

# Waving not Drowning – How to keep afloat in the choppy sea of Research



# Stress

- What is stress ?
- How does it affect us ? Physical, emotional ,cognitive effects
- How does it relate to your research
- Health – Physical and Mental
- Coping Strategies
- A life outside of study
- How to get support

# What is Stress?

- Like blood pressure we all have stress
- Stress should cause concern if:
- You can't get rid of it even when you try
- It affects your day to day life
- There doesn't seem to be a good reason for it





# Stress that causes a problem

- The most common form of stress is a mixture of anxiety and depression-
- Anxiety – tension ,stress, panic attacks
- Depression – low mood, feeling flat , lethargic
- It is unusual to have a single problem most people have a mix of symptoms

# Who is affected by stress?

- It can affect anyone and everyone
- Right now in Edinburgh ,1 in 5 of us has a problem with stress
- In our lifetime almost 1 in 2 of us will have a problem with stress



# 14 most common signs

- Worry
- Anger
- Poor sleep
- Tiredness
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling on edge
- Unable to switch off
- Panic attacks
- Poor concentration
- Tearful
- Drinking too much
- Waiting for the worst to happen



# Stress can affect your body



## What Stress Does to Your Body



### **Head**

issues with mood, anger, depression, irritability, sadness and a lack of energy, swings in appetite, concentration problems, sleeping issues, headaches and pain, mental health issues, like anxiety disorders and panic attacks

### **Skin**

skin problems like acne

### **Joints and Muscles**

aches and pains, tension, lowered bone density

### **Heart**

increased blood pressure, increased heart beat, higher cholesterol and instances of heart attack

### **Stomach**

stomach cramps, reflux, and nausea and weight fluctuations

### **Pancreas**

diabetes

### **Intestines**

digestive issues like irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhoea and constipation

### **Reproductive System**

reduced sex drive, lower sperm production (for men) and increased pain during periods (for women)

### **Immune system**

reduced ability to battle and recover from illness

# Fight/Flight /Freeze

- Stress
- Ancient survival mechanism to deal with threats to our physical wellbeing
- Triggered by sense of threat – our adrenaline levels increase rapidly
- Physiological component to stress



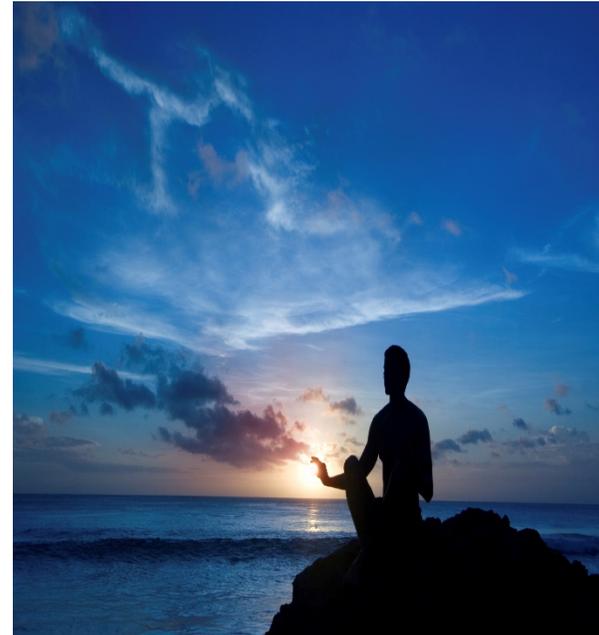
# Controlling your body

- Breathing and Relaxation
- Slow regular breathing
- In through the nose out through the mouth
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation



# Controlling your thoughts

- Common stressful thoughts ;
- I can't cope
- Everyone is looking at me
- I'm losing control
- They'll think I'm an idiot
- What if its more serious than stress
- I'm going mad

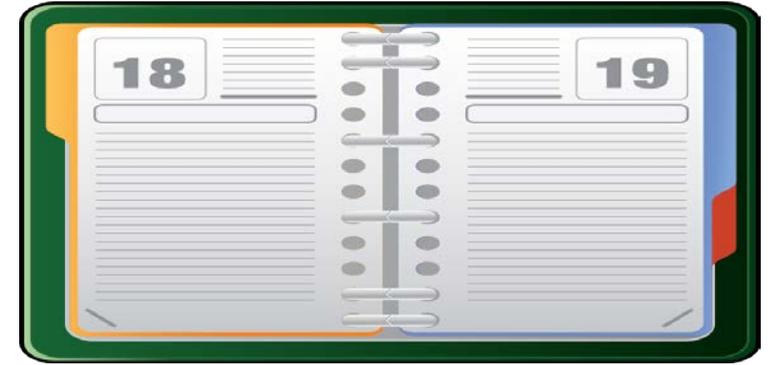


# Health actions

- Exercise
- Sleep hygiene
- Relaxation
- Nutrition
- Identify your fears
- Face the fears
- Deal with the issues causing stress
- Positive strategies



# Coping Strategies



- Forward planning
- Talking to someone and seeking appropriate advice
- Lists – prioritising
- Diary of thoughts or write down issues
- Keeping your focus on your goal – why are you doing your Research?
- Getting support from family, friends, colleagues
- Asking for help

# Having a life outside of study

- It's important to keep connected to others and the world
- University activities
- Hobbies and pastimes
- Social activities
- Sport and exercise
- Current affairs



# How to get support?

- Within the University – Mental Health Advisers and Student Counselling. Disability and Inclusion , Academic support and ENSA
- Out-with – GP , Health in Mind, Community Mental Health, Counselling, therapy, psychology
- Stress Control groups – NHS Lothian and Health in Mind

