STRESS
WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT
Dr Mike Sheldon
STRESS

- Dr Michael Sheldon
  - MB, BS, FRCGP, MICGP, BA, FACC, DipTheol

- General Practitioner – slowly retiring
- Academic – teaching communication skills
- Counsellor – ACC
- Ministry in YWAM
- Traumatic life events
- Whole Person Medicine
WHAT IS STRESS?

- Is it good or bad?
- What causes it?
- What effects does it have on people?
- How do I recognise it?
- How can I avoid it, cope with it or heal it?
THE PHYSIOLOGY OF STRESS
SYMPTOMS WHEN PAST THE THRESHOLD

- Sleep disturbance
- Short temper, irritability
- Anxiety and mood swings
- Using stimulants such as alcohol and tobacco
- Nervous Habits
- Palpitations
- Dizziness and nausea
- Lowered immunity to infections
- Aches and pains
ILLNESS CAUSED BY STRESS OVERLOAD

- High Blood Pressure
- Irregular heart beats
- Lowered immunity
- Skin conditions eg excema
- Bowel dysfunction
- Serious mental health conditions
- Addictive behaviour
Brain

Hypothalamus

ACTH

Cortisone

Adrenal Glands

Effects on the body

Adrenaline

+ + +
EFFECTS OF ADRENO-CORTICAL HORMONES

- Fight and flight
- Wake us up
- If no physical danger there is an “overflow” of hormones which cause the physical symptoms of “stress”
WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US

- We need stress in order to function effectively
- Everything is fine as long as we can control our environment.
- Emotional difficulties also lead to a chronic stress situation.

- Can I control the levels of stress in my life – or does the stress control me?
EXTERNAL STRESSES

There are numerous external causes of stress – just being alive is stressful!

A “hit list” of the most important causes would include –

- Broken relationships
- Debt and financial difficulties
- Losing a job, and losses of any kind
- Bereavement
- Abuse of any sort
EXTERNAL STRESSES 2

- Modern life –
  - Crowds
  - Pollution
  - Noise
  - Interruptions
  - Too much work
  - Lack of leisure activities
  - Multi-cultural society
  - Loss of the extended family
  - Poor education leading to dissatisfaction at work
  - Bullying
  - Commuting
Brain

Hypothalamus

ACTH

Cortisone

Adrenal Glands

External stressors

Internal stressors

Effects on the body
INTERNAL STRESSES (1)

- Personality types affect reaction to stress
- Your sense of control
- Optimistic or pessimistic attitude
- Sense of humour
- Emotional intelligence
- Your support networks
INTERNAL STRESS (2)

- Perfectionism
- Unrealistic expectations
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Inability to accept uncertainty
THE “SAUSAGE” OF STRESS
STRESS UNTREATED IS SERIOUS

- Inheritance
- Abuse + neglect
- Upbringing
- Life events

Everyone 1 in 4 1 in 20

- Personality
- Reduced efficiency
- Somatic symptoms
- Suicide risk
- Depression
- Loss, bereavement, trauma, and stress
Life events

- Work of Holmes and Rahe in 1967

- Score below 150 – normal expectancy of illness

- Score 300 or above – serious risk of major illness in the next year

- BUT – everyone reacts differently to these events – remember after the death of a spouse, and elderly person has a 50 % chance of also dying within a year.
**Stress Due to Life Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of Spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Separation</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Sentence</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of a Close Family Member</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Personal Injury or Illness</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Married</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Stress due to Life Events 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious illness affecting a close family member</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual difficulties</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New baby</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in business</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in financial affairs</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of a close friend</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in work</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in relationship with partner</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage rate rise</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of mortgage</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New boss</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children leaving home</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with in-laws</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning award / outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner changing type of work</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning or stopping study course</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in living conditions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Stress Due to Life Events 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in Personal Habits</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling out with Boss</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Working Conditions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving House</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Changing Schools</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Social Activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Religious Activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Out a Loan</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altered Sleep Patterns</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Family Location</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dieting</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Law-Breaking</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW DO I RESPOND TO STRESS?

- Two main responses – ACTIVE or PASSIVE

- ACTIVE
  - Get angry and irritable
  - Over-sensitive to criticism
  - Irrational behaviour
  - Impulsive actions
  - Mood swings
  - Anxiety states – excessive worry
HOW DO I RESPOND TO STRESS

PASSIVE

- Withdrawn
- Turn anger inwards
- Apathy leading to depression
- Loss of appetite OR comfort eating
- Poor decision making
- Loss of libido
STRESS

1. MINIMISE the stress levels - prevention
2. RECOGNISE when stress is past the threshold
3. TREAT the stress rather than the symptoms
PRINCIPLES OF STRESS AVOIDANCE (1)

- Fellowship
  - Build trusting relationships
    - How many friends should I have?
  - Share with others
  - Supervision – even peer supervision
  - Narrative – tell your stories
  - Communicate honestly with people you trust
PRINCIPLES OF STRESS AVOIDANCE (2)

- PERSONAL INNER STRENGTH
  - Personal spiritual director
  - Small groups for sharing
  - RETREATS are essential
    - Book 4 a year
- JOURNAL
  - Write a personal diary of events, reactions, feelings, successes and failures.
  - Add prayer needs and answers
PRINCIPLES OF STRESS AVOIDANCE (3)

- RELAXATION

- Time for me

- From time to time monitor your weekly work, ministry and personal time activities

- Priority is ME, then family, then work and finally ministry – but with Jesus at the centre of all we do.
How do I relax
- Make a list – hobbies, how I spend time if there is nothing else I have to do
- We need 2 to 3 hours a day of time for ourselves

Am I an introvert or extrovert?
- If an extrovert I may need to make sure I have retreats
- If an introvert I may need more fellowship times
SUMMARY – DEALING WITH STRESS

1. Balance of life – me, family, work and ministry
2. ME time
3. Growing spiritual life – spiritual director
4. Realistic goal setting – in fellowship
5. Peer supervision
6. Share honestly with significant others
7. Journal – reflections, prayers etc.
COUNSELLING SKILLS DEALING WITH STRESS
1 BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

- Essential first requirement

- Core counselling competencies
  - Acceptance (Compassion or love)
  - Build trust (Confidentiality)
  - Non-judgemental
  - Appropriate sharing of self

- Commitment to the journey
2 Be-Friend

- Story of Johannes Facius
  - He describes how friends took him in and walked through the illness with him.

- “What a friend we have in Jesus”
  - But the presence of Jesus is usually absent at the beginning of depression, so we must be Jesus for them.

- Make no judgements
3 Listening

- Who do you listen to?
  - Patient
    - Words
    - Method of communicating
    - Body language
  - Story
  - Person
  - Carers and relatives
  - God
LISTENING SKILLS – NARRATIVE MEDICINE

- Ability to actively listen is the core of help in mental illness.

- Skills of listening
  - Pay attention
  - Be interested
  - Be concerned
  - Be in relationship
  - Sharing
  - Go with them on the journey
IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE

- Life is a story
- Who do we tell our story to?
- Do we know what our story is?
- The more we tell, the more we understand
- Can we change our story?

- Narrative medicine helps the patient to make sense of their pain and suffering so that they can cope with it. It gives them the power to change their story to a healthier one.
TELLING THE STORY

- Telling their story increases a person’s understanding of their health.
- Importance of language – verbal, non-verbal and emotional.
- The more times the story is told the nearer it can come to the truth.
- The story is told within the context of a trusting relationship.
SEEKING THE TRUTH

- As the person increases in their understanding of the truth about their health issues so they have the power to become healthier

- They can then better adapt, cope, make allowances, take action, seek appropriate help, make better decisions etc.
4 SUPPORTING

- Be there and available
- Give time, but keep boundaries
- Be committed to the whole journey
- Expect set-backs
- Have hope in your own heart
- Encourage self-help as appropriate
5 ENCOURAGING

- Relate to them as a person not a patient
- Being a friend is probably the most important thing you can do.
- Praise their successes
- Commiserate with their failures
- Keep hope alive
6 TALKING THERAPIES

- Self-help groups
- Medical consultation with nurse or doctor
- Counselling in NHS
- Brief intervention therapy
- Counselling for special problems (e.g., marriage)
- Psychology
- Clinical psychotherapy
- Psychiatry
7 Behaviour Therapy

- CBT is the flavour of the month

“An individual’s emotional response to an event or experience is largely determined by the conscious meaning placed upon it”

*Beck 1979*

*It’s what we perceive that is important.*

We all have bad experiences, what we think about them in our hearts determines how we react.
CBT OUTLINE

- Behavioural Techniques
  - Weekly activity scheduling
  - Mastery and Pleasure ratings
  - Graded task assignments
  - Task Assignment

- Cognitive techniques
  - Eliciting automatic thoughts
    - Emotion – Dysfunctional schema – negative automatic thought
  - Testing automatic thoughts
  - Identifying and modifying schemas
8 Spiritual Engagement

- Be wary of the two extremes –
  - Leaving God out of it altogether
  - Believing that it all has a spiritual dimension

- Pray silently and listen to God, both for the patient and for yourself.

- The joy of “words of understanding and wisdom”, but be careful how you use them.
We need to move from the “Cure of minds” to the “Care of souls”
Where the soul is the whole person
The spirit cannot be divorced from the person, everything has a spiritual dimension.
Counselling is the exploration of the EXPERIENCE and its MEANING
Helping the client to understand the importance of the spiritual dimension
We need to understand what the spirit is!
THE THREE WINDOWS

- **Physical window**
  - Normal ‘medical model’ view of problems, translated into a whole-person approach

- **Psychological window**
  - Normal psychological counselling viewpoint looking at mind, emotions and life events

- **Spiritual window**
  - Looking at the spiritual and religious aspects of a person’s health problems
7 STAGE MODEL OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

- 1 Self-image
- 2 Relationships with others
- 3 Relating to the world
- 4 Moral and ethical practice
- 5 Purpose and meaning in life
- 6 Decisions, choices and Will
- 7 Belief and faith
1 Self Image

- Each person is a unique individual
- View of themselves and self-understanding
  - Realistic view of strengths and weaknesses
- Ability to “love” self and then others
- Ability to grow and mature and acquire wisdom
2 Relationships with Others

- Family
- Friends
- Strangers

Quality of ability to relate, to give and receive love, to mend broken relationships and relate appropriately in different situations
3 Relating to the World

- Locus of control – themselves or others?
- Attitudes to work
- Social responsibilities
- Cultural influences
- Creativity
4 Morality and Ethical Practice

- Basis of their personal ethics
- Are they based on external standards
- Attitude to religious standards of morality
- How aware are they of their conscience?
- Attempts to act morally and consequences
5 Purpose and Meaning

- What hope do they have for the future?
- Priorities in life
- What fulfilments and disappointments have there been?
- What are the desires of their heart?
- What do they see as the purpose of life?
Making good decisions
This means understanding and making good choices
Will Power to follow good path
Perseverance
Facing challenges
7 Belief and Faith (Values)

- What do they put their faith in (faith is belief in action)
- Concentrate of health and healing rather than everything in life
- Beliefs which were handed down to them
- What do they actually believe in?
- How do they put their faith into practice?
VALUE OF SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

- We all have similar problems
- Testing of counselling skills in an environment which is constructively critical
- Learn to share yourself in appropriate ways
- Fulfills part of the need for supervision
THESE SLIDES ON THE INTERNET

- Powerpoint and PDF version on –

- www.drmikesheldon.com

- On home page click “Index to whole person articles”, follow link to that page where talks are listed.
Welcome to the personal website of Dr Mike SHELDON

I apologise that the site is undergoing a re-make and so much of the site doesn't yet work - I will try to get everything back to normal as soon as possible. Thank you for your patience. Mike Sheldon May 2010. Recent talks can be accessed through the boxes below. I apologise that the navigation bar is not yet functional.

This website contains details of my academic and personal life, as well as guides to my special interests - Genealogy of the Sheldon family and the Christian approach to Whole Person Health Care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine of the Person</th>
<th>Genealogy Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copies of my talks at the UK annual conference in Cropthorne April 2010</td>
<td>my interest in the Sheldon family history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This page contains links to recent talks I have given and useful articles.
Articles in Whole Person Health

The following articles, all from lecture notes by Mike Sheldon, are being made available as quickly as possible. Click the title to go to the page. Articles can also be downloaded as Word files.

Recent talks

Stress for Tower Hamlets Readers

Full Powerpoint or pdf of outline

May 2010

Click to download the powerpoint slides or the pdf file of just the outline of the talk