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PSYCHOLOGY

**Stress and Overwhelm – Summary of Presentation Finpro 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

**Stress**

- Part of survival system
- Chronic stress includes many short-term stresses with insufficient time to return to resting state
- Identify symptoms and triggers

**Transactional Model of Stress**

- Feelings of stress occur as a result of the appraisal, perception and way we think about an event

**Physiological Stress Response**

- Oxytocin release enhances empathy and primes us to connect and share (but we often ignore this and keep to ourselves when we are stressed!)
- Optimum stress occurs when we recognize my body is rising to the challenge and we prepare for action, complete task and most importantly return to emotional/psychological resting state post stressor
- Glass of water is only heavy if we hold it for too long

**Four Common Factors Linked to Stress in the Workplace**

- Compromised Work-Place Boundaries
- Perfectionism
- Procrastination

**Work-Life Balance**

- 70% of Aussie workers rate work-life balance as number one factor in new position
- Creating Work-life boundaries more effective than striving for work-life balance
- Identify and challenge any internal yet faulty beliefs that may breach work-life balance
- Create boundaries using behavioural, time, physical or communicative tactics

**Perfectionism**

- Indecision, seeking reassurance, excessive list making, procrastinating, repeated checking, trying to avoid failure/blame/judgement
- Identify thoughts associated with perfectionism and find evidence that negates thoughts
- “Drill down” by asking “and then what?” to learn that you could probably live with outcome you are desperately trying to avoid

**Procrastination**

- We procrastinate to avoid uncomfortable feelings which makes us feel-good in the long-term so we repeat avoidance
- Avoidance maintains stress, frustration and guilt
- Tips to manage procrastination include identifying when you gain and lose by procrastinating
- Jump in (“just do it”) knowing difficult feelings will arise, but they will pass
- Start with hardest task first

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#### Strategies for Managing Stress

- Do not expect to eliminate stress
- Maximize time spent in “resting state” or down-time to recover from stressful periods
- Prioritise sleep
- Minimize screens at bedtime
- Unprocessed diet
- Daily exercise – consistency more important than intensity

#### Practical Stress Management Tips

- “am I only one who can do this job?”
- Make meetings count with clear goals and outcomes
- Question fixed beliefs
- Say no
- Write down tasks by hand to declutter brain
- Avoid multi-tasking
- Create no-interruption times during the day
- Focus on productivity not being busy
- Align personal values with work

#### PERMA model of Well-being (Seligman) – well-being requires all five components:

- Positive emotions
- Engagement using natural strengths
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Achievement, goal setting and having a bucket list

#### Mindfulness

- Can practice any task mindfully or mindlessly
- Try Smiling Mind or Headspace Apps

#### Victor Frankl quote:

- “Between stimulus and response is space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response is our growth or freedom.”

#### Bronnie Ware, Palliative Care Nurse – Most common regrets from those who are dying:

- I wish I had courage to make my own decisions
- I wish I had not work so hard and lost balance
- I wish I had kept life more simple
- I wish I freed myself from guilt
- I wish I had included more humour in my life
- I wish I had stayed in touch with more old friends
- I wish I had taken more time for happiness

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