STRESS, COPING and MENTAL HEALTH

GORDON STRAUSS MD
PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY

DIRECTOR, MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR PHYSICIANS IN TRAINING
What Is Stress?

Dual Meaning

1. The external cause: the “stressor”

2. The person’s reaction
   - Physical
   - Psychological
Six Step Model of Stress

1. Perception
2. Psychological Defenses (coping styles)
3. Psycho-physiological Responses
4. Response Reduction
5. Illness Behavior
6. Illness Measure
General v. Specific Stresses

- **General**
  - Heat, Cold
  - Hunger
  - Sleep deprivation

- **Specific**
  - Tied to perception of significance
1. Perception

- How stressful do you find
  - A first date
  - Going to the dentist for a filling
  - A weekend with your parents
  - A flight to NYC
    - 7 a.m. departure
    - 11 a.m. departure
MD Professional Stressors*

1. Time Demands
2. Doctor-Patient Relationships
3. Role Responsibility
4. Career – Family Conflicts
5. Inability to Cure
6. Threat of Malpractice

*reported by experienced physicians and residents
2. Psychological Defenses

- Coping mechanisms which serve to reduce the magnitude of responses

- Displacement
- Reaction Formation
- Intellectualization
- Humor
- Suppression
3. Psycho-physiological Responses

- **With Awareness**
  - Headache, Muscle tension, Mood shifts

- **Without Awareness**
  - Elevated lipids and BP
  - Low blood sugar
4. Response Reduction

- Exercise
- Muscle Relaxation
- Situational Adjustments
- Psychotherapeutic Interventions
- Medications
5. Illness Behavior
6. Illness Measures

- When coping is not sufficient
- Sustained symptoms
- Sick role/help-seeking
- Diagnosis & Treatment
- Documentation in medical record
Coping with Stress

1. Health-sustaining Habits
2. Social Supports
3. Responses to Stress
4. Life Satisfactions
1. Health-Sustaining Habits

- Diet
- Relaxation
- Physical Exercise
- Pace
- Medications
2. Social Support

- Benefits come from both structure and function
  - Health Benefits of marriage/relationships
  - Key role of a confidant
  - Availability when needed
3. Response to Stress

- **Positive**
  - Problem solving
  - Utilize social support
  - Look for silver lining

- **Negative**
  - Avoidance
  - Self-blame
  - Wishful thinking
4. Life Satisfactions

- Optimism & Humor
- Work
- Family
- The Arts
- Nature
- Spirituality
The Arts in Louisville

- **Orchestra, Opera & Ballet**
  - At Center for the Arts on Main St.
- **Actor’s Theater & Shakespeare in Central Park**
- **Gallery Trolley Hops**
  - 1st, 2nd and 4th Fridays
- **Speed Art Museum** (temporarily closed)
Shakespeare in the Park

- Nightly at 8 pm Mid-June to August
- Central Park (4th Street & Magnolia)
- It's FREE
Nature Places

- Louisville’s Olmsted Parks
  - Cherokee, Iroquois & Shawnee
- River Walk
- Bernheim Forest
- Many Lakes and Rivers
- Red River Gorge