

## Stress on the Job

### Tips and tricks

#### Stress – body, mind, spirit

- These categories help us conceptualize, but it's important to recognize they are a human categorization and possibly a limited way of understanding the human condition
- The “human being” evolved as one dynamic and highly integrated life in response to forces in the universe
- We should not be surprised therefore, when science is able to give us an ever broadening perspective that we are exquisitely interconnected within ourselves, between each other, and with our habitat.

#### Body – food, Movement, sleep

##### Food – foods that fight, foods that invite

GOOD - These nutrients / foods are good because they help to support your adrenal glands (adrenals are active during stress):

- **Vitamin C** - bell peppers, spinach, broccoli, dark leafy greens, citrus, berries, cabbage
- **Vitamin B complex** - dark leafy greens, whole grains, beans, nuts, meats
- **Calcium and Magnesium**- dark leafy greens, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds
- **Zinc**- nuts, seeds, organic whole grains, eggs and meat

GOOD - Blood sugar stabilizers (stable blood sugar helps to prevent further aggravation to the adrenal glands)

- **Protein-rich foods:** beans, lentils, split-peas, hummus, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters (almond, tahini, cashew, sunflower, pumpkin seed), eggs, fish, quality poultry/red meat/dairy
- **High fibre foods:** fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, split-peas
- **Cinnamon:** activates insulin receptors on cells

NOT Good - Avoid these foods while under stress since they stimulate the adrenal glands:

- coffee/black tea, cola , alcohol, sugar

### **Movement – office friendly stretches**

- Unfurl your ears and look side to side
- Stretch out your feet and look up to the ceiling
- Hang your head and close your eyes
- Breathe like “Darth Vader” and hold your eyeball in your tongue
- Make the “ahh” sound and loosen your jaw as you sway your hips
- Forward bend with hands on back of chair, stretching back of legs and side body

### **Sleep**

- Your body cleans up stress hormones while you sleep, but chronic “clean up” means that other repairs in the body get put on hold.

### **Mind – mindfulness and stress reduction**

- There are many aspects of stress in the mind (ex. Negative thought patterns, anxious/obsessive thought patterns, unresolved thoughts of anger)
- today we are focusing on mindfulness , not some of the other mind related habits listed above

### **What is mindfulness?**

5 elements of mindful behavior:

1. Non judgmental
2. Non-reactive - equanimity
3. Stay in the moment with sensations
4. Label internal experience with words, describe, not explain
5. Ability to observe yourself experiencing the situation

### **How does mindfulness fight stress?**

- The way you direct your attention Changes the structure of the Mid Prefrontal Cortex, creating more and stronger connections within the MPC and between the MPC and other parts of the brain,. This fosters a more coherent, integrated experience.
  - These stronger MPC connections leads to improvement in the following 9 areas
1. Appropriate body regulation – Your ability to rev up and calm down
  2. Attuned communication – Your ability to tune into how others are feeling

3. Emotional balance – Your ability to come back to balance after emotional ups and downs
4. Impulse control – Your ability to think before you act and react
5. Insight – Your ability to connect past, present and future
6. Empathy – Your ability to tune into another’s feelings and connect it to your own experience
7. Your ability to modulate fear
8. Intuition - being in touch with signals from your body
9. Morality - your ability to picture a larger social good and enact those morals even when you are alone

## **Spirit**

- Spirit is connecting with something bigger, beyond yourself
- While there are many different religious traditions that aim to connect humans with “a higher power”, in this context we will not leave the visible world, but find common ground in our “common ground”.
- nature is a universal route to connecting with the bigger cosmos
- The typical office environment would be deemed illegal and inhumane for animals, according to international zoo standards.

## **Mindfulness and Nature**

- Being in, looking at, listening to nature helps your attention to be more mindful
- Nature grabs your attention into the “moment” and gives your planning-logical brain a rest
- When you “return” to your planning and logical thinking, your attention is refreshed

## **Great On-Line Resources**

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nil3FzCOH4>

## **One Thing**

- What one thing are you going to take away and act on?