A red pencil is shown in the upper right corner, drawing a red outline of a brain on a background of blue neurons. The neurons are depicted as a network of interconnected cells with star-shaped cell bodies and thin, branching processes. The text is centered over the brain outline.

# **Self-Care 101 in the Trauma-Informed Era**

# Who am I and why am I so stressed?



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# What is Stress?

- A physical, mental or emotional response to events that causes bodily harm or mental tension
- Typically comes from a situation or thought that makes you feel nervous, anxious, angry, etc.

# What is Stress?

- Your body's stress response kicks in when you perceive you are under threat
- Mammals have evolved this superb mechanism to ensure we have the best possible chance of survival when faced with a life-threatening situation.

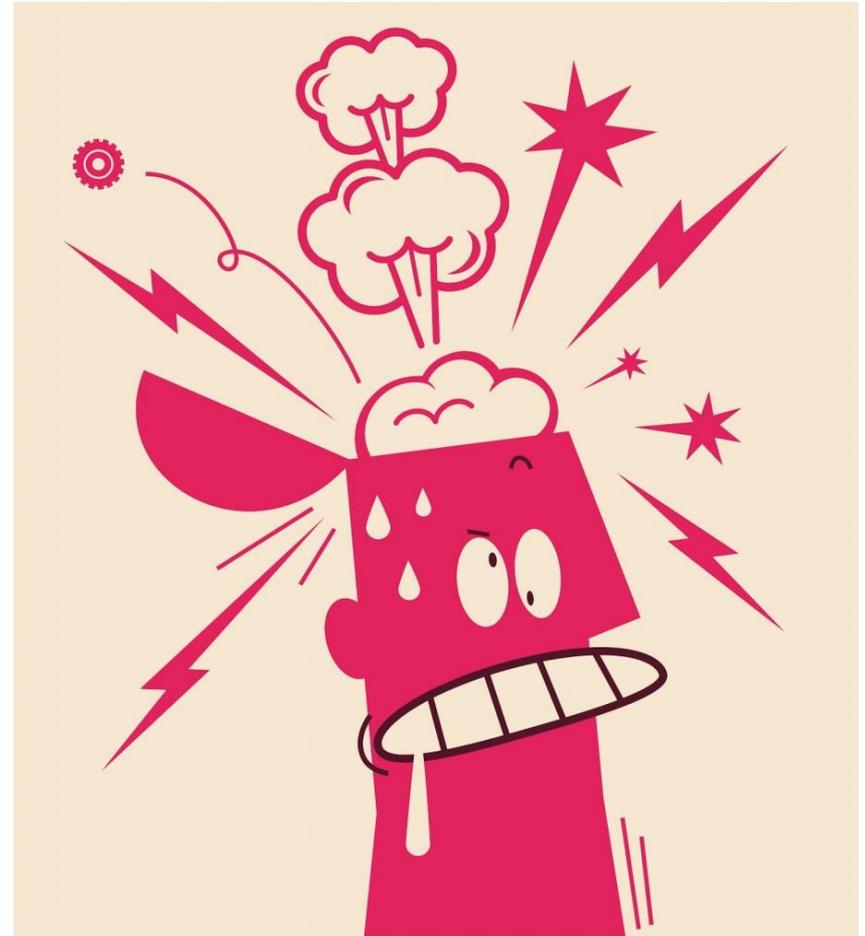
# What Happens to your body?

- Your heart beats faster, your blood pressure increases and you breathe faster pumping maximum oxygen and energy-rich blood to your muscles. Your liver releases more sugar into your blood ready for action.

In evolutionary terms, this is a remarkable system that has helped our species survive.

# What happens to your body and brain?

- There are three main parts of you that control your stress response – your hypothalamus and your pituitary (both in your brain), and your adrenal glands by your kidneys.

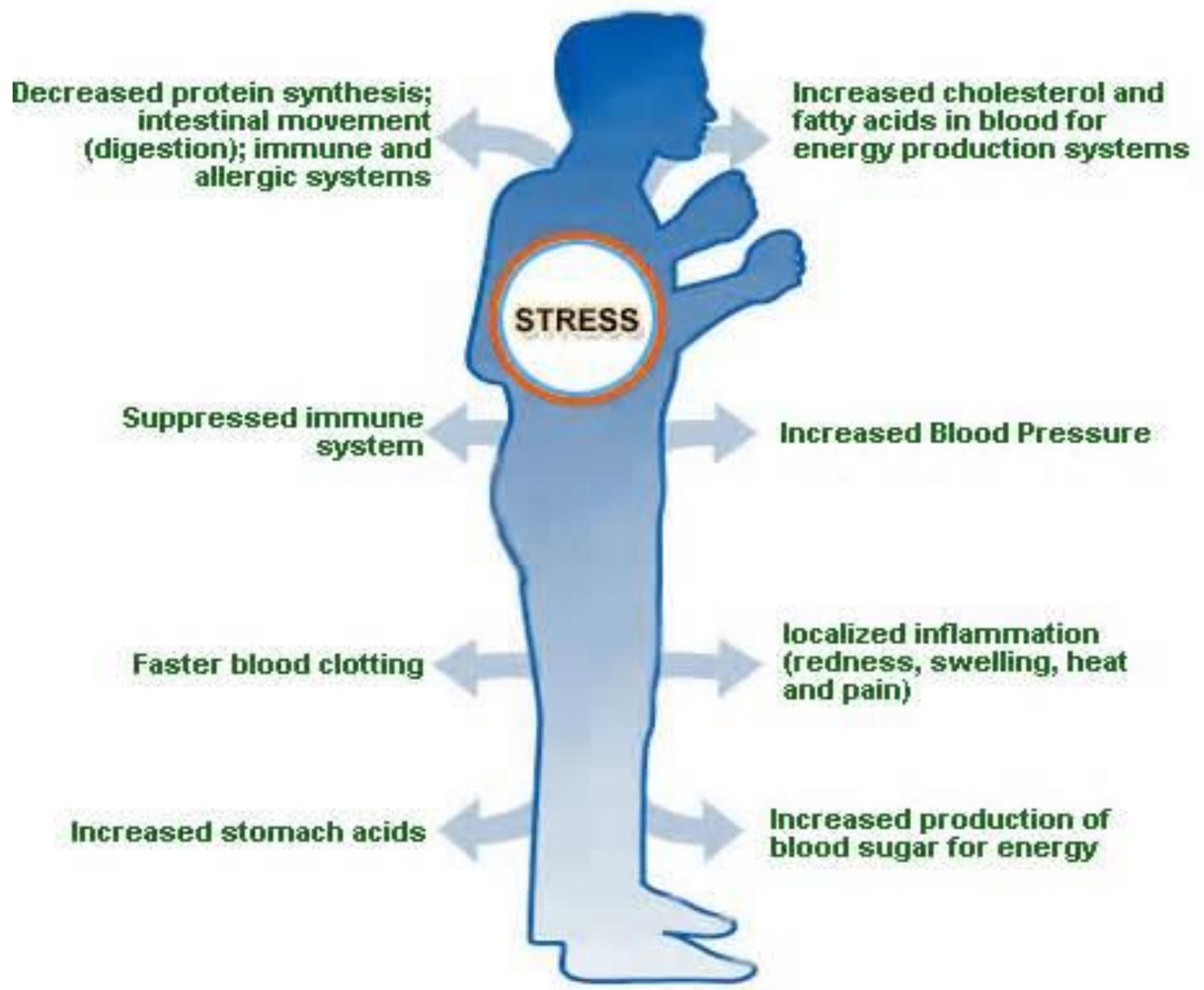


# What happens in your brain?

- Once your brain has decided there's a danger, it sends immediate nerve signals down your spinal cord to your adrenal glands telling them to release the hormone adrenaline.
- Once released, adrenaline increases the amount of sugar in your blood, increases your heart rate and raises your blood pressure

# What happens in your body?

- Your brain's hypothalamus also sends signals to your pituitary gland at the bottom of your brain, telling it to release factors that within a few minutes have travelled through your blood stream and stimulated your adrenal cortex to produce a stress hormone – cortisol.
- Cortisol is very important in your stress response - keeping your blood sugar and blood pressure up to help you escape from danger.



# Long-term Effects of Stress

- Your body's stress response is perfect in the short-term, but damaging if it goes on for weeks or years.
- Raised levels of cortisol for prolonged periods can damp down your immune system and decrease the number of brain cells so impairing your memory.
- It can also affect your blood pressure and the fats in your blood making it more likely you will have a heart attack or stroke.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am stressed.



# Common Sources of Provider Stress

Tension with parents, clients and co-workers	Too much work to do and not enough time
Feeling unable to make use of your skills or abilities	Too many clients per worker
Immediate needs and delayed responses/approval	Environmental issues-noise, space, disorganization, distance
Personal Concerns- family, finances, health, relationships, commitments, etc.	Having few/no opportunities for professional development or advancement
Lack of clear communication/support with co-workers/supervisors/policy maker	Feeling like you have little control over how you perform your job

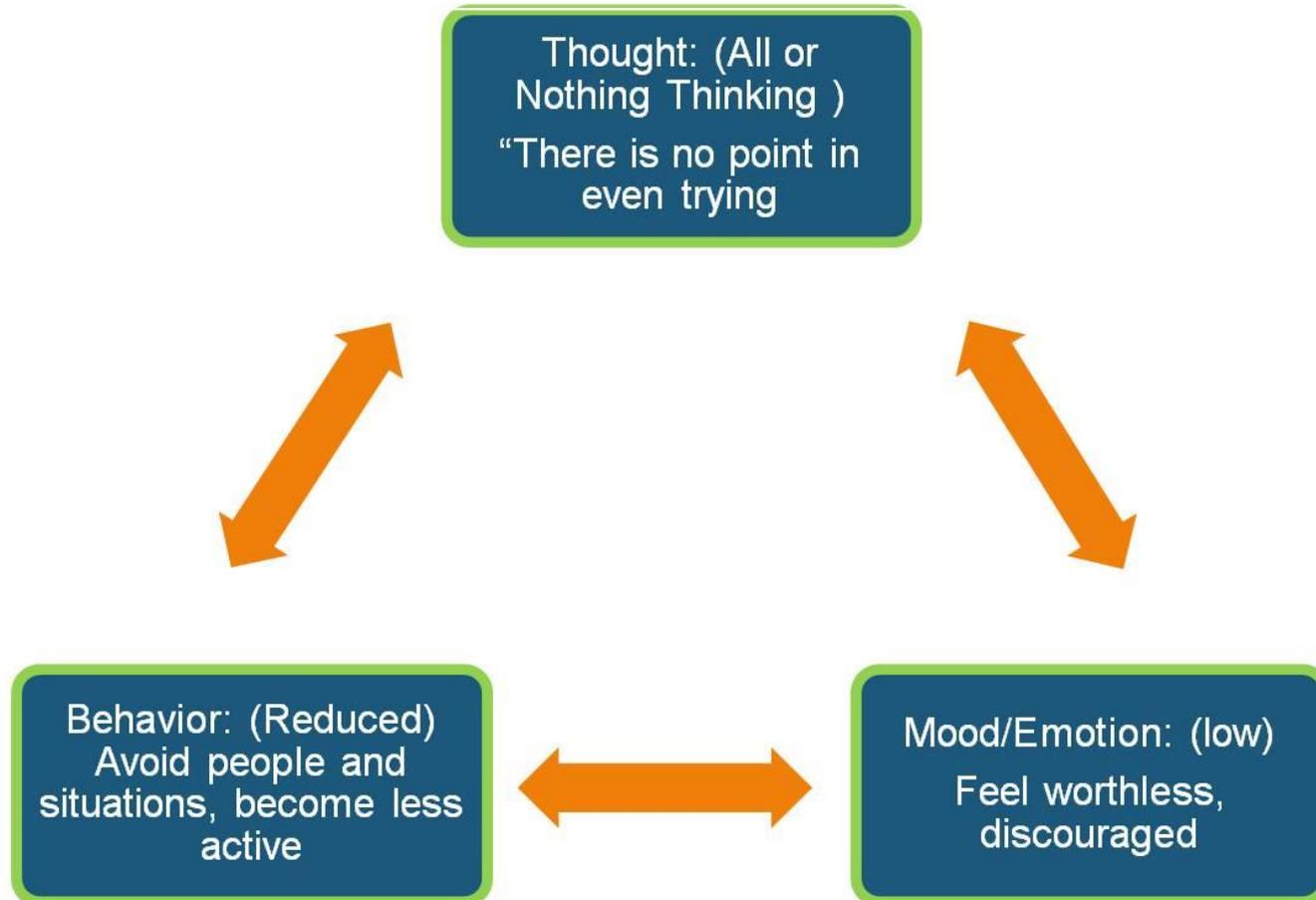
# Common Symptoms of Stress

<b>Cognitive:</b>	<b>Emotional:</b>
Memory Problems Inability to Concentrate Continuous Worry Racing Thoughts	Feeling Down Feeling Overwhelmed Irritability/Short Temper Inability to Relax
<b>Physical:</b>	<b>Behavioral:</b>
Excessive Perspiration Chest pains/elevated heart rate Frequent colds/illness Nausea, dizziness or headaches	Increase/decrease in appetite Nervous Habits Difficulty/Irregular Sleeping Excessive use of alcohol, over eating, drug use, etc.

# Thought Patterns from Stress

All or Nothing Thinking	Overgeneralization
Jumping to Conclusions	Filtering out the Positive
Emotional Reasoning	Catastrophizing
Should Statements	Personalization

# Thought-Behavior-Emotion Cycle



How does stress impact our ability to work with our clients?



# Compassion Fatigue

- Normal physical and emotional response to hearing about another person's traumatic experience
- Not based on experience or "time in the field"
- May relate to personal experience/association
- Numbness to severity or desensitization

# Burnout

- Result of emotional exhaustion
  - Exposure to trauma
  - Feeling inefficient
  - Repetitive cases/experiences
  - Lack of support/empathy from others
  - High caseloads
  - Hierarchical pressures
  - Toxic work environments
  - Joy is lost (often replaced by dread)

# Burnout Symptoms

- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Lack of motivation
- Coming to work late
- Deficiencies

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory

# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Related to vicarious trauma, however secondary traumatic stress reflects physical and emotional stress of knowing about another's trauma.
- Vicarious trauma reflects personal/cognitive changes as a result of hearing about another's trauma

# Secondary Traumatic Stress Symptoms

- Identifying stress or other emotional reactions related to the client's trauma
- Re-experiencing or recollections of traumatized client (dreams, intrusive thoughts, being reminded of client's experience)
- Efforts to avoid thoughts/feelings related to client
- Detachment or changes in relationships

# Countertransference

- Type I: Avoidance/Repression Reactions
  - Minimization of the experience
  - Shifting of focus to another topic
  - Denial of incident/impact
  - Intellectualization
  - Withdrawal or “zoning out”

When does this occur?

# Countertransference

- Type II: Emotional Disequilibrium
  - Uncertainty
  - Vulnerability
  - Dysregulation
  - Empathetic Enmeshment
  - Loss of boundaries
  - Over-involvement
  - Dependency

When do you see this?

# Vicarious Trauma

- Happens over time
  - Natural process of working with survivors of trauma, disasters or clients who are generally struggling
- Process of recognition
  - Realizing impacts, developing resiliency and creating strategies to minimize
- Understanding risk factors

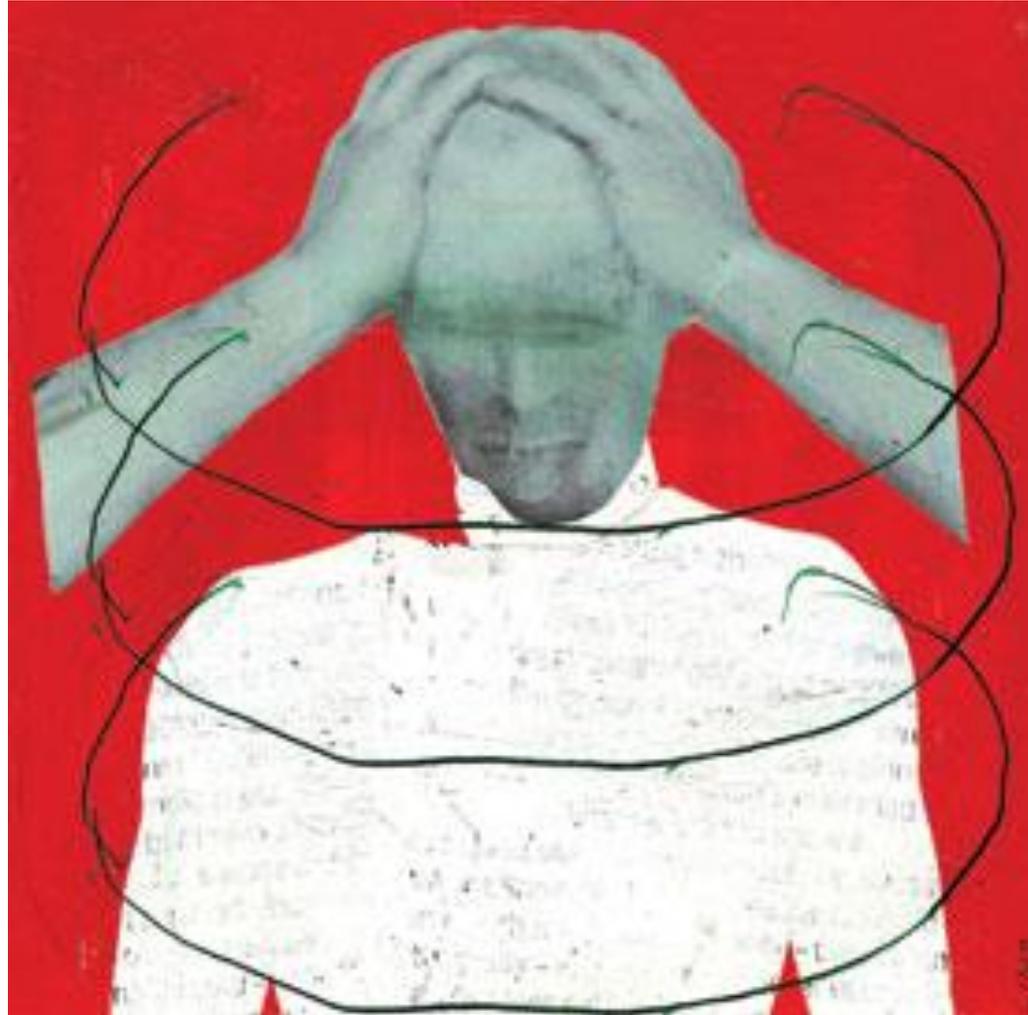
# Understanding Signs

- Personal frustration or anger about a client's decision
- Thinking about the client outside of work more than is expected
- Anxiety about working with a client
- Dread related to anticipation of meeting
- Anger directed towards client
- Feeling incompetent or without skills to support client
- Taking on too much responsibility or difficulty leaving work at the end of the day
- Attempting to control others around you

# Understanding Risk Factors

- Personality and coping style
- Personal trauma history
- Current life circumstances
- Social support
- Spiritual resources
- Work Style
  - Work/life balance
- Professional role/experience
- Agency/Supervisory support
- Clients responses/expectations
- Cultural considerations
- Ability to accept assistance

What if your job is supposed to be stressful?



What is stressful about your position?



# What is Job Stress?

- Job stress comes in different forms and affects your mind and body in different ways.
- Small things can make you feel stressed, such as a copy machine that never seems to work when you need it or phones that won't quit ringing.
- Major stress comes from having too much or not enough work or doing work that doesn't satisfy you. Conflicts with your boss, coworkers, or customers are other major causes of stress

# What causes job stress?

- Most of the time, it's the major sources of stress that lead to job burnout and health problems. Job stress can affect your home life too.

# Causes of Job Stress

- **Lack of control.** Feeling as if you have no control over your work or job duties is the biggest cause of job stress. People who feel like they have no control at work are most likely to get stress-related illnesses.

# Now What?! This is stressing me out!

- Stress. It makes your heart pound, your breathing quicken and your forehead sweat. But while stress has been made into a public health enemy, new research suggests that stress may only be bad for you if you believe that to be the case.

# How can stress be helpful?

- **It can help you be more creative.**
  - Stress often precedes or accompanies creative breakthroughs
  - If our minds are totally calm and relaxed, they don't need a reason to see things differently.

# How can stress be helpful?

- **It may be good for your immune system.**
  - Research has shown that the immune system may benefit from short bursts of stress that elicit our "fight or flight mechanism." (Think of the stress you'd endure while taking a timed exam, running a race or playing a game with a timer.)
  - Stress in short bursts can be helpful to the immune system. When cortisol (stress hormone) is released, it increases immunity in the body.

# How can stress be helpful?

- **It may help you get fit.**
  - Lifting weights, running or spending 45 sweaty minutes on the exercise bike are all forms of stress on your body (also relieves negative stress)

# How can stress be helpful?

- **It may help with problem solving.**
  - Are you experiencing stress from a dilemma in your life or from having to make a big decision? This type of worrying may actually be beneficial.
  - Stress can illuminate our values/immediate responses. If we didn't care about something, we would not worry about it. So if you are stressed about something, it is important to you

# How to manage Job Stress

- **Get organized.** Keep track of your projects and deadlines by making a list of what's urgent. Decide what matters most and what can wait.
- **Don't put things off.** Use a schedule planner to plan your day or week. Just seeing on paper that there is time to get each task done can help you get to work. Break a large project into small steps, and set a deadline for each one.
- **Learn to say "no."** Don't overcommit yourself. If you take on too much, you're creating stress.

# How to manage Job Stress

- **Focus.** Do one thing at a time. In some cases, you can do two things at a time. But if you start to feel stressed, go back to doing one thing at a time.
- **Concentrate.** Try to limit distractions and interruptions. Ask others to give you a block of time when you are not disturbed.
- **Delegate.** Ask someone else to take on a task. It's not always important to have all the control

# Coping Skills for Stress

- Eat a well- balanced diet; drink fluids low in sugar, calories, and caffeine; have healthy snacks; and drink water!
- Sleep well
- Exercise: any activity that you find enjoyable
- Create time each day to decompress
- Talk with friends, peers, avoid gossip and hurtful conversations
- Write in a journal
- Pair enjoyable activities or tasks with less enjoyable activities or tasks
- Reward yourself for a job well done

# Managing Job Stress

- **Track your stressors.** Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved, the physical setting and how you reacted. Did you raise your voice? Get a snack from the vending machine? Go for a walk? Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them.

# Managing Job Stress

- **Develop healthy responses.** Instead of attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do your best to make healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Yoga can be an excellent choice, but any form of physical activity is beneficial. Also make time for hobbies and favorite activities. Whether it's reading a novel, going to concerts or playing games with your family, make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure. Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night.

# Managing Job Stress

- **Establish boundaries.** In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.

# Managing Job Stress

- **Take time to recharge.** To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires “switching off” from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That's why it's critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don't let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best. When you're not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your smartphone and focusing your attention on non-work activities for a while.

# Managing Job Stress

- **Learn how to relax.** Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises and mindfulness (a state in which you actively observe present experiences and thoughts without judging them) can help melt away stress. Start by taking a few minutes each day to focus on a simple activity like breathing, walking or enjoying a meal. The skill of being able to focus purposefully on a single activity without distraction will get stronger with practice and you'll find that you can apply it to many different aspects of your life.

# Managing Job Stress

- **Talk to your supervisor.** Healthy employees are typically more productive, so your boss has an incentive to create a work environment that promotes employee well-being. Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor. The purpose of this isn't to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with an effective plan for managing the stressors you've identified, so you can perform at your best on the job. While some parts of the plan may be designed to help you improve your skills in areas such as time management, other elements might include identifying employer-sponsored wellness resources you can tap into, clarifying what's expected of you, getting necessary resources or support from colleagues, enriching your job to include more challenging or meaningful tasks, or making changes to your physical workspace to make it more comfortable and reduce strain.

# Managing Job Stress

- **Get some support.** Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program (EAP), including online information, available counseling and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behavior.

# What will you do to de-stress?



# Thank you!

Please feel free to contact me with questions, follow-up thoughts and for support related to stress management and trauma-informed care!

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