



National Institutes of Health
Office of Management

Stress Reduction Techniques: Relax, Get Centered and Improve Your Mindset

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Office of Research Services
National Institutes of Health

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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Let's Share Experiences

Go to the Google Doc in the Chat

What Is Stress?

The brain's response

- Interaction between you & your environment
- Perceived as threatening
 - Physical, emotional, behavioral responses

Triggers of stress

- Lack of sleep or exercise, illness
- Pressures: time, work, life changes, inability to say “no”
- Too much caffeine

How Stress Manifests

- Not eating, or eating too much
- Feeling like you have no control
- Forgetfulness
- Headaches or back pain
- Lack of energy or focus
- Time management issues
- Trouble getting things done
- Short temper
- Poor self-esteem
- Trouble sleeping
- Upset stomach

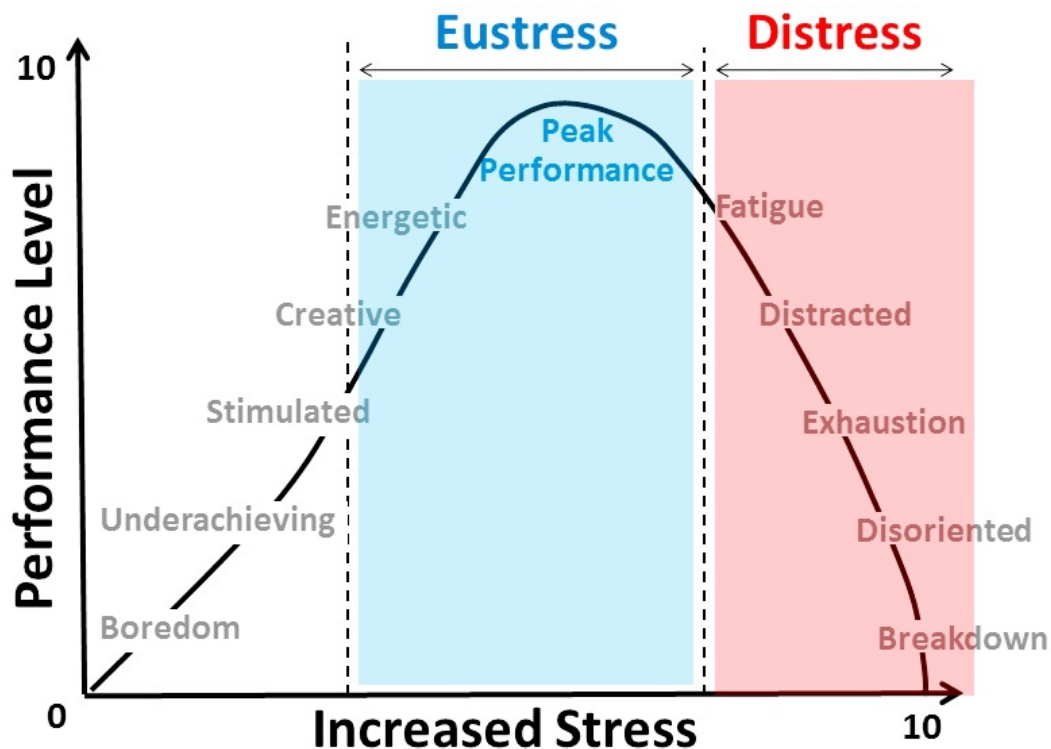
What Stress Does to Your Brain

- **When you sense danger, your brain tells your:**
 - adrenal glands → release adrenaline
 - hypothalamus → excrete cortisol
- **These hormones have an impact on your body**
 - Increased heart rate
 - Pupils dilate
 - Digestion stops
 - Rapid breathing

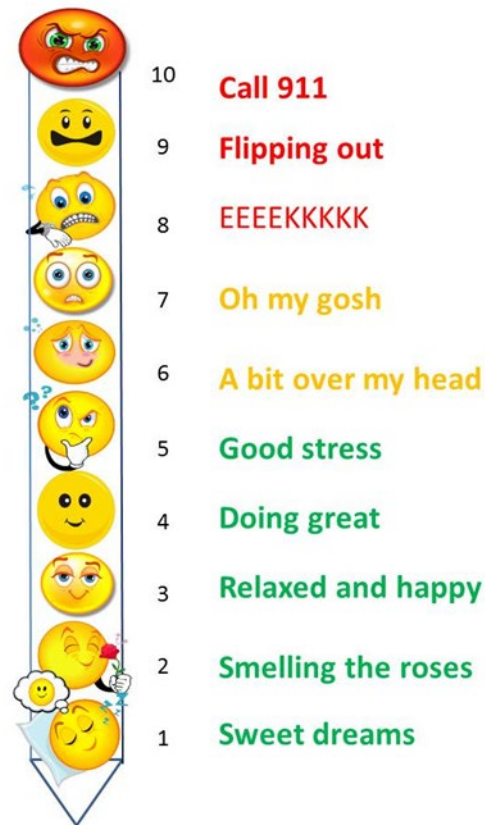


Eustress vs. Distress

Performance Curve



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Identifying Your Stress

- Let's explore how life situations and feelings trigger different degrees of perceived stress
- **Perceived Stress Scale (PSS):** Go to Google Sheet, go to “Ratings” tab to evaluate your perceived stress using the PSS Calculator.

MASTER STRESS

Maintain healthy eating

Avoid isolation

Stay informed, not obsessed

Talk to others

Engage in mindfulness

Relax, play, exercise

Start journaling

Take deep breaths

Rest and sleep well

Engage in gratitude

Step outside into nature

Seek support from friends,
family, and professionals

- **What is resilience?**
 - Ability to cope with and recover from setbacks
- **A resilient person:**
 - Has strong coping skills
 - Utilizes their resources
 - Asks for help when needed
 - Uses skills & strengths to respond to life's challenges
 - Regulates their emotions
 - Has an internal locus of control
 - Has good problem-solving skills
 - **Shows self-acceptance and self-compassion**

- **Physical Resilience**
 - How the body deals with change and recovers from physical demands, illnesses, and injuries.
- **Mental Resilience**
 - Ability to adapt to change and uncertainty
- **Emotional Resilience**
 - Able to regulate emotions during times of stress
- **Social/Community Resilience**
 - Ability of groups to recover from difficult situations.
- **Let's Share: Google sheet tab, "Question 2"**

Reframe Thoughts to Manage Stress

Original Thought	More Helpful Thought
“It would be selfish to take a break from this work.”	“Taking an occasional break from this work will help me be more effective.”
“I’m okay, I’m fine, I’m not even tired.”	“Even though I feel fine I need to pace myself.”
“The needs of those I’m supporting are more important than my own needs.”	“I can better care for others if I also attend to my own needs.”
“I’m not doing enough.”	“I’m doing enough.”
“I can contribute the most by working all the time.”	“I can contribute the most by pacing myself.”
“I don’t want anyone to know how affected I am.”	“Letting someone know how affected I am can help me.”
“Only I can do x, y, and z.”	“I can trust that others can fill in when it’s necessary.”

- **What is Mindfulness?**
 - **The practice of** being present, non-judgmental.
 - **The quality of** being fully engaged with whatever you are doing.
 - **Practicing mindfulness** involves:
 - Breathing methods
 - Guided imagery, and/or
 - Other practices to relax the body and mind,
 - And help reduce stress



- **What is a Growth Mindset?**

- A growth mindset comes from the belief that your abilities and intelligence are things that can develop and grow with effort.



Growth mindset

- According to Carol S. Dweck's (PhD) research, people who have a growth mindset reach much higher levels of achievement and success.



VS

Fixed Mindset

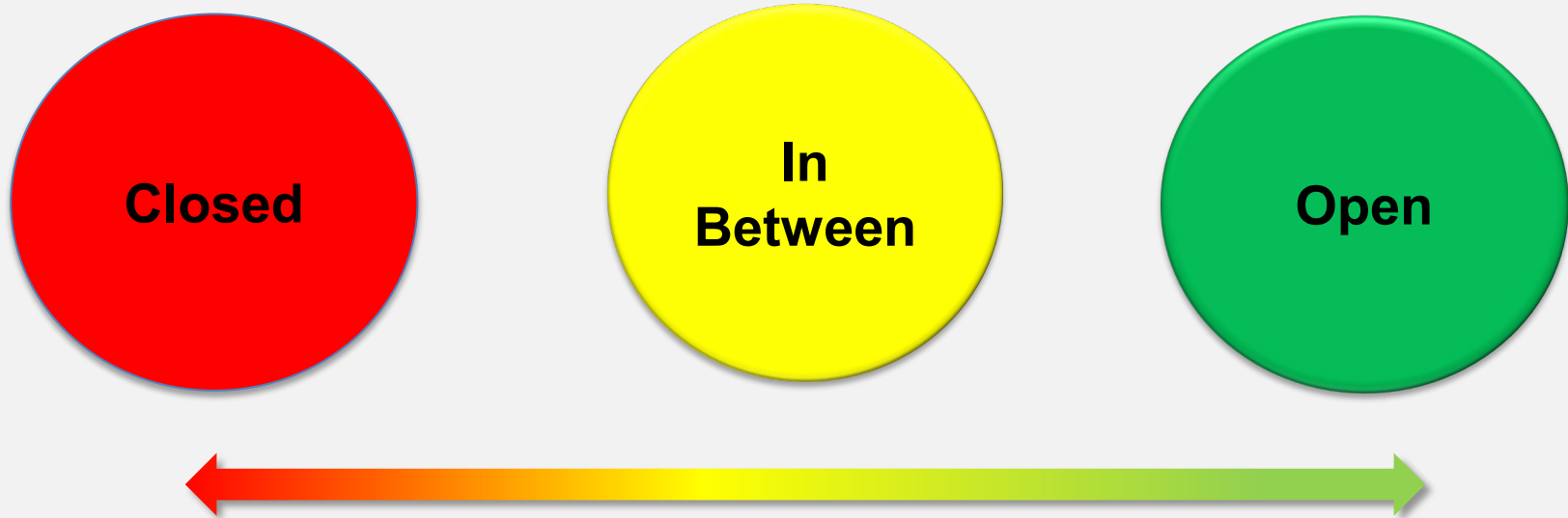
- A fixed mindset comes from the belief that your abilities are unchanging, or you cannot get better at something.



Let's Practice! MBSR Techniques

Pleasant Experience Calendar

What was the experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings <i>while</i> the experience was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings, & thoughts accompanied this experience?	What thoughts are in your mind now as you write about this experience?
Thurs				
Fri	Go to the Google sheet for a copy!			
Sat				
Sun				
Mon				
Tues				



What exactly causes you to switch from open to closed and then open again?

Reframe Your Thoughts to Manage Communication

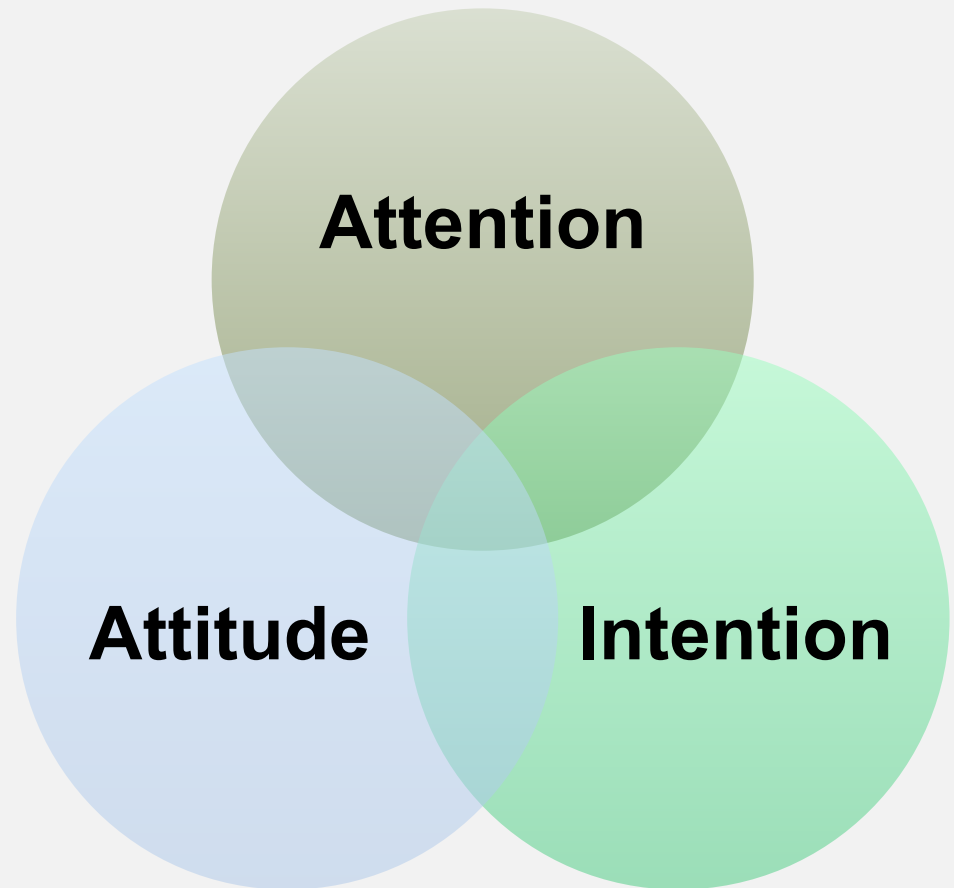
- Defuses inflammatory language
- Recasts negatives into neutral or positive statements
- Refocuses the attention
- Acknowledges strong emotions in a productive way
- Translates communication so that it is more likely to be heard
- Recontextualizes or provides a broader perspective

-
1. Truth
 2. Accusations
 3. Blame
 4. Judgments, Characterizations
 5. Defending
 6. Certainty
 7. Past
 8. Loss
 9. Positions

1. Different Stories/Perspectives
2. Intent and Impact
3. Contribution
4. Feelings
5. Explaining
6. Curiosity
7. Future
8. Opportunity
9. Interests

Mindful communication involves applying principles of mindfulness to the way we correspond with others.

Principles include setting an **intention**, being **fully present**, remaining **open and non-judgmental**, and relating to others with **empathy**.



Mindful Listening

Let's practice – go to Google Sheet Q3

Instead of...



Try...

- Multi-tasking
- Interrupting or defending
- Finishing sentences
- Judging what someone is saying before they finish
- Planning/rehearsing your response
- Only focusing on specific things (or wrong-spotting)
- Comparing your thoughts and experiences to others
- Ignoring your own "cues"

- Being fully **present**
- Bringing **openness and curiosity** to the interaction
- Giving people **space**
- Checking your **intentions for interrupting**
- Paying attention to **internal thoughts/reactions**
- Watching **body language** and listening for **tone**
- **Reflecting back** what you heard and **asking questions**

Mindful Speaking

Instead of...



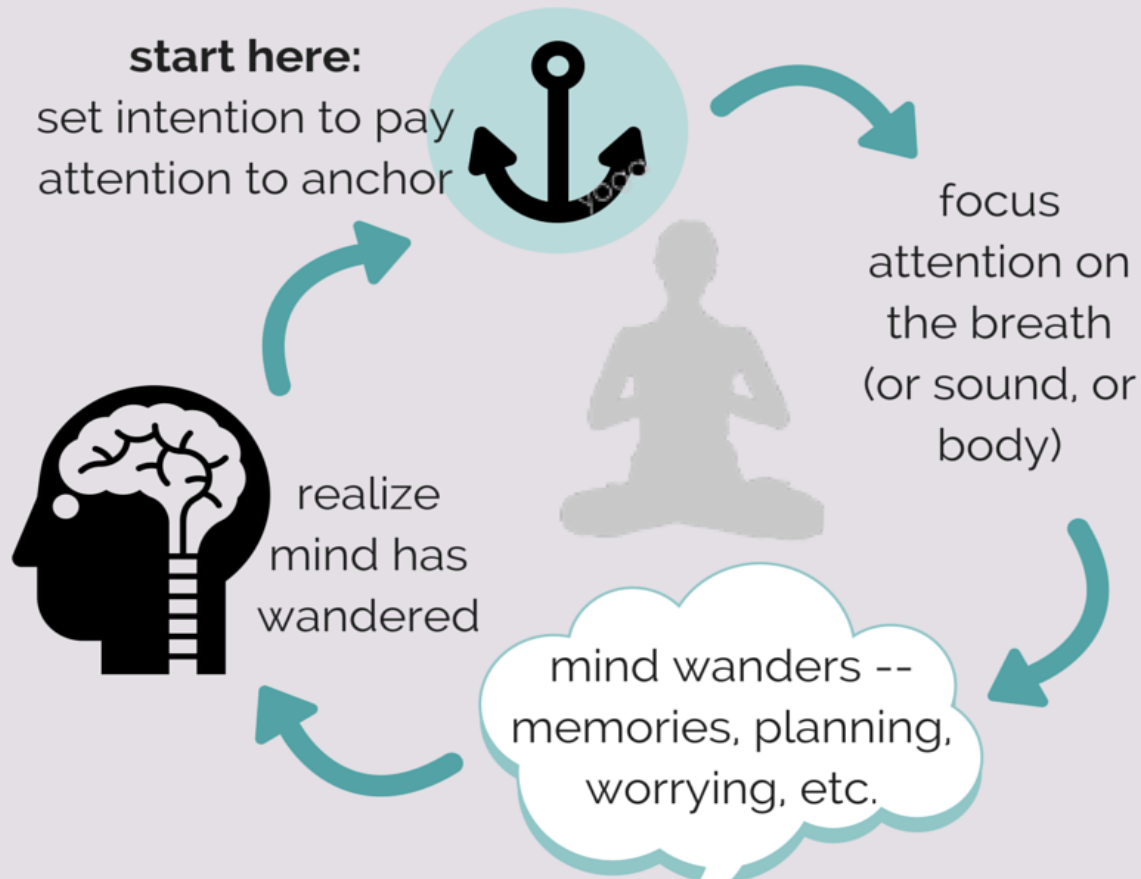
Try...

- Rushing to share your thoughts (or shutting down)
- Reacting instead of responding
- Disconnecting from body/emotions
- Pushing your own agenda
- Trying to prove a point (or “win”)
- Using disclaimers
- Rationalizing and repeating
- Making potentially hurtful comments

- Taking a **pause**
- Taking the **other person/people** into consideration
- **Acknowledging** emotions and what they signal
- Being **clear** about your **intentions**
- Speaking from your **own perspective** (using “I” statements)
- Being **concise, direct, and specific**
- Communicating to **clarify and learn (ask questions)**
- **Paying** attention to the reaction of others

Mindfulness Loop

BASIC MINDFULNESS MEDITATION



4 MUST-KNOW FACTS ABOUT **MEDITATION**

It Increases **GRAY MATTER**

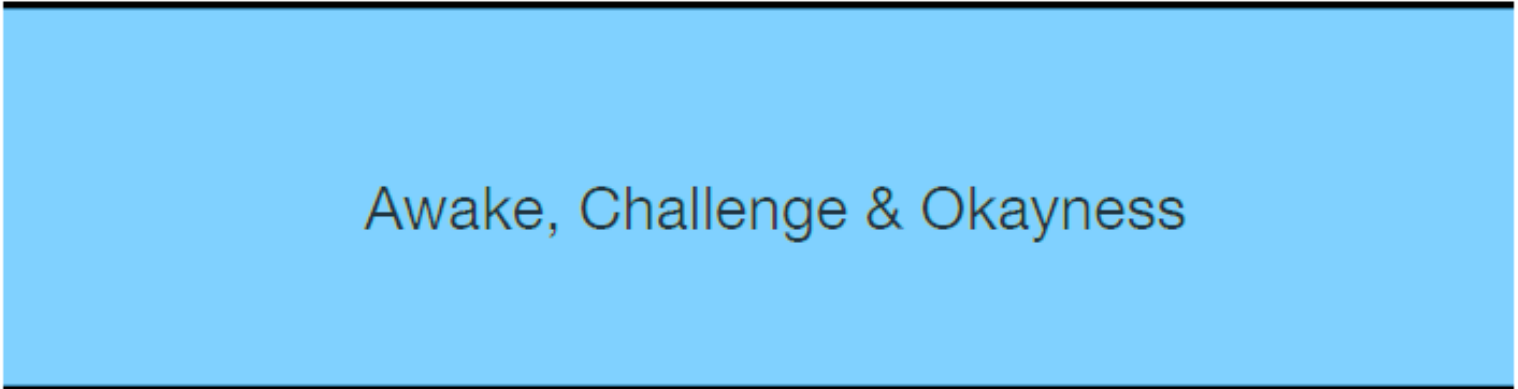
Brain scans of participants in a mediation study by Yale, Harvard and Mass General Hospital showed increases of gray matter in parts of the brain, and that meditation may slow natural brain deterioration.

The parts of the brain with increased gray matter thickness are related to attention and processing sensory input.



Let's Practice! Zones of Tolerance

Too Much, Excessive Risk



Awake, Challenge & Okayness

Zoned Out, Automatic, Falling Asleep

NIH EAP is a free, voluntary and confidential program that helps employees work through challenges that may adversely affect job performance, health, or personal well-being



EAP Contact Information



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Designed to help NIH employees support comprehensive well-being:
work, family & community



NEW! NIH Joins the Mindful FED Program.

Video: <https://shorturl.at/wDJNQ>

Link to flyer: <https://go.nih.gov/FjU0CIH>

Upcoming Campus Events – get outside with NIH!

- 16th Annual Take a Hike Day - all campuses – June 6
- Safety, Health and Wellness Day – Bethesda & hybrid sessions – June 18

Questions?

Comments?

Feel free to unmute or use the chat

Thank you!