Recognising and managing stress

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Boundaries

• Audiologist not a stress counsellor

• Very general overview of stress and stress management

• Not a substitute for assessment by a trained health professional
Define Stress

“Any factor that threatens the health of the body or has an adverse effect on its functioning, such as injury, disease or worry”.

Tinnitus and Stress

• Many medical conditions can be exacerbated by stress

• Many patients state that their tinnitus gets worse with stress

• Techniques aimed at reducing stress and anxiety will probably be beneficial
The Vicious Cycle

Perception

Negative

Fear

Increase in tinnitus

Stress

Underlying stress fuels the cycle

Neutral

Anxiety

Habituation
Stress Response of Body

• Fight or flight response: cascade of bodily changes to prepare us when danger is sensed
• Stress hormones released
• Heart rate changes
• Blood vessels constrict
• Pupils dilate
• Blood sugars increase
• Senses on red alert
• Bodily processes not essential to immediate survival are suppressed
Signs & Symptoms of Stress

- Recognise signs in yourself
- Stress affects mind, body & behaviour
- All directly linked to fight-or-flight response
- Identify your red flags & take early steps
Signs & Symptoms of Stress

- **Cognitive:** memory, concentration, anxious or racing thoughts
- **Emotional:** moodiness, agitation, irritability, feeling tense, depressed, unhappy
- **Physical:** headaches, muscle stiffness, nausea, dizziness, rapid heart beat
- **Behavioural:** disturbed sleep, overreacting, isolation, maladaptive coping
Causes of Stress

• You can’t avoid stress

• Numerous and highly individual

• Major life events

• Depends on many factors including personality, general outlook, social support system

• Something stressful to one person may be enjoyable to another
Top 10 Stressful life Events

1. Death of a spouse
2. Divorce
3. Separation
4. Prison sentence
5. Death of somebody close
6. Injury/illness
7. Marriage
8. Fired at work
9. Marriage reconciliation
10. Retirement

Source: Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory
Managing Stress

• Living with high stress levels puts your entire well being at risk

• Interferes with emotional equilibrium

• Narrows your ability to think clearly, function effectively and enjoy life
Managing Stress

• Goal is to bring the mind and body back into balance

• Adopt a positive attitude

• Learn healthier coping strategies

• Change the way you deal with stress
Take Charge of Stress

- Emotions
- Environment
- Schedule
- Balanced life
Dealing with Stress

**Change the situation**
- Avoid the stressor
- Alter the stressor

**Change your reaction**
- Accept the stressor
- Adapt to the stressor
Make a stress management plan

- Identify your sources of stress
- Look closely at habits, attitudes, excuses
- Consider a stress journal
- Evaluate your coping strategies
- Learn positive coping strategies
Avoid Unnecessary Stress

- Learn to say “No”
- Take control of your environment
- Avoid hot topics
- Reduce your “To do list”
Alter the situation

- Express your feelings
- Compromise
- Be assertive
- Time management
Accept things

• You cannot control the uncontrollable

• Look for the positive

• Share your feelings

• Forgive
Adapt

• Look at things differently
• Look at the big picture
• Adjust standards
• Focus on the positive
Stress Reduction Tips

• Relax: opposite to stress response

• Breathe properly: reduces heart rate

• Socialise

• Do something you enjoy

• Sense of humour
Healthy Lifestyle

• Exercise

• Healthy diet

• Reduce caffeine and sugar

• Avoid alcohol and nicotine

• Adequate sleep
Main Reference

www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm