

Stress less

This session is usually done after the supermarket tour and everyone is wound up and excited. You need to settle people down as you start this session.

Stress less

- What is stress
- Our causes of stress/distress
- Personal response to stress
- How stress impacts on our health?
- Good stress management - Life Balance Check
- Tips - relaxation, good thinking, ANT and PETS
- Seeking help

It is natural to feel stress. Note ANT and PETS are explained in the presentation later.

What is stress?

- Stress is arousal of mind and body in response to demands on them
- Stress can be helpful as well as harmful
- No life is free from stress
- Often stress can lead to more stress
- There is a connection between stress and how we think, feel and react.
- Learn how to cope with stress

Read section on page 6.3 of the Resource Kit – stress need not rob you of energy

In your table groups

Discuss the following questions

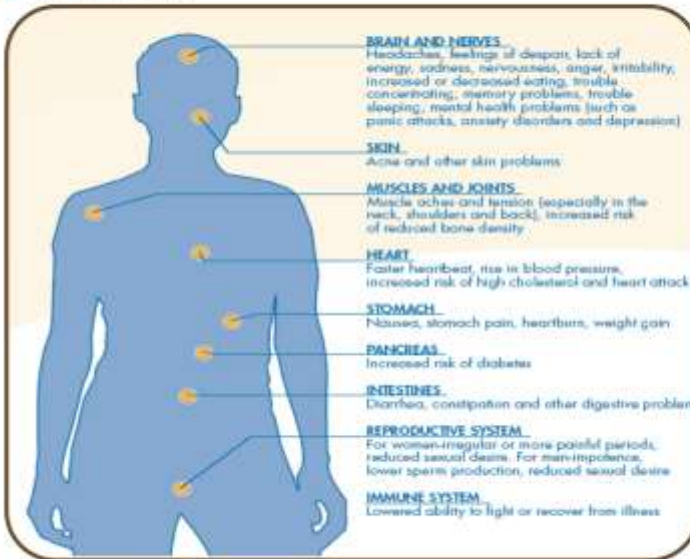
- Discuss what are the major causes of stress in your life?
- What feelings do you experience in your body when you are stressed (eg feel like being sick, jittery)?

Document your answers on page 6.2 in your resource kit

Document of white board/butchers paper the causes and feeling and try to encourage people to pull out their feeling s and signs. Eg Nausea, rapid heart, feel like I'm choking, clenching of jaw. This is not easy to draw people out but it is worth it.



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Resource – images courtesy of Mental Health America

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Now when you show them this slide they can see how it all fits together.



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Cause - job control and job demand

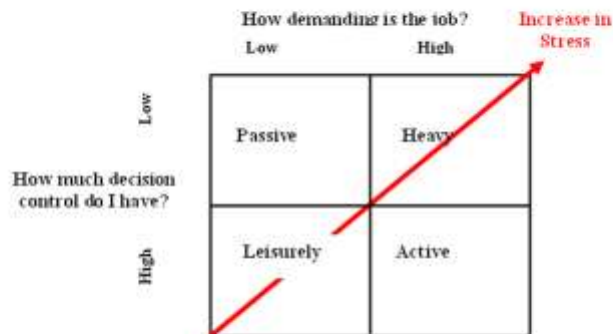


Figure 1 illustrates the likelihood of stress occurring. The more one moves from low demand / high control (leisurely), toward higher demand/low control (heavy) the more the signs and symptoms of stress will present (Gardell, B 1981).



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Need to be clear and ensure that participants understand. Use own examples to explain the concept.

Make sure the example is relevant to the farming group you are delivering to
EG when I was running the shearing shed and the shearers voted the pregnant ewes out Friday lunchtime.. I had high demand and low control and sheep everywhere.

In your table groups

Discuss the following question

- Think about the last 3 months.
 - Give examples of work or family life that have had 'heavy' and 'active' characteristics.

Document your answers on page 6.4 in your resource kit

Always have an example up your sleeve.

How does 'stress' impact?

- Long term wear and tear on body and mind
- Precipitates illness, headache, migraine, diarrhoea, heart attack, sleep, eating disorders
- Encourages the use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes
- Decreases quality of relationships

Note role of adrenaline in anxiousness see chapter 9.13 for impact.



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Warning signs of stress

- Lack of energy, not interested in socialising
- Difficulty remembering
- Lack of interest in sex
- Sleeping problems - early waking/over sleeping
- Irritability - short temper
- Headaches
- Stomach churning
- Heart palpitations
- Thoughts of suicide



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Remember a change in signs often indicates a change(increase) in stress.

Hazards of ongoing stress

- Depression, anxiety
- Substance abuse, alcohol, smoking, drugs
- Domestic violence
- Relationship breakdown
- Increased risk of accident and injury
- Suicide
- Illness - increased heart disease and mental illness

Stress is now seen as an important health indicator for CVD.

Good stress management

- Decreases risk of illness
- Improves quality of life for self
- Improves relationships, generates caring
- Promotes wellness for self and others
- Know your limits ... push when you need to –
sometimes tolerate temporary distress

Whilst many things in farming may be outside our control, there are ways we can learn to respond to them better. The way we relate to our stressors can go a long way to predicting whether we manage them, or they manage us.



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Good stress management – how?

- Anticipate and monitor stress, “*know thy stressors*”
- Influence your reactions to events (ABC)
- Practice daily relaxation and exercise
- Use health buffers
- Recognise early warning signs of stress
- Use ‘Helpful thinking’ ANT and PET control



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Research suggests that regular exercise is as effective as antidepressant drugs for mild to moderate depression and anxiety, and you get added physical health benefits as well.

Tips - 'good thinking' ANT and PETs

- **Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANT)**
 - 'I cant cope'
 - 'This always happens to me'
 - 'Here we go again'.
 - 'Stevens in a terrible mood – must be something I did'
- **Positive emotions and thoughts (PET)**
 - Start with positive affirmations
 - 'We run a good farm'
 - 'My daughter took her first step'
 - 'We are capable farmers'

Squash your ANTS and pat your PETS

Automatic negative thoughts (ANTS)

Tips - work life balance

- Work Life Balance in your Manual (Page 6.13)
- Useful insight - What makes you feel good /distressed
- Do for a week, grade it and review how you have gone
- Adjust..... and recheck

Participants have found this useful when we have seen them in the next workshop. It's about training your mind, the same way you train a muscle. You can do it by going for a run, swimming, listening to heavy metal for 10 minutes, gardening, wood carving etc. In fact, I'd argue that anyone who has ever gone fishing on their own has been doing mindfulness etc. It's about controlling attention and clearing the mind of distractions – like a spam filter



Life balance check list

CHECKLIST	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRID	SAT	SUN
Physical							
Intellectual							
Emotional							
Spiritual							
Creative <small>hobby, woodwork, music</small>							
Relaxation							
Family							
Own time							
Own suggestions							



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Any questions. Use a personal example after you have completed this yourself.

Tips - when stressed try this



A: AWARE – how you feel you are going
respond – Control



B: BREATH – away your tension and
allow yourself some time - Control
response



C: CHANGE – how you are feeling from
reacting immediately– Control your
behaviour

Turn to the breathing exercise handout at the end of the chapter in the resource kit. Undertake the breathing exercise for 60 seconds . This is important to get the group ready for the meditation.

In your table groups

Discuss the following question

- Identify 3 things that you or your family can do to manage stress (list one for yourself).
- Identify two thoughts (PETs) you could use to enhance your sense of control.

Document your answers on page 6.10 in your resource kit

Managing stress – avoid burn out

- Be aware of & control your stressors
- Take care of yourself - diet
- Deep breathing
- Laugh - funny jokes (releases endorphins)
- Sleep, relaxation, meditation
- Health buffers – exercise releases endorphins
- Have a cup of tea
- Life Balance



More information in your Resource Kit

A Meditation

(Source: Jean Hailles Foundation)

- Please be quiet
- Get comfortable
- Close your eyes
- Be non critical of yourself and others
- As your mind wanders bring it back to the relaxation
- Treat thoughts as you would clouds passing by... let them come and go



Preparation for this session – make sure you are in an area with enough space for participants to lie on the floor.

Have you got mats or towels?

Close the doors, shut blinds,

Make sure lunch is not coming barging in.

Play meditation. Note people may fall asleep.

Let people return to the group slowly at the end.



A Meditation

(Source: Jean Hailles Foundation)

Your thoughts?

- Please share your thoughts of this experience with the group



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Ask the group to share their thoughts on this experience

Encourage all responses – positive or not to get the group sharing

Do they have alternate ways they like to ‘meditate’ they may not think it as meditation

Stress less

The other facilitator asks participants to complete the **EVALUATION FORM** for this session.