Psychological First Aid
A Minnesota Community Support Model
• Helps you to understand stress, and what it does to your mind and body

• Gives you simple tools to help yourself, your friends, and your family.

• It can be used anytime, anywhere.

• Uses skills you probably already have...
“Stress is the effect of anything in life to which people must adjust.”

• Anything we consider difficult causes stress, even if it is something we want to do.

The key is that stress forces us to make adjustments (changes) to our thoughts and behavior while at the same time making demands upon our mind & body’s energy.
Psychosocial Stress Response

Impact of Event

Fear and Distress Response

Behavior Change

Psychiatric Illness

Under extreme stress your frontal lobe turns off, and your limbic system (cave man brain) turns on.
• The Stress Response occurs Every Time our brain and body feel threatened

• Just thinking about something stressful can turn on the Stress Response

• When turned ON our brain starts to release over 1,400 chemicals and 30 different hormones that flood our whole body and help us in an emergency.
**Seen/Felt**

- Pupils dilate
- Mouth goes dry
- Muscles tense
- Heart pumps faster
- Breathing becomes fast and shallow

**Unseen**

Brain gets body ready to act by:

- Releasing adrenaline
- Blood pressure rises
- Liver releases glucose for muscle energy
- Digestion slows
Common Physical Reactions Teens

- Sleep problems
- Constipation/diarrhea
- Stomach upset, nausea
- Headaches
- Rash/Acne
- Muscle aches/stiffness
- Sweaty palms
- Feeling out of control of your own body
• Fear or Anxiety
• Sadness or Tearfulness
• Anger or Irritability
• Feelings of inadequacy or worthlessness
• Feeling of guilt
• Loss of sense of “Safety”
• Numb, withdrawn
• Lack of enjoyment in favorite activities
• Feelings of emptiness or hopelessness
Common Behavioral Reactions Teens

- Impulsive behaviors
  - Unsafe sex
  - Alcohol/Drugs
- Aggressive behaviors
  - Bullying
  - Arguments with friends and family
- Isolation/avoidance
  - Places, activities, or people that bring back memories
Common Cognitive Reactions Teens

- Difficulty concentrating, feeling spacey
- Difficulty with remembering things
- Not able to forget about it (Intrusive Memories)
- Day dreaming
- Recurring dreams, nightmares
- Feeling on edge/watching out for danger
Common Sensory Reactions Teens

- Sight
- Sound
- Smell
- Taste
- Touch
Common Spiritual Reactions Teens

- Comfort in our faith community
- Moving closer to our beliefs
- Moving away from our belief system
- Anger at what we see as an injustice
- Developing a new viewpoint of the world
What Helps Us Deal with Stress?

- Being able to look at what happened
- Without blame to self or others
- Understanding our stress reactions
- Feeling like we have some control over what is going on in our life.
Youth PFA Card

Psychological First Aid
Youth Help Card

SAFETY
Have a Plan
Make a Kit

CALM
Listen
Relax

CONNECT
Check In
Buddy Up

EMPOWER
Think Positive
Accept Guidance
Take Action

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed – Ask an adult for help!

Psychological First Aid
Youth Help Card

STRESS PREVENTION TIPS
Talk it out
Move your body
Eat healthy
Say No to tobacco, alcohol, & illegal drugs
Cool your temper
Get enough sleep
Learn your stress triggers
Breathe from your gut

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed – Ask an adult for help!
• Remove from immediate danger area as soon as possible
• Meet basic survival needs
Take steps for becoming prepared for emergencies

• Develop a family emergency communications plan
• Determine an emergency meeting place
• Learn about local resources & support services
Be prepared to take care of yourself in an emergency

- Personal “To Go Kit”
- Safety tools
- Food/water
- Medication
- Entertainment
- Winter Car Kit
- DRAT! (Readiness Actions for Teens)
• Most often, people just need someone to talk to about their experience
• We all want to know someone to cares about us
• We all want someone to really listen, without judgment
• We all want someone to BE PRESENT WITH US!
• Face the person & eye contact
• Show supportive facial expressions
• Nod your head to show you understand
• Stay relaxed
• Lean in toward the person
Use Active Listening Skills
Verbal

• Silence is OK
• Let them tell their story their own way
• Don’t interrupt
• Ask questions to understand
• Don’t judge or ask “Why?” and “Why not?”
• Don’t give your opinion
  • Remember it is not about you!

Source: Gerald Jacobs, U.DMHI, 2005
Use Stress Reduction skills

• Deep Breathing
• Muscle relaxation
• Visualization
• Play/Laugh
• Get enough sleep
• Move your body
Let people know how you are doing and if you need help

• Let your loved ones know that you are safe

• Talk out your problems with friends, family, and trusted adults

• Connect with crisis support services

• State-wide crisis hot-line (1-866-379-6367)
If you or a friend are talking about:

- Harm to self
  - Saying they want to:
    - "End it all"
    - "Go to sleep and never wake up again"
- Preoccupation with death
- Giving away possessions
- Excessive anger
- Use of substances
  - Driving under influence
  - Using at school

TEXTME: 839863
Keyword: “Life”
• Don’t try to go it alone
• Reach out to others
• Help your friends, family and community
• Helping others makes you feel good too!
• Look out for younger kids or those that might need a little extra help
How we think shapes how we feel!

- Stressful negative thoughts – those “what ifs…..”
  - Cause muscles to tense and send our mind a “Danger, Danger” signal
- Positive thoughts – “I can handle this…”
  - Allow our body to stay relaxed and tells our mind that we are in control
Sometimes we all need a helping hand

- Give yourself a break
- Allow other to help you with problem solving
- It is a sign of strength to know your own limits and to ask for help
- Learn from your past experiences
- the successes as well as the mistakes
• Learn what triggers stress for you
• Learn to be flexible with life
• Take care of your body and your physical health
• Take care of your mind by stretching your mental muscles
• Practice stress reduction and self care daily
Teen PFA Resources

- Resilience for Teens: Got Bounce?
  (American Psychological Association)

- Minnesota Department of Health, Behavioral Health Web page
  https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/behavioral/index.html

- Just-in-Time PFA Training video -11 minute video based on the MDH Adult PFA First Aid Card
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa7WiL1xwQg
For More Information

Nancy Carlson
Behavioral Health Preparedness Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Health
Center for Preparedness & Response
Phone 651-201-5707
Cell: 651-247-7398
Nancy.J.Carlson@state.mn.us

MDH Behavioral Health Web Sites:
https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/behavioral/index.html
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