

Stress management and improving wellbeing

Session 2



Professor Myra S Hunter and Dr Melanie Smith
Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London

Review of the week

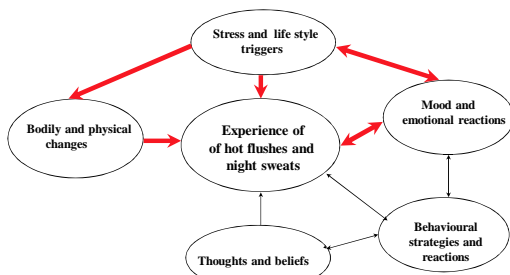
How are you getting on with different aspects of the programme?

- Relaxation
- Monitoring and modification of your triggers
- In pairs discuss any barriers you have encountered and ways of overcoming them

© Hunter&Smith2014

2

A cognitive behavioural model of menopausal hot flushes: thoughts, mood, behaviour and lifestyle



© Hunter&Smith2014

3

What causes stress?

- Stress is a normal part of everyday life
- What is stressful varies from person to person
- Stress occurs when:

A situation places huge demands on us

AND

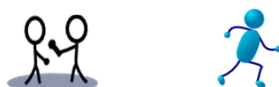
We think that we do not have the personal resources to manage the situation

© Hunter&Smith2014

4

Effects of stress

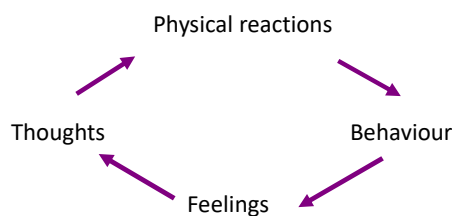
- It is important to recognise the signs that you are getting really stressed
- The 'fight or flight' response



© Hunter&Smith2014

5

Thoughts, feelings, behaviour and physical reactions



© Hunter&Smith2014

6

Recognising the signs of stress

- **Bodily symptoms:** tension, aches, heart racing
- **Mood:** irritability, anger, frustration, crying, venting of feelings
- **Cognitive:** Anxious thoughts, e.g. "I'm not going to finish this!" "I'm not good enough" "I can't please everyone!" "They will think badly of me!"
 - Overestimate likelihood of negative outcome
 - Underestimate ability to cope
- **Behaviour:** affects general well-being and the extent to which people look after themselves (working hours, smoking, drinking); withdrawing from other people and positive activities

© Hunter&Smith2014

7

How to reduce stress and improve wellbeing

- Prioritising own health and wellbeing
- Calmer thinking- identifying unhelpful thoughts and coming up with 'calmer' and more helpful alternatives'
- Regular exercising (e.g. brisk walking, swimming)
- Engaging in pleasant activities and taking time for yourself
- Pacing activities (planning and allowing regular breaks)
- Problem-solving

© Hunter&Smith2014

8

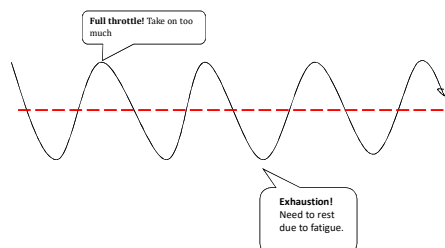
Tackling Stressful thinking

- Impact of anxious thoughts, e.g. catastrophic predictions on emotions:
 - Advantages of thinking this way
 - Disadvantages of thinking this way
- Consider other ways of thinking that may lead you to feel less stressed by answering the following:
 - Would a friend agree wholeheartedly with this approach to the situation?
 - What might they say to help me calm down?
 - What would you say to a friend in the same situation?

© Hunter&Smith2014

9

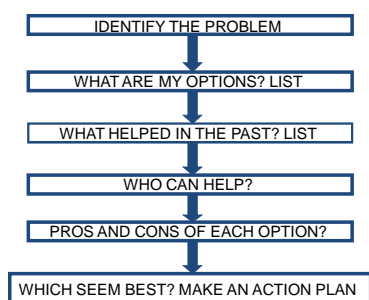
The boom and bust cycle



© Hunter&Smith2014

10

Problem-solving



© Hunter&Smith2014

11

Stress and lifestyle

Helpful strategies:

- Prioritising own health and well-being
- Not rushing
- Keeping a balance between rest and activity (e.g. exercising every day) and pacing activities throughout the day
- Identify anything stressful and worrying and allocate a specific time for problem-solving. It can be helpful to write this down.
- Identifying anxious thinking which may increase your levels of stress
- Engage in at least one pleasant activity per day

© Hunter&Smith2014

12

Stress and lifestyle

Less helpful strategies:

- Being very busy and exhausting yourself, and sleeping in the daytime
- Keeping problems to yourself, bottling up worries and keeping them at the back of your mind most of the time
- Not making time for yourself for exercise, relaxation or pleasant activities
- Avoiding people or activities because of menopausal symptoms

© Hunter&Smith2014

13

Reducing stress/effects of stress

- How could you reduce stress for yourself?
- In pairs identify and discuss own personal goals for reducing stress
- Goals should be specific and measurable:
"going for a 15 minute walk once a day", rather than "walking more," setting aside time to problem solve an on going stress, or 'identifying thinking errors and coming up with an alternative"
- Feed back your personal goals to the group

© Hunter&Smith2014

14

Group Relaxation and Homework

- Practising relaxation and focus on breathing at the onset of a flush
- Continue to practise daily
- Monitoring and modify triggers during the week
- Carry out stress/wellbeing goal



© Hunter&Smith2014

15