

Clinical Guidelines for “Just the Facts-Coping with Stress”

OVERVIEW:

The handout for this topic provides an overview on stress: what is stress, what are the signs of stress, and what types of situations cause stress (both in general and for the client in particular). It also provides information on how to prevent and cope with stress. Stress is conceptualized as a potential problem in both the client and relatives' lives.

Goals

1. Provide information on stress, its signs, causes and consequences.
2. Help the participant identify factors that contribute to their own stress and ways to prevent and manage them.
3. Teach specific relaxation techniques for managing stress.

Handout Needed

1. Just the Facts-Coping with Stress

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Ask the participant about what stresses him/her out and what strategies he/she uses to manage it.
- Normalize stress as something that everyone experiences.
- Assess the participants' knowledge about his/her own daily hassles and life events as well as his/her perception of the client; fill in the gaps of the knowledge with the handout (life events and daily hassles checklists).
- Informally ask the participants about their own stress reactions and how they manage them. Use exercises such as “signs of stress checklist,” “strategies to prevent stress,” and “how can you cope more effectively with stress,” to complement their knowledge.
- Incorporate the participant's own coping strategies (if he/she has some) into the “individual plan for coping with stress.”

- Find out if the participant is using relaxation techniques. If so, ask which ones and assess their effectiveness. If not, find out which techniques the participant wants to learn. Practice the techniques in the session.
- Ask the participant to practice a relaxation technique during the week.

TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:

- Participants may use maladaptive coping strategies to manage stress (e.g., substance use). If the participant is willing to discuss them, examine the pros and cons of using such strategies.
- Relatives may not see how becoming good in their own stress management can be relevant to the outcomes of their relatives with psychosis. However, we know persons with psychosis living with relatives who use less nagging, prompting, or criticism do better.
- Time may be short to cover everything in the session. If so, only one relaxation exercise needs to be practiced.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF THE SESSION:

Help participants learn to manage their own stress a bit better, which should reduce tension in the family and have a positive outcome on the person in NAVIGATE.

EVALUATING GAINS:

- After completing the handout for this topic it may be helpful to assess how much knowledge the participant has retained about stress. You can assess a participant's knowledge using the following questions:
 1. What is stress?
 2. What is the difference between daily hassles and life events?
 3. What are some ways that people experience stress?
 4. How would you teach someone an individual plan for coping with stress?