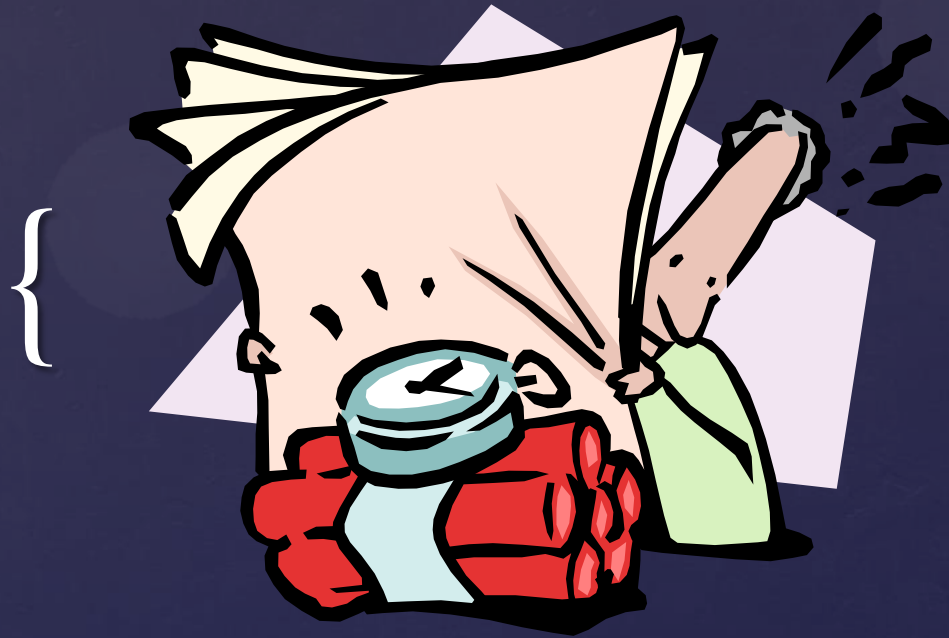


Post Concussion Action Group: Session 2



Managing Stress

What is stress?

- An emotional and physical response to an unpleasant situation
- Can motivate us to resolve problems
- Can be a minor irritation in the short term
- Over the long term it can lead to health problems, anxiety and depression
- Can contribute to difficulties with alcohol or drugs

Dealing with Stress After a Concussion

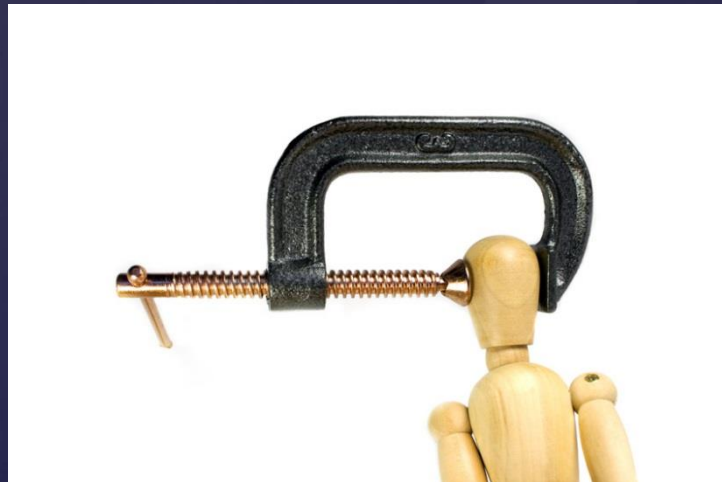
- Recovery in itself can be challenging. Our ability to tolerate everyday stress is reduced
- Techniques to cope that worked in the past may not work anymore, or may not be an option
- Emotions can be more difficult to control
- Relationships can be strained or different
- Adapting to limitations

Signs you're getting “stressed out”

- Headaches, heart, and digestion problems
- Negative feelings, anxiety, depression
- Sleeping difficulties
- Drop in energy and motivation
- Lower life satisfaction and self-esteem
- Moodiness, irritability, temper, or withdrawing from others
- Relationship or family problems

And on top of it all -

It can make symptoms of a
concussion seem worse and
slow recovery



Negative Thinking



- Experiencing painful emotions
- Feel anxious, depressed, or angry
- Worry about the same thing over and over
- Conflict with family or friends



Loop of Negativity

So...what can you do?

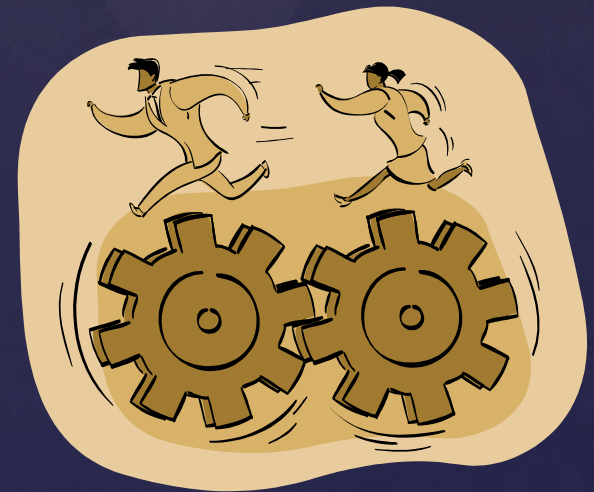
- We can't stop stress. We need to find ways to deal with whatever life throws our way.
- What are some ways to relax, blow off steam, or manage stress?

Check in with yourself

Be aware of how you are really feeling. Sometimes we get caught up in what we need to do or what we think we should be doing, and don't notice the toll it is taking. When we push too far, we break down.

Examples of break downs:

- Return of concussion symptoms
- Being overcome with emotions
- Actions or words we later regret
- Engaging in risky behaviours, using alcohol or drugs
- Relationship conflicts



Ways to keep your cool

- Treat your body well. A healthy body can help your mind feel better as well.
- Eating a balanced, nutrient rich diet
- Getting rest when you need it
- Exercise in any way you can; stretches, walking, swimming, low impact sports.
- Avoid substances that are harmful to you like alcohol, tobacco, and drugs



Some places that can help:

- Community groups, municipal recreation facilities, YMCA, Tai-Chi, yoga, sports teams, and lots more
- Going for walks
- EatRight Ontario and Public Health
- Your doctor's office
- Community Health Centres
- Counselling and Addictions Services
- Are group members aware of other resources?

Find people who support you

- Talk to friends or family members about your feelings
- Meeting other people who have had a concussion and sharing experiences can help feelings of isolation and not being understood.
- Supportive professional like counsellors are also great resources and can help you learn new strategies to overcome challenges

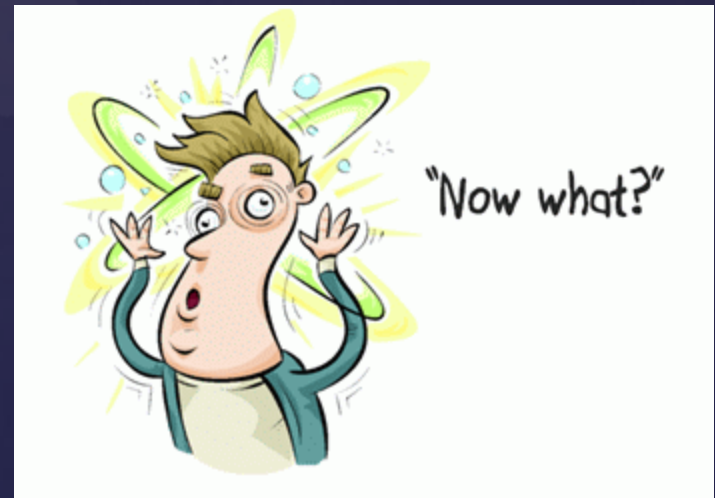
Don't get bogged down

- Make caring for yourself #1 priority
- Don't take on more than you can handle.
- Remember it's ok to say "NO"
- ASK for help from others

Difficult Environments

If certain places pose particular difficulties think of how you can :

- Change them
- Prepare for them
- Avoid them



Tolerating Bad Feelings



Accept that at times, feeling this way
is unavoidable

BUT

When it does happen, there are things you can
do...

Accept the moment for what it is

Be willing to accept the situation as it is, not as we think it should be or wish it could be. Don't judge it as good or bad. Just accept that this is what things are like for the moment.

This doesn't mean you have to tolerate this situation forever, or that you won't try to do what you can to improve it.

Practice relaxing

- Learn techniques like deep breathing and relaxation exercises to help let go of daily stress.
- Engage your senses: play!
- Try out some breathing stretches.
- Build time into your day for breaks
- Enjoy some aromatherapy with scented candles, lotions, etc.
- Chew gum
- Have a warm bath
- Watch the clouds, listen to the birds, etc.

Purpose & Meaning

- By choosing to view things as having a reason for them, you can often find strength in trying times
- Consider: What have I learned as a result of this? Who have I met? What new skills have I developed? Can I teach others something through this? Where could this lead me in the future?

Self-Talk & Affirmations

“I can get through this, I’ve managed before and I can now”

“If I keep my cool, at least I won’t make things worse”

“I’ll just take it one minute/hour/day at a time”

“I am stronger for making it through this”

“I am a resourceful person and I’ll be ok”

“I am a strong / kind / wise / resilient person”

“I may not be there yet, but I am working hard at reaching my goal”

“Things are getting better every day”

Mini Vacation Destinations

Little things you can do to give yourself a breather, before getting to the breaking point.

- Have a coffee/tea/cold drink break
- Do something with your hands – doodle, knit, bake, paint,
- Stretch
- Walk
- Have a shower
- Call a friend
- Spend cuddle time with a pet
- Go out and smell the flowers
- Look at photographs or reminisce about something fun

Make a conscious effort to focus on the positive.

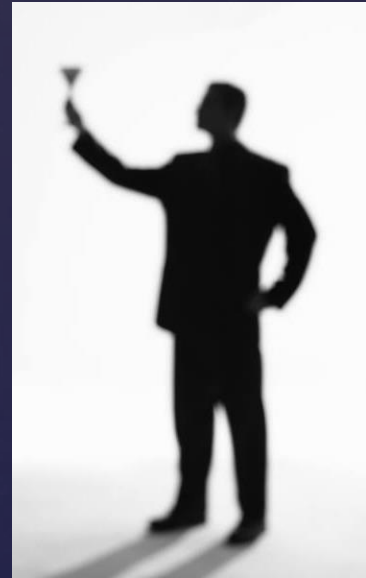


- Count your “blessings”
- Be kind to yourself
- Challenge negative thinking patterns
- Do activities that bring happiness
- Find ways to make yourself laugh!

Alcohol and Drug Use

After a concussion, the brain is much more susceptible to the impact of alcohol and drugs. Even small amounts can slow down recovery.

If you used alcohol or drugs before your injury, it's important to stop as much as possible while you get better. If this is difficult you may have a dependence or addiction.



What should you do if you are having trouble stopping:

- Find activities to fill your time with, particularly during the time of day you would normally use
- Have a reason to stop/cut down that is personally meaningful
- You will feel more tense when you stop or cut down. Use stress management techniques to help relax
- Don't tempt yourself. Avoid places where alcohol or drugs will be
- Cut back as much as possible. Try reducing the amount or pushing it off until later in the day. Once this becomes easier, cut back a little more.

Find Support



- Tell friends or family that you need to cut back and need their support
- Talk with your doctor about your difficulties not using alcohol or drugs
- Link with professional support such as 1:1 addictions counselling or Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous
- Check out the website for links to community resources
- Remember, you are not alone!