Strategies for Cultivating Mindfulness and Resilience

Kathryn Jones, PhD, LMFT, CEAP
Objectives

- Define Stress
- Define Mindfulness
- Learn examples of mindful activities to reduce stress
- Define Resilience
- Learn examples of building resilience
Stress vs. Stressor

- **Stress**
  - Physical, mental, emotional responses to stressors

- **Stressors**
  - Deadlines
  - Relationship challenges
  - Financial difficulties
  - Health concerns
  - Work environment
What is Stress?

- Any change requiring you to adapt
- Unavoidable and Necessary
- Stress can be POSITIVE!
  - a source of high energy and increased awareness
  - Some stress actually improves performance, but too much stress impedes performance
Stress Effects on Our Body

- Activates Sympathetic Nervous System
  - Musculoskeletal System
  - Respiratory System
  - Cardiovascular System
  - Endocrine System
  - Gastrointestinal System
Chronic Stress

- Associated with numerous diseases and health issues
  - Cardiovascular issues, including heart attacks and strokes
  - Higher cholesterol
  - Hypertension
  - Tension headaches and migraines
  - Reproductive system issues in males and females
  - Digestive issues, including ulcers, diarrhea or constipation, heartburn
  - Increased risk of diabetes for those vulnerable to the disease
  - Increased risk for anxiety and depression
Mindfulness

Intentionally bringing one’s awareness to both the internal and external experience, in the present moment, without judgement.
4 Skills of Mindfulness

- **Attending** – centering one’s attention in the “here and now” of immediate experiencing

- **Knowing and noting** – “Tuning In” or “What is my experience now...can I name it?”

- **Releasing** – Allowing experience to rise and pass freely without judgement

- **Remembering and Returning** – A willingness to return again and again to this process of being here now.
STOP – A Short Mindfulness Technique

- Stop
- Take a breath
- Observe your thoughts and feelings
- Proceed
Engage Your Senses

- Engaging one or more of your primary senses can help bring you back to the moment and ground you in your body, a key aspect of mindfulness
  - Sights
  - Sounds
  - Smells
  - Sensations
  - Tastes
Short 5 Senses Exercise

- Notice 5 things you can see
- Notice 4 things you can feel
- Notice 3 things you can hear
- Notice 2 things you can smell
- Notice 1 thing you can taste
Five Senses Tools

- Sensations
  - Breath deep
  - Stamp feet on ground
  - Rub fingertips together
  - Tap arms of chair
  - Focus on temperature of air on skin
  - Keep a smooth stone or piece of soft fabric in your pocket to touch when stressed
  - Squeeze a stress ball
  - Do a body scan and notice what your muscles feel like part by part
Five Senses Tools

- **Sight**
  - Notice 3 new things around you and name the objects aloud or in your mind
  - Find 5 things of the same color in the room
  - Look at a picture of a loved one or soothing scene, like a beach or mountain stream
  - Look out a window
  - Practice an imagery exercise

Focus on noticing the colors, patterns, or textures you see
5 Senses Tools

- **Sound**
  - Hum a favorite tune
  - Listen to soothing music on breaks
  - Keep a small fountain or sound machine in your workspace to focus on nature sounds or white noise

- **Smell**
  - Keep a small bottle of a scent that is energizing (ginger, peppermint) and relaxing (lavender, chamomile) at work
  - Focus on how your food smells when you break to eat your meal at work
5 Senses Tools

- **Taste**
  - Stop. Take a moment to **SAVOR the FLAVOR** of your food/snack(drink)
  - Keep sugar free mints or gum close at hand at work
  - Drink non-caffeinated hot tea (like chamomile or peppermint)
  - Indulge in a small piece of dark chocolate on break
  - Keep healthy crunchy snacks at work (celery, trail mix, carrots)
  - Keep smooth snacks at work (jello, yogurt)
Mini-Mindfulness Exercise

- Bring awareness to what you are doing, thinking, sensing
  - turn off auto-pilot
- Bring awareness to breathing for 1 minute or 6 deep breaths
  - Focus on movement of body with breath, chest rise and fall, belly move in and out
- Expand awareness outward to body then environment
  - Notice sensations in body, such at tightness or lightness
  - Notice colors, patterns, shapes in environment around you
Resilience

- Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors.
- It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.
- It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.
Factors in Resilience

- **Primary factor:** Having supportive and caring relationships within and outside of the family
- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Skills in communication and problem solving
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses

All of these are factors that people can develop in themselves!
Ways to Build Resilience

Make connections

- Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important.
- Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience.
- Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope.
- Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
Ways to Build Resilience

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems

- You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events.
- Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better.
- Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.
Ways to Build Resilience

Accept that change is a part of living

- Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations.
- Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress." - Frederick Douglass
Ways to Build Resilience

Move toward your goals

- Develop some realistic goals.
- Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals.
- Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"
Ways to Build Resilience

**Take decisive actions**
- Act on adverse situations as much as you can.
- Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.
- Break down situations into smaller components…
  - categorize info
  - sequence elements into a plan
  - attend to details
  - take action one step at a time
Ways to Build Resilience

Nurture a positive view of yourself

- Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
- Focus on your successes and positive qualities
- Celebrate and reward achievements
- Work to eliminate negative self-talk and replace it with positive internal messages
Ways to Build Resilience

Maintain a hopeful outlook

- An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life.
- Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.
- Identify specific ways you can see opportunities in a current challenge.
- See the value in new opportunities from the experience.
- Learn useful lessons from setbacks.
- Look for the good in bad situations.
- Be generally upbeat about the future.
Gratitude

- Identify 3 things/people/interactions you liked, appreciated, or were grateful for
- Spend about 60 seconds savoring each memory/moment in your mind
- Share your gratitude with others as appropriate
Ways to Build Resilience

Take care of yourself
- Pay attention to your own needs and feelings.
- Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.
- Exercise regularly. Get enough sleep. Eat a balanced diet.
- Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Self care is not self indulgence.
Self care is self respect.

~gateway~women.com
“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

-Confucius
Questions?

- Information adapted from:
  - Alabama Mental Health Counselors Association
  - American Psychological Association, The Road to Resilience