

# Communicating with awareness and emotional competence to recognize, handle and prevent stress



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# Referencing and acknowledging the iCARE-Haaland model

- *Please feel free to use and adapt the material in this presentation, and the model it is built on, by referring to the model, and the authors:*
- This presentation is adapted from «**Communicating with awareness and emotional competence to recognize, handle and prevent stress**», which is part of the learning materials in the iCARE-Haaland model.
- **To reference this content please use the following:** Haaland A, with Boga M, 2020. Communicating with awareness and emotional competence: introducing the iCARE-Haaland model for health professionals across cultures. With contributions from training teams, Vicki Marsh and Sassy Molyneux. <https://connect.tghn.org/training/icare-haaland-model/>
- The authors' names should remain on the presentation, with a by line recognizing the person who (has adapted and) is presenting the presentation

# Introduction:

## Stress can cause problems





# Objectives



## To strengthen awareness on

- How emotions can lead to stress and conflict
- How stressful situations can lead to mistakes (mis-diagnosis, mis-treatment, mis-management)
- How stress can affect providers' wellbeing
- What are external and internal causes of stress

## To strengthen skills to

- Recognize and acknowledge emotions
- Use emotional competence (EC); take a step back
- Communicate with awareness to
  - deal with the problem
  - manage stress, using EC
  - (and prevent conflicts and burnout)



# How do you communicate with patients and colleagues when you are stressed?

## Discuss in small groups:

- What are some **effects** (*on patients, colleagues and yourself*) of you being stressed?
- How does stress influence the interaction and communication with patients, colleagues and supervisors?



# What can stress lead to?

## *Some possible effects on the provider*

- Demoralization/feeling low; frustration
- Insomnia and not be able to think rationally, can lead to poor work output and making mistakes
- Not listening well, misunderstanding
- Not seeing patient as a person
- Not practicing respect; not empathizing
- Insecurity
- Depression
- Anger and agitation
- “Space out” or withdraw; freeze up
- Our blood pressure rises, our heart pumps faster
- Our muscles constrict; get muscle pains



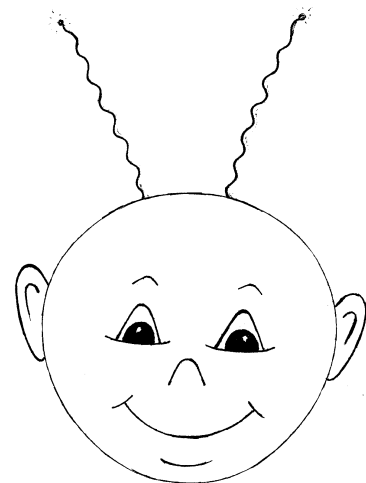
*What is common to most of these reactions?*

# Positive effects of short term stress

- Short term stress can also have positive effect – when handled with awareness
- Stress is originally a protective response – to help us survive: We decide if we should “fight or flight” – i.e. stress can protect us from danger by activating bodily defenses
- Some research shows positive effects of short term stress on the immune system; stress can prepare the organism to deal with challenges
- Stress can help productivity and be stimulating, and protect against boredom and under-involvement
- Physical exercise is stressful – and is positive for (most of) us
- Positive stress can lead to growth
- The ability to take on stress consciously can improve with learning
- Positive stress is known as EUSTRESS

## The key:

- **Recognize the signs of stress, and**
- **Handle it with awareness and EC**



# How do you handle **stressful** situations?

- Share **experiences** of how you handle stressful situations as a provider
  - Reflect on what you have become **aware of** during observations
  - Discuss strategies you use to handle stress
- What do you need to learn, to handle stress better?





# What causes **stress**?

- **External factors**

*(outside you,  
belonging to system)*



- **Internal factors**

*(inside you/emotions)*



# What causes **stress**?

*From the experiences you shared in groups – discuss:*

- What were **external factors** (outside you/system) causing stress?
- What were **internal factors** (inside you/emotional)?
- Which ones can you **influence** – **How?**



# Examples: Causes of stress

## External factors

- Lack of equipment and resources
- Workload/alone at work



## Internal factors

- **Fear** (of being blamed by patients (“I am not able to help her”); of patient condition worsening; of being seen as lazy or incompetent by colleagues, and/or supervisors, etc)
- **Blaming and criticism**; sarcastic/not living up to expectations
- **Being shouted at/disrespected**
- **Not knowing what to do, and why**
- **Gloomy facial outlooks** by patients or colleagues
- **Handling challenging clients (difficult)**
- In summary: ***Not practicing emotional competence***



# *How to prevent stress:*

## Discovering early warning signs

- Forgetfulness
- Poor concentration
- Not listening to others
- Disorganized
- Inability to set priorities
- Losing overview
- Doing many things without finishing them
- Irritable, jittery – snapping at colleagues
- Get annoyed easily
- Insomnia



- Easily/unexplained fatigue; just tired
- Wake up tired
- Body pain - unexplained

# What strategies can you use to **prevent** stress?

- **Share strategies** of preventing stress:
  - what you do already?
  - what more can you do?
- What **effect** would this have **on you** – if you have less stress?
- **Effect** on handling colleagues, and **patients**?



# Useful strategies to prevent stress

- **Develop awareness:**
  - Recognize the situation: identify emotions, and danger signals
  - Identify and deal with the cause(s) of stress
  - Acknowledge the situation as it is
- **Use EC: Take a step back - Choose the right time**
- Negotiate with your boss
- Apologize?
- Share the issue with a colleague
- Take a rest/break



## **Buzz:**

- *Which of these strategies take care of your emotions? How?*
- *How can you strengthen skills to take care of emotions?*

# Taking care of emotions – preventing or dealing with stress

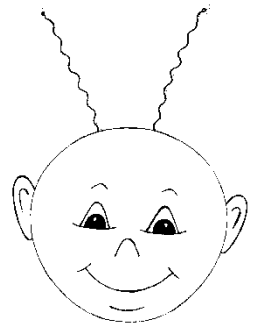
## At work

- Share with people you trust: burden of stress reduces
- Take a (tea?)break – breathe!
- Do something physical – walk?
- Share a joke, Smile
- Cry



## At home

- Listen to music, sing; read a book
- Look at photos with family – link to good moments
- Do something physical – swim, dance, walk, run
- Prepare a good meal, enjoy good smells
- Other methods/streatategies?



# ***Preventing stress from building up:***

## **Practising emotional competence**

### **Step 1: Recognize:**

- Recognize your own emotions – use EC: Are you overworked? Feeling stressed, in general? If so -

### **Step 2: Acknowledge**

- Get antenna out. Decide to be aware – use tools!

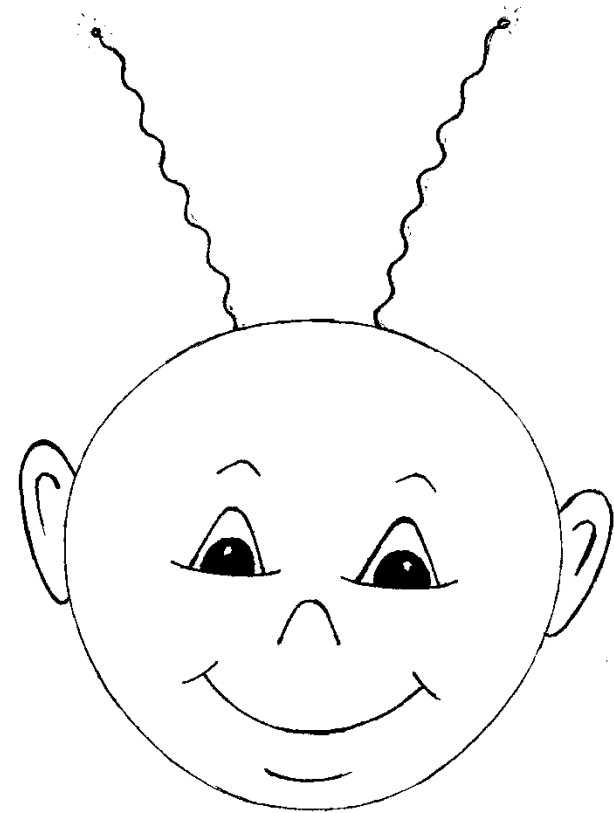
### **Step 3: Step back**

- When meeting patients or colleagues - stop automatic reactions, try to be fully present

### **Step 4: Listen with ears, eyes and heart:**

- If patient is upset, or scared – deal with emotions first. Set your own stress aside (***for now***)
- When the patient trusts you, the quality in the communication can soothe your stress (***for now***)

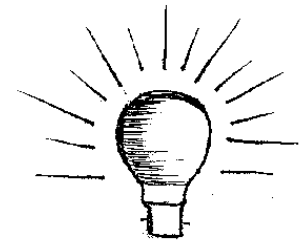
### **Step 5: Take care of your needs: Find cause of stress**





**YOU** have  
to change  
the way  
**YOU** handle  
the causes of stress  
**yourself!**

*If you expect the people from the outside  
to change  
**you get nowhere!***



***Look at internal factors for stress – and ACT!***

# In summary – dealing with stress

- Recognize emotions and take a **step back**
- Reflect – get **clarity**
- Take a **step forward** – to **solve the problem** – **with awareness**

