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MPS 5 Engage and stress management: Objectives © copyright, Donald R. Woods, 1998

Engage is the first step in problem solving. Here, the problem solver becomes aware of a problem (by reading it on an exam or from an assignment, by listening to it presented to us by a colleague or by a supervisor, or by being told that something needs to be fixed). The process of **Defining the real problem** is a three-stage process. This is the first stage: our initial engagement with the problem.

The main concerns here are with your attitude and your willingness to continue and your ability to curtail your impetuosity. In this MPS unit, we focus on those attitudes, and in particular on distress and stress management.

A *stressor* is an event (news of winning \$6 million, wedding, death of a friend, an exam, an awkward situation) to which your body naturally responds with endocrinal response and physiological tensions. Although the term stress refers to either positive or negative (happy or sad) events, we call negative or sad events as distress. The body's response might be so excessive as to cause inability to move, to think or to concentrate, nausea, sleeplessness, angry outbursts, tears or illness. *Stress management* is the combination of physical and mental skills you apply to minimize the impact of the stressors, to monitor and manage the body response and to ensure that long term harmful response does not occur.

This Unit has been developed with the guidance and help of the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Hamilton Wentworth Health unit and has been vetted by the Australian Mental Health Association.. Many thanks.

Skill development:

1. Introduction to some important *attitudes* that affect your ability to solve problems.
2. More practice on applying the strategy, introduced in MPS 4, to solve problems.
3. Engender an attitude of being patient with the problem solving process; not jumping into the problem solving process.
4. Skill with the first of three stages in **Defining a problem**.
5. Enrich your knowledge of stress, stressors and body response to stressors.
6. Provide you with evidence about the current level of annual and daily stress in your life.
7. Increase your awareness of the stresses your classmates, friends and colleagues are experiencing so that you can better work together and support one another.
8. Develop your skill in stress management that is needed, not just for problem solving, but for lifetime living. Later this is related to managing anger and dealing creatively with conflict.
9. Introduces the grieving model, as background for coping with change, MPS 49.
10. Provide a framework for the further development of your positive self confidence, your time management skills, .
11. Through self awareness, to improve self confidence. Introduction of Maslow's model of development to provide a framework.
12. Continue to develop an environment of trust where risking is OK.
13. Help overcome any exam anxiety you might have
14. Introduction to your network of people; background for MPS 56.

Pretest: Engage

Awareness: how aware are you of what you do when you use a strategy? Rate with an "x"

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unaware				Aware of						Very aware
I just				Some						I can describe
do it										The details of
										how I do it

Skill: how skilled are you in doing this activity? Rate with an "x"

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor		Fair		Good			Very good			Excellent

Comments:

Pretest: Stress management

Awareness: how aware are you of what you do with this activity? Rate with an "x"

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unaware				Aware of						Very aware
I just				Some						I can describe
do it										The details of
										how I do it

Skill: how skilled are you in doing this activity? Rate with an "x"

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor		Fair		Good			Very good			Excellent

Comments:

Learning objectives

MPS 5 Engage & Stress management

1.1 given a term listed under "concepts introduced", you should be able to give a word definition, list pertinent characteristics and cite an example.

1.2 you will be able to list at least nine techniques for managing stress.

1.3 you can define stress and distress and describe Selye's model.

1.4 you will be able to identify two people who are role models for you, explain why they are role models, and list what particular action they have taken that you want to emulate.

1.5 you will be able to Maslow's model of the five levels of human need.

1.6 you will be able to describe the various stages in the grieving model

2.1 you will be able to list the attitudes that unsuccessful problem solvers possess and rate your current attitude. Over the progression of this course you will shift your attitude 2 units toward those held by successful problem solvers.

2.2 you will be able to demonstrate the muscle relaxation technique.

2.3 you will list the traditions that are important to you and that provide touchstones of stability in your life.

2.4 given a week, you will be able to monitor your self-talk, assess whether it is positive or negative, identify the types of trigger situations that cause the self-talk and set goals to reduce the amount of negative self-talk.

3.1 given a set of facts about a situation, you will be able to identify which facts are within your control and which ones are not. Your assessment will agree with that of the tutor 85% of the time.

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3.2 given the response from the Rotter locus of control or the Heppner PSI inventories, you will be able to rate the degree to which your score “represents you” , identify what does represent you and list the implications.

3.3 given a problem statement, you will underline or circle any words that might be ambiguous.

3.4 given that you have read the problem statement, you will say to yourself “I want to and I can.”

3.5 given a task to do, you will be able to identify a sub-task which is challenging enough but not overwhelming to you. The criteria you used shall be described to the tutor and he/she will agree 85% of the time that the criteria are pertinent and they have been correctly applied.

3.6 given the results from the Billings-Moos test, you will be able to interpret your results and set goals for development.

3.7 given that you have successfully solved a problem, you will list the stress this causes and proactively create an action plan to overcome this.

4.1 you will be able to write out your personal, practical interpretation of the relationship between stress management to time management.

4.2 given a future event, you will be able to verbally describe to a Whimbey-pair listener, an imaginary movie of the event. The movie will last 5 minutes.

4.3 given a spider diagram, you will be able to identify about 200 people in your network.

5.1 given that you want to improve your ability to manage stress, you will set goals, create criteria and gather evidence to show growth and achievement of your goals.

6.1 given a list of options for managing stress, you will be able to identify which ones you currently use, which ones might work for you and which ones would not work for you.

6.2 given problem situations in general, you can rate which elements in the situation stress you most, and proactively create an action plan to overcome the distress.

Concepts introduced Stress, distress, Holmes Rahe inventory, Billings-Moos feedback, Selye model, self-talk, locus of control, attitudes of successful versus unsuccessful problem solvers, factors that relate to exam anxiety, Maslow’s model of development, grieving model, network of people and spider of connections.

MPS 5: Stress management: Example assessment tasks:

1.(a) Monitor your own stress level before you read question 2, after you have read it and after you have completed question 4. Use a rating scale of 0 (meaning negligible stress), and 10 meaning very high stress. Distinguish between positive stress and distress. Use Table 2 to summarize ratings.

Table 2: Summary of ratings

Concerning Qu. 2	positive stress	distress
before reading		
after reading		
after completing		

(b) List the stress management techniques that seem to work for you under "test" conditions.

***** end of question 1 *****

2. Define the stated problem and visual thinking

For the page-long problem given in Table 3:

- (a). identify the stated goal, task to be done, or unknown to be determined.
- (b). draw a "good" diagram(s) to represent the situation.
- (c). indicate the system by drawing (on the diagram drawn in (b) above) a dotted line around the system.
- (d). identify the knowns.
- (e). identify the stated constraints.
- (f). identify the stated criteria.

(DO NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM)

stress rating after reading this problem statement _____

distress rating _____

stress rating after completing problem _____

distress rating _____

3. From the in-class activity, you have the following evidence:

- your reflections that you wrote three times during the activity.
- your worksheets and the statement of the exercises.
- the DISCOVERY sheet.
- your awareness and skill checklist **before** and **after** the activity.

Write up a reflective assessment of the degree to which you have achieved the objectives. Refer to the evidence by number and relate your evidence and claims to the objectives by number.

4. You will be able to list the elements in a problem

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statement or situation that cause you distress, and for each write out actions that you have taken to overcome the distress.

5. Given that you have successfully solved a problem, you will describe the potential causes of stress and list the actions you take to overcome this stress.