Sources of Stress
Sources of Stress

• A single stressor may cause great distress or eustress:
  • Death in the family
  • Going back to school
  • Car accident
  • Marriage
  • Pregnancy
  • Vacation
Sources of Stress

- A single stressor may cause less extreme but more frequent distress or eustress
  - Traffic
  - Relationships
  - Work
  - Losing one’s keys
  - Exercise
Sources of Stress

• A single stressor may be beyond an individual’s control:
  • A blizzard makes getting to work, school, or another important engagement impossible
  • Public utilities (electricity, gas, cable, water) malfunction

• A person may also have some level of control over certain stressors:
  • Failing to study for an exam
  • While getting ready to go out with someone new, a person may become anxious by expecting the worst
Sources of Stress

• “Sources of Stress” in HEA150 have been categorized so students might think about and appreciate how stressors differ in terms of:
  • Extreme
  • Frequency
  • Level of control over an event or situation
Life Events

- Very well recognized as a source of stress
- Major life occurrences or changes
- Feelings of stress may be negative or positive
  - weddings
  - Illnesses or injuries
  - relationship breakups
  - loss of job
  - death among family or friends
Life Events Assessment

- Survey
- Assesses number of life events occurring in a finite period of time
  - Six months
  - Year
- Example: Holmes-Rahe Test
Daily Hassles and Uplifts

• Not as extremely unpleasant (hassles) or pleasant (uplifts) as life events
• Frequent occurrence
• Contribute significantly to distress or eustress
Daily Hassles

- Traffic
- Losing one’s keys
- Homework
- Relationships
- Weather
- Car problems
- Chores
- Environmental pollutants
Daily Uplifts

- Exercise
- Pets
- Relationships/family
- Eating
- Reading
Perceptions

• How one perceives an event or situation will impact response
  • Example: Parachuting
    • “Stella” may find jumping out of a plane exhilarating
      • Heart rate, breathing frequency increase, *eustress high*
    • “Stanley” may find jumping out of a plane frightening
      • Heart rate, breathing frequency increase, *distress high*

• An individual who can shift his or her perception of a potentially stressful scenario may also shift the stress outcome
  • If “Stanley” works toward addressing his fear of heights, then perhaps he may be able to go parachuting with Stella, or at least experience less distress
Behavioral Patterns

• Established patterns of behavior may impact the stress response
  • “Type A” behavior
    • Increase in heart rate, breathing frequency
    • Anger
    • Inability to get along with others
    • May increase distress

• Changing behavioral patterns can change the stress response
  • Toni is a self-described “pessimist,” expecting the worst out of new situations
  • If Toni engages in some cognitive restructuring work to break down why she feels the way she does, she might reduce her pessimistic tendencies and subsequently reduce distress
Time Management

• Poor time management skills can impact stress
  • Procrastination
  • Failure to delay gratification (going out before studying, e.g.)

• Excellent time management skills can reduce distress
Coping Resources

- Resources are available to help manage stress
  - Exercise
  - Proper nutritional habits
  - Sleep
  - Effective use of time
  - Social support
  - “Defense mechanisms”
Coping Resources

- The presence of coping resources may reduce distress
- The absence of coping resources may increase distress
- Adding coping resources into one’s life can impact stress
  - General coping resources
    - Exercise
    - Nutrition
    - Reading
    - Spending time with friends
  - Specific coping resources
    - Breathing exercises
    - Meditation
    - Biofeedback
    - Other stress management techniques