Trauma-Informed Toolbox Strategy Session:
Simple Ways to Manage Stress in the Moment

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No feeling is final.

(Rainer Maria Rilke, 20th-century German poet; Safety Quote~ From Seeking Safety by Lisa M. Najavits, 2002, adapted from p.132)
Stress

- A natural feeling of not being able to cope with specific demands and events
- When faced with a stressful situation the body produces larger quantities of the chemicals cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine, triggering the following reactions:
  - Increased blood pressure
  - Heightened muscle preparedness
  - Sweating
  - Alertness
- A person’s ability to cope/manage stress influences overall mental and physical health.

(Felman, 2020)
Normal Responses To Stress

**This is not an exhaustive list, however there are many responses to managing stress.**

Physical
- Sweating
- Cramps/muscle spasms
- Headache
- Pins and needles sensations
- Pain (especially in back and chest)

Emotional
- Anger/Irritability
- Difficulty focusing
- Burnout
- Restlessness
- Sadness
- Feeling overwhelmed

Behavioral
- Changes in appetite
- Sudden angry outbursts
- Nail biting
- Drug/alcohol misuse
- Social withdrawal
- Frequent crying
PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR SELF TALK

Negative self-talk increases stress. Positive self talk can help you calm down and control stress.

UNDERSTAND STRESS

Not all stress is bad – stress can be helpful in motivating us to complete tasks.

IDENTIFY YOUR PHYSIOLOGICAL STRESS REACTIONS

Knowing how your body responds and noticing the signs allows you to address what is happening in the moment.
“Take 10”
Intentionality and Making Time for Yourself

YouTube Video: Amy Cunningham – Drowning in Empathy
50 Ways to Take a Break

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Wellness Resources 2021
What We Can Do….

- **Breathe** – deep breathing evokes a powerful physical relaxation response.

- **Ground or Anchor** yourself in the moment – use your senses to interrupt the stress response.

- **Assess** – What do you notice about yourself? Pinpoint what is contributing to your stress.
What We Can Do....

Get Moving – walk away from your desk; Engage the class in a stretch or physical activity break

Remind yourself of what you can control – your thoughts, responses, and actions

Have tools readily available – music, essential oils, pictures, quotes
MOVING PAST THE MOMENT...

PRACTICE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES
Identify one or two “in the moment” strategies and try them out.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP
A good night’s sleep helps improve performance and stamina.

EAT HEALTHY FOODS
A balanced diet can help maintain the immune system in times of high stress.
Moving Past the Moment...

GET ORGANIZED & PRIORITIZE TASKS
This can help you gain perspective, uncover tasks that you can combine to save time, and discover pieces of the puzzle you hadn’t considered.

WRITE IT OUT
By writing it down, you can save energy by releasing your brain from the exhausting task of holding on to all those thoughts.

EXERCISE
From stretching to kickboxing, engaging in physical activity can help improve your physical and mental health.
Moving Past the Moment...

CONNECT WITH OTHERS
Take intentional time with friends and loved ones.

MAKE YOURSELF A PRIORITY
Figure out what works for you and block off the time to make it happen!
Reflection Activity: Taking 10

• On a scale from 1 to 10, where are you on the scale right now?

1 = I do not make time for myself  10 = I intentionally take 10 minutes for myself each day

• What are you already doing that lets you know you’re at that number?

• What will you notice that is different once you’ve moved up just one point higher on the scale?

• What do you suppose is the next small step you can take in order to get to that one point higher on the scale?

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Additional Resources: Managing Stress

• American Psychiatric Nurses Association – Managing Stress and Self-Care During COVID-19

• Braive (YouTube) – How Stress Affects Your Body and Mind

• Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress – Sustaining the Wellbeing of Healthcare Personnel During COVID-19

• Harvard Business Review – How to Handle Stress in the Moment

• National Center for PTSD – COVID-19 Resources: Managing Stress for Healthcare Workers

• NYS Office of Mental Health – Managing Anxiety in an Anxiety-Provoking Situation

• Triple Peak Wellness - 5 Simple Steps to Manage Stress the Moment It Hits