


**Supporting Mental Health and Stress Management of Long Term Care Staff**

Heidi H Ewen, PhD, FGSA, FAGHE  
University of Indianapolis



1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**What is "stress"?**



- We all experience stress and can describe what that experience was like, but social scientists need to be able to measure it.
- Researchers often use questionnaires and established, reliable, and validated survey scales which yield a score or scores on feelings of stress.





2

---

---

---

---

---

---




---

---

**Appraising Stress**

Our appraisal processes can lead to three types of appraisals:

- **Harm** – The (psychological) damage or loss that has already happened
- **Threat** – The anticipation of harm that may be imminent
- **Challenge** – The results from demands that a person feels confident about mastering

3

---

---

---

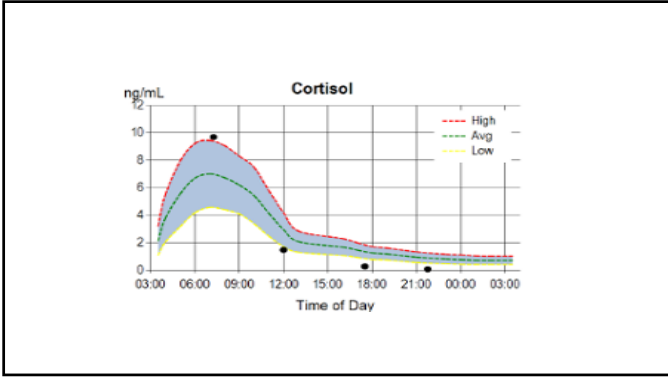
---

---

---

---

---



4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Stress Response



- Normal values for both peak and nadir vary by age and gender.
- During times of stress, the peak level will rise.
- Under chronic stress, both peak and nadir elevate as our bodies work to sustain our energies to manage the stress.
- As we age, the curve naturally shifts downward yet the pattern of peak and nadir are consistent.

ALL IN  
September 27-30, 2021  
#2021

LeadingAge  
Indiana

INALA

5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

A. Normal Pattern of Diurnal Cortisol

B. Elevated Pattern of Diurnal Cortisol

C. Abnormal Pattern of Diurnal Cortisol

D. Flattened Rhythm of Diurnal Cortisol

ALL IN  
September 27-30, 2021  
#2021

LeadingAge  
Indiana

INALA

6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Sleep – Wake Cycle

- Under periods of stress, the sleep-wake cycle is often disrupted
- Cortisol release is closely tied to sleep
- Disruption affects multiple hormone systems



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Risks for Burnout (Non-pandemic)

- You have a heavy workload and work long hours
- You struggle with work-life balance
- You work in a helping profession, such as health care
- You feel you have little or no control over your work



8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Consequences of Burnout



Effects of elevated or disrupted cortisol

- Excessive stress
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Vulnerability to illnesses
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Sadness, anger or irritability
- Alcohol or substance misuse



9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Ways to Cope

- o Seek support
- o Try a relaxing activity
- o Get some exercise
- o Get some sleep
- o Mindfulness
- o Therapy / Counseling



10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Stress Management (healthcare)

HOW CAN ADMINISTRATORS SUPPORT THEIR STAFF?



11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Roles of Administrators and Leaders

Effective leaders are adept at balancing the management of

- Business
- Work and Workers/Staff
- Facility in community and society



12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



13

---

---

---

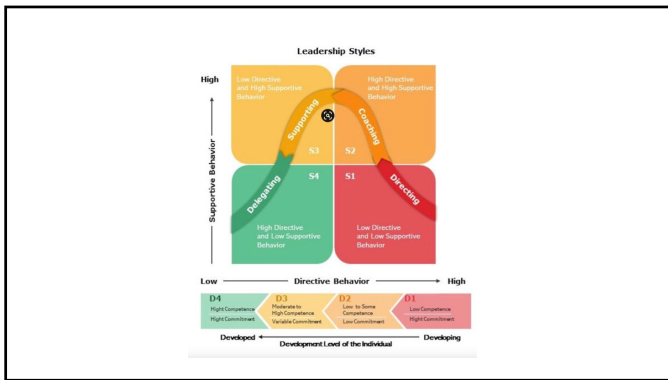
---

---

---

---

---



14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Supervisors

- o Ensure staff feel supported and understood
  - o Acknowledge the stresses they are under
  - o Include them in strategizing solutions to work place issues
  - o Lack of control contributes to demoralization and burnout
- o Seek options for assisting your staff
  - o Counseling and therapy for managing stress
  - o Massages or pampering packages
  - o Private or seclusion spaces onsite

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Active Listening

- o Maintain a constructive attitude
- o Be attentive
- o Ask open-ended questions
- o Ask probing questions
- o Request clarification
- o Paraphrase
- o Be attuned to and reflect feelings
- o Summarize
- o Cultivate a capacity for adjustment



16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## T-Strategy: Trust through Transparency

Cara Siletto

- o "Leaders and organizations must gain the trust of their staff over time and this process requires **authenticity** and **good intentions**."
  - o A 'coach' approach rather than a boss
  - o Tactic includes enhancing transparency
- o Do employees know how and why company-wide decisions are made?
- o Does your organization have clearly defined wage ranges by role?
- o Are career paths identified and discussed with staff?
- o How are staff notified of rapidly changing rules and guidelines during the pandemic?



17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Stay Interviews

Regular check-ins with staff to build stronger relationships and trust

- o Can you tell me about a great day you had at work recently?
- o Can you tell me about a frustrating day you had recently?
- o How do you feel you get proper recognition for your work?
- o Tell me about ways you feel treated and respected at work.
- o What have you found to be the best way to stay in the loop about company information?
- o What resources would help you do your job better?
- o What do you like most about your job?
- o What do you like least about your job?
- o What would you like to learn or achieve this year?



18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## No more 'Eating their Young'

Seasoned staff treating new hires poorly must stop

- o Conduct stay interviews
- o Offer senior staff mentoring opportunities
- o Complainers do not make good trainers, however.

ALL IN September 27-30, 2021 #2021

LeadingAge Indiana INALA

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Prepare for Feedback and Criticisms

- o Give employees the benefit of the doubt.
  - o Attempt to understand why they feel so strongly; try to take their perspectives to see from their view point.
- o Work with leaders in your organization with the feedback you've been given
- o Be open about changes that can be made easily, changes that might take time, and changes that are not possible.

ALL IN September 27-30, 2021 #2021

LeadingAge Indiana INALA

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## ABC Model

- o Antecedent
- o Behavior
- o Consequence
- o Behavior is learned over time, by observing others, or being taught
- o Consequences make the behavior more or less likely to occur again in the future

ALL IN September 27-30, 2021 #2021

LeadingAge Indiana INALA

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### ABC Model of Therapy

- o Adversity
- o Beliefs
- o Consequences
- o Beliefs about the event
  - o Includes underlying thoughts about situations, yourself, and others
  - o Consequences are the emotional and behavioral response



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Therapists

- o Listen to your description of stresses
- o Ask how you feel or react to that event
- o Have you identify the belief behind this response
- o Ask questions about this belief and challenge whether it's true (The goal is to help you recognize how you interpret situations.)
- o They will teach you how to recognize alternative explanations or solutions



24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Incentives

- o What would your staff like?
- o What could they use?
- o What resources do you have available?
- o What creative ways can you brainstorm to promote well-being?



25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Questions or Comments

UNIVERSITY OF  
**INDIANAPOLIS**  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN  
HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION



26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---