# 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
  - OA first date
  - OGoing to the dentist for a filling
  - OA weekend with your parents
  - OA 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 Behavior6. 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

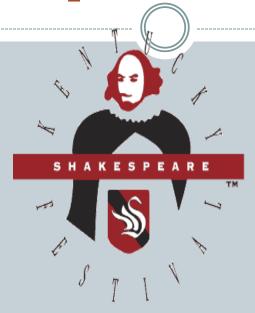
### 4. Life Satisfactions

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

### The Arts in Louisville

- Orchestra, Opera & Ballet
  - OAt Center for the Arts on Main St.
- Actor's Theater & Shakespeare in Central Park
- Gallery Trolley Hops
  - 01st, 2nd and 4th Fridays
- Speed Art Museum

## Shakespeare in the Park



- Nightly at 8 pm Mid-June to August
- Central Park (4<sup>th</sup> Street & Magnolia)
- It's FREE

### Nature Places

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