches, abdominal and back pains, appetite changes, sleeping issues.
- Emotional signs: anxiety, frustration, guilt, mood swings, undue pessimism or optimism, irritability, crying spells, nightmares, apathy, depression.
- Mental signs: forgetfulness, poor concentration, poor job performance, negative attitude, loss of creativity and motivation, boredom, negative self-talk, paranoid thoughts.
- Relational signs: feeling isolated, resentful or intolerant of others, loneliness, marriage problems, nagging, social withdrawal, antisocial behavior.
- Spiritual signs: feeling of emptiness, doubt in religious beliefs, feeling down, looking for magical solutions, loss of purpose of life, needing to prove self-worth, cynicism about life.

How Teams May React to Cumulative Stress

- Anger towards managers/management
- Morale issues
- Lack of initiative
- Clique formation (inner and outer "circle")
- Conflict between groups
- High turnover of personnel
- Productivity diminished
- Critical attitudes towards colleagues
- Communication breakdown
- Scapegoat mentality
It is important that:

- you realize that feelings of distress in yourself and others are legitimate and not signs of personal weakness or lack of professionalism;
- you take the responsibility for noticing the signs and symptoms showing that your coping mechanisms are overloaded; and
- you ensure that you get support, not only to deal with the symptoms of stress that are emerging within you, but also to identify and tackle the cause of the stress.

Healthy Strategies to Mitigate Negative Effects

- Create a daily routine to help regain a sense of control.
- Eat balanced, healthy meals.
- Get extra rest to let your body relax and recover.
- Exercise.
- Let frustration and anger out through safe, exhausting physical activity.
- Ask for support from friends, colleagues, and loved ones.
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.
- Limit caffeine.
- Don’t dwell on news. Gather the information you need, then turn away from news sources.
- Be aware of the impact of your own past experiences on your current functioning.
- Seek assistance when you are concerned about your reactions.

10 Ways to Become More Resilient

- Build Positive Beliefs in Your Abilities
- Find a Sense of Purpose in Your Life
- Develop a Strong Social Network
- Embrace Change
- Be Optimistic

10 Ways to Become More Resilient

- Nurture Yourself
- Develop Your Problem-Solving Skills
- Establish Goals
- Take Steps to Solve Problems
- Keep Working on Your Skills

Relaxation Strategies

- One minute vacation
- Breathing
- Progressive relaxation
- Guided imagery
- Quiet time
- Getting yourself to exercise
- Walking in a park/forest
- Hobbies
- Humor, humor, humor

You feel good
- Promotes optimism
- Reduces stress
- Eases boredom
- Builds relationships
- Helps to cope with problems
- Breaks down barriers
- Promotes creativity and problem solving
- Creates job among people.
› Pay attention to your signals of experiencing negative consequences to stress.
› Plug in new resiliency and coping strategies to navigate new circumstances.
› You are not alone. Many share your reactions and feelings.
› It is a sign of strength - not weakness - to ask for help when it is needed.

Thank you for your attention.
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