

Windsor-Essex Cardiac Wellness Centre
STRESS AND COPING CLASS HANDOUT
Megan Trepanier, MSW, RSW

Change

- Some changes with a medical event are outside of our control, and happen to us; while other changes require choice -- heart healthy diet, exercise, supporting own mental health with coping strategies
- Making these changes can bring a lot of challenging emotions with it

Feelings

- All emotions are valid and they can be challenging
- **Grief:** Changes can often be non-death losses leading to expected emotional reactions like anger, anxiety, depression, frustration, fear
 - Depression – sadness, withdrawal
 - Anxiety – worry, fear, nervousness
 - Anger – when reality does not match expectations
- Can experience more than one emotion at a time
- Difficult emotions can be overwhelming and lead to distress

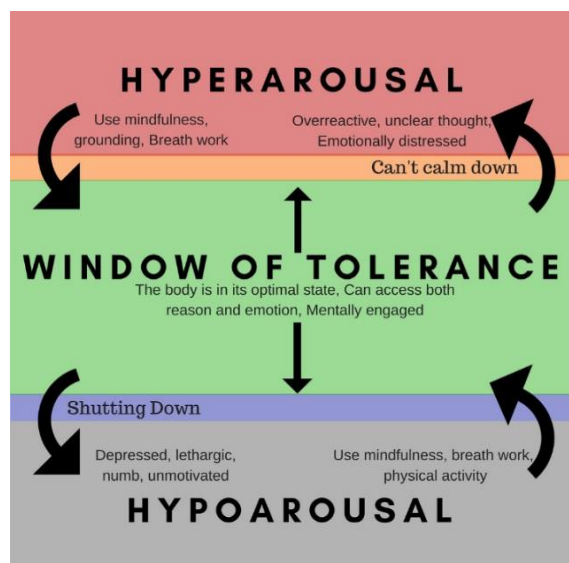
Stress is a natural human response

- Distress is when the stressors we are faced with become overwhelming and we cannot get a break from the stress response
- Our goal therefore is not to get rid of stress but to help find ways to prevent it becoming distressing, and learn to navigate it when it does

Window of Tolerance

Hyperarousal –fight/flight responses to stress; **Hypoarousal** –freeze response

While we cannot remove the stressors we can find ways to go back to our “window of tolerance”, grow our window of tolerance and stay there for longer periods



Staying in the Window

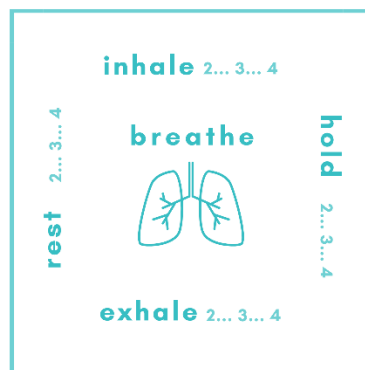
- Practice calming, joyful and happy activities regularly
- Set Boundaries: Communicate what you need in relationships
- Ask for help; we are not meant to “go it alone”

Effective communication (Nonviolent Communication, www.CNVC.org)

1. What I observe, free from my evaluation about it “When I see you arrive 2 hours late”
2. How I feel “I feel worried”
3. What I need or value “because I need to know you are safe”
4. Request “Next time can you call me?”

Example: “When I see you arrive 2 hours late I feel worried because I need to know you are safe. Next time can you call me?”

SQUARE BREATHING



ZENCARE

Ideas for Navigating when Outside Window

- **Mindfulness** can be done in the simplest of ways: feeling the warmth of the sun on your face, noticing the colors of the season
 - More formally: relaxation exercises, with visualization, guided meditations, deep breathing exercises, yoga
- **Physical Activity** can clear your mind, reduce tension and increase energy
- **Eat a healthy diet** nourish your body so that it can run on good fuel
- **Get good rest** don't stay in bed if you aren't sleeping, keep regular schedule, have relaxing bedtime rituals, go to sleep when sleepy
- **Relationship with self** - send love and compassion to yourself, think about what you would say to a loved one going through the same experience and say it to yourself
- **Language** notice how the words you use affect your moods; we know that words can hurt so we know that words can heal; example “should”
- **Acknowledge and celebrate** even the smallest of accomplishments, share them with a loved one, or write them down to look back at

- **Connect** with a loved one, share how you are feeling and what you need; spend time with people who you love and support you
- **Laughter** really is the best medicine, watch a funny movie or read some jokes
- **Journaling** ex. listing what you are grateful for; stream of consciousness writing; writing an Angry Letter-write a letter to person, situation, experience you feel the anger towards and then destroy the letter
- **Find joy** do something you enjoy, or used to enjoy (a hobby or interest you have)
- **Prioritize** decide what is most important to you, set realistic goals-break them to small, manageable parts, and manage your time to ensure your energy is going towards what matters to you and helps you reach your goals
- **Respond** rather than react to situations, taking some moments to ensure you are in your window of tolerance before making the choice on how to reply
- **Time Out** you can always walk away, let the other person know that you will return when you are able to have effective communication
- **Let it out** release difficult emotions, cry if needed
- **Avoid** comparison, everyone has a different journey
- **Music** listen to your favourite music that helps to calm or bring joy
- **Remember** that we can do hard things, but we do not need to do them alone

Virtual Social Support

- <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/heart/recovery-and-support/the-power-of-community>
- Women Only: <https://cwhhc.ottawaheart.ca/programs-and-services/virtual-care-program>

Loving-Kindness Info:

- <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/loving-kindness-meditation-infographic>

Cardiac Wellness Social Work Support

- Individual social work sessions are available, call the cardiac wellness program to connect with the social worker
- 519-257-5111 ext. 72525



**WE
CAN
DO
HARD
THINGS**

Community Mental Health Supports

- Crisis Lines:
 - Community Crisis Centre (Ages 16+) 24-Hr Crisis Line: 519-973-4435
 - Windsor Distress Centre (All Ages) 12pm-12am: 519-256-5000
- Canadian Mental Health Association 519-255-7440
- Family Service Windsor-Essex 1-888-933-1831 or 519-966-5010