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Nursing with a smile: an effective stress control



Nursing with a smile, an effective stress control

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Overview

- ▶ Nursing staff through tradition and training, are good at spending a great deal of mental, emotional and physical energy on caring for others and this can be stressful.
- ▶ Stress has become a major cause for concern for much of the nursing workforce.
- ▶ If you can take care of yourself the more effective you will be in your capacity to care for others.

(Stress and you: a guide for nursing staff, RCN 2017)

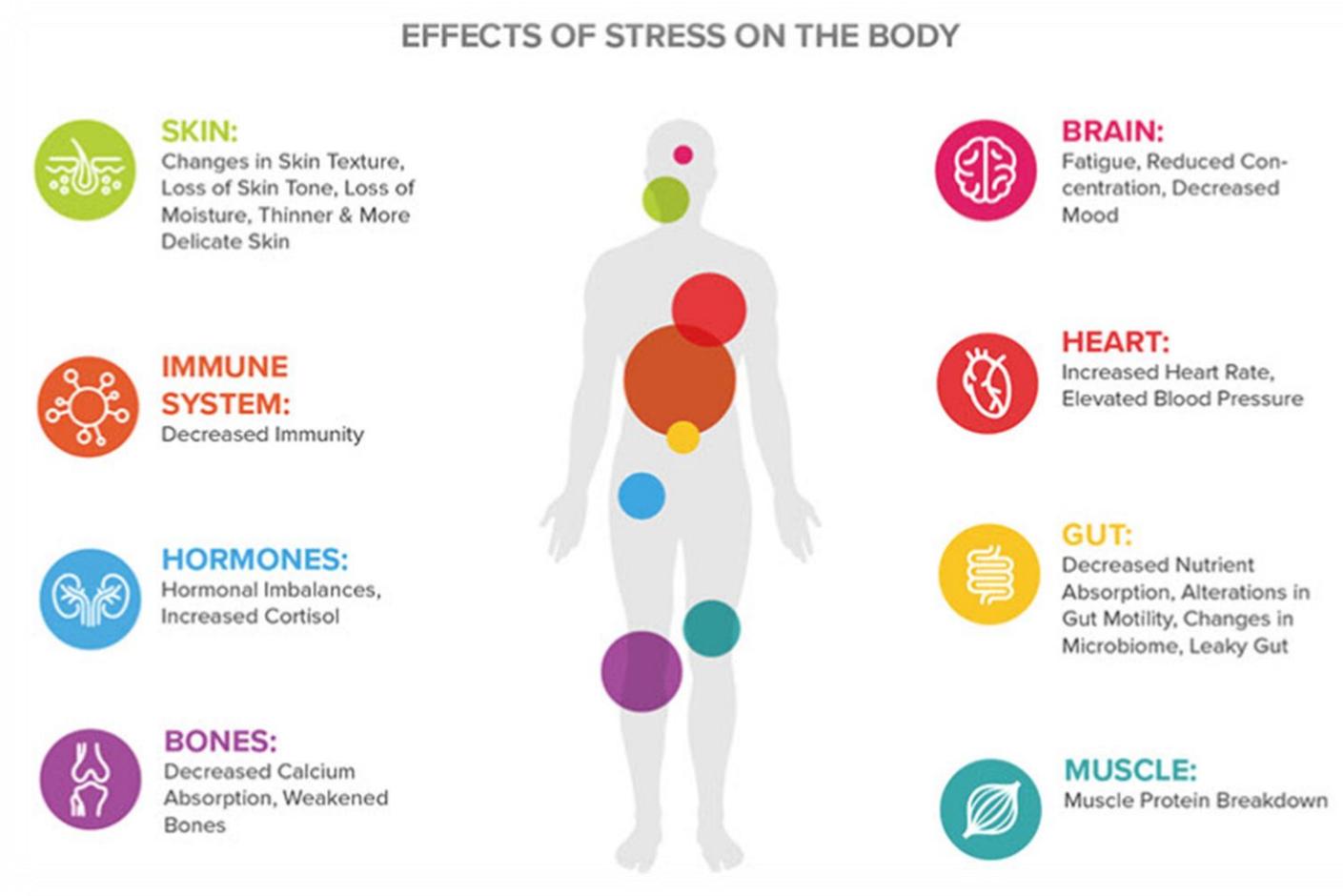
What is Stress?

- ▶ Stress is the body's reaction to harmful situations – whether they're real or perceived.
- ▶ Generally speaking, stress arises when events leave us feeling overwhelmed and out of control.
- ▶ When you're stressed, your body responds.
- ▶ Your bloodstream is flooded with hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline.
 - Your blood vessels constrict.
 - Your blood pressure and pulse rise.
 - You breathe faster.

(<https://symptoms.webmd.com/default.htm2019>)

EFFECTS OF STRESS ON THE BODY

<https://www.asyr.ca/managing-everyday-stress/stress-effects>



Effects of Stress

Cognitive symptoms

- ▶ Memory problems
- ▶ Inability to concentrate
- ▶ Poor judgment
- ▶ Seeing only the negative
- ▶ Anxious or racing thoughts
- ▶ Constant worrying

Emotional symptoms

- ▶ Depression or general unhappiness
- ▶ Anxiety and agitation
- ▶ Moodiness, irritability, or anger
- ▶ Feeling overwhelmed
- ▶ Loneliness and isolation
- ▶ Other mental or emotional health problems

Effects of Stress

Behavioral symptoms

- ▶ Eating more or less
- ▶ Sleeping too much or too little
- ▶ Withdrawing from others
- ▶ Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- ▶ Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- ▶ Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

Physical symptoms

- ▶ Aches and pains
- ▶ Diarrhea or constipation
- ▶ Nausea, dizziness
- ▶ Chest pain, rapid heart rate
- ▶ Loss of sex drive
- ▶ Frequent colds or flu

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-symptoms-signs-and-causes.htm>

Are Nurses Stressed?

According to a publication by Royal College of Nursing in 2012 titled Beyond Breaking Point, nurses experience stress from

- ▶ heavy workloads and staff shortages
- ▶ shift working
- ▶ Insufficient number or length of needed breaks.
- ▶ being pressured to do more and more work beyond ones ability or scope
- ▶ frustrations from paperwork, targets and a lack of resources such as equipment and IT.

Stress Management

- ▶ *Improve quantity & quality of sleep.*
- ▶ **Split up big tasks**
- ▶ Allow yourself some positivity
- ▶ **Challenge unhelpful thoughts**
- ▶ *Exercise regularly*
- ▶ *Play and relax*
- ▶ *Boost energy naturally*
- ▶ Plan ahead – prioritize your “to-do’s” and reduce mental clutter
- ▶ **Practice smiling**
- ▶ **Be more active**
- ▶ Talk to someone
- ▶ ***What Matters Most? Do that first.***
- ▶ *Evaluate and Adjust Expectations*
- ▶ ***Practice mindfulness/breathing gratitude/meditation/P rayer.***
- ▶ *Write about your Day Slow Down and Practice Patience*
- ▶ ***Reevaluate Often***

(Dr Christina Hibbert,2013)

Smile and its Effect on Stress

- ▶ Science has shown that the simple act of smiling can spur a chemical reaction in the brain which releases happy hormones in the body of both the giver and receiver of the smile.

www.stresstostrength.com2016)

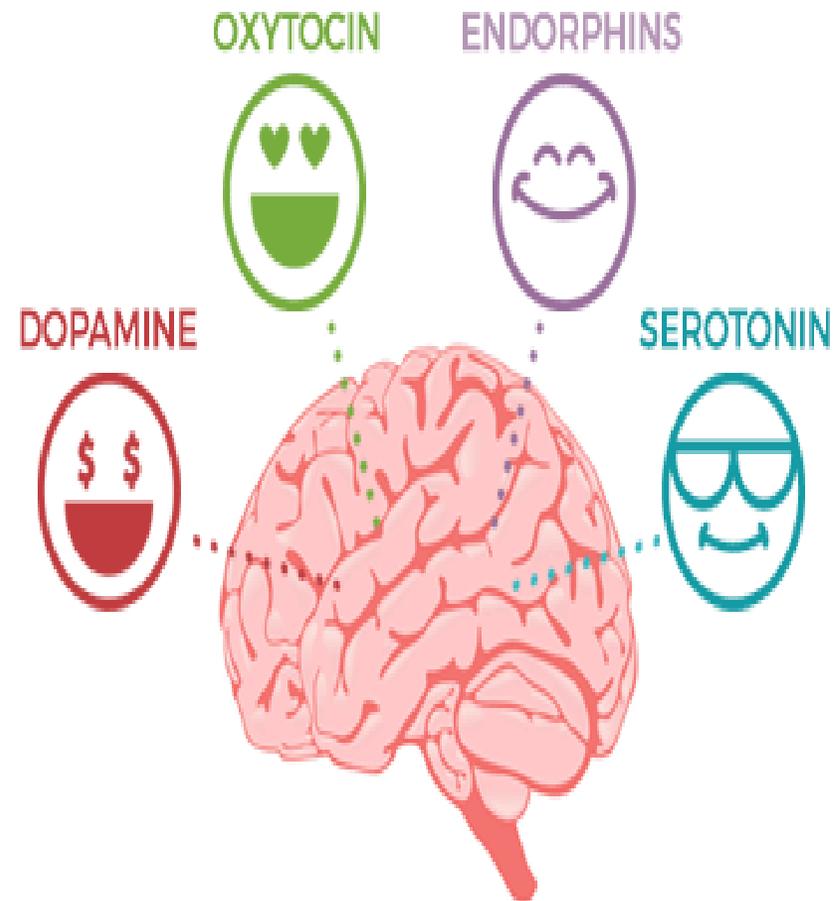
- ▶ Both parties receive a highly refreshing hormonal bath (D.O.S.E) of
 - Dopamine
 - Oxytocin
 - Serotonin
 - Endorphins

1. **Dopamine** - The Reward Hormone

2. **Oxytocin** - The Love Hormone

3. **Endorphins** - The Calm Hormone

4. **Serotonin** - The Will-Power Hormone



<http://emailday.blogspot.com/2015/09/wwwkeralitesnet-4-happy-hormones.html>

The Happy Hormones and their Effects

- ▶ **Dopamine** increases our feelings of happiness. Low levels of dopamine is associated with depression.
- ▶ **Endorphins** acts as natural pain reliever and happiness booster.
- ▶ **Oxytocin** is the neurochemical that has allowed us to become social creatures. It makes us feel empathy which helps us to feel close and bonded to others.
- ▶ **Serotonin** release is associated with reduced stress. Low level of serotonin is associated with depression and aggression.

[www.healthline.com > health > happy-hormone2019](http://www.healthline.com/health/happy-hormone2019))

Summarily, these happy hormones released while smiling

- ▶ lower stress
- ▶ increase happiness
- ▶ reduce pain
- ▶ boost the immune system and
- ▶ possibly even prolong life because they
 - decrease cortisol level,
 - decrease blood pressure and
 - decrease heart rate

Background of Study

- ▶ The duties of a nurse are enormous and could become STRESSFUL.
- ▶ Despite this, it is important for nurses to manage their stress level well so that they would not compromise their effectiveness and efficiency.
- ▶ This study looked into the effect of smiling on stress level among nurses, its effect on patients, and how it affects the way nurses are perceived.
- ▶ 85 nurses in Kettering General Hospital, Northamptonshire, England participated in the study

Discussion of Findings

- ▶ 95% of the respondents agreed that the duties of a nurse are enormous especially with the constant staff shortages leading to increased stress level.
- ▶ Most of the respondents (67.54% – 96.52%) agreed that the following are signs and symptoms of stress

Being irritable and wound-up

Difficulty making decisions

Tiredness all the time

Constant worrying

Concentrating

Muscle Tension and Pain

Smoking more

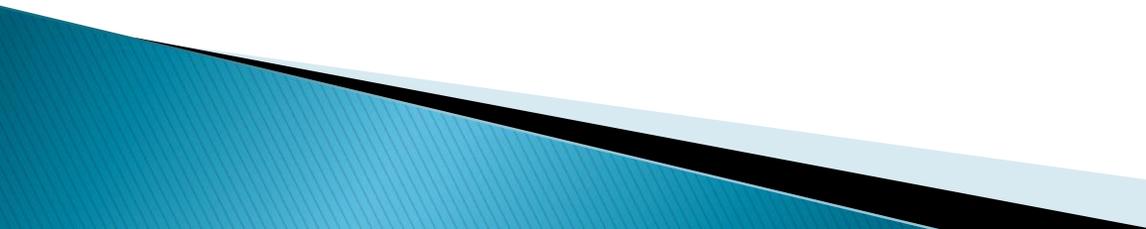
Sleep Problems

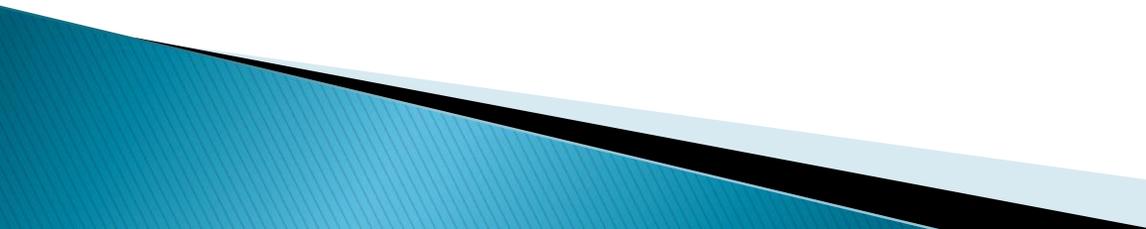
Snapping at People

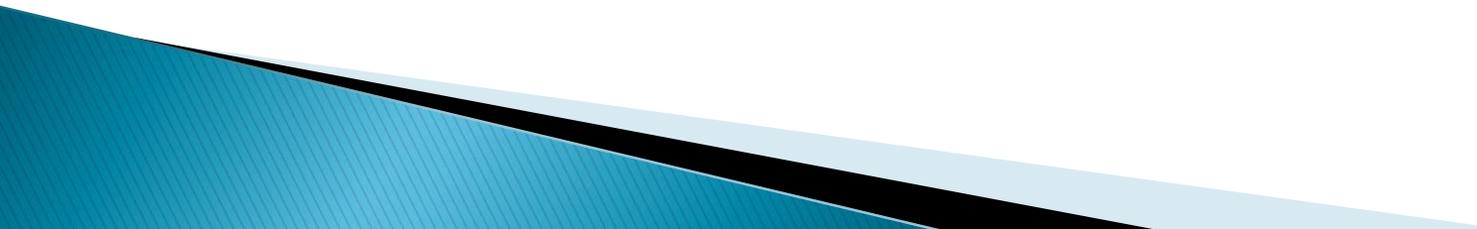
Headaches

Difficulty

Drinking more

- ▶ Only 62% of the respondents would readily smile when stressed but 88% would definitely return a smile no matter their stress level. (When an individual smiles at another individual, the receiver most times, returns the smile as it is the polite thing to do, www.stresstostrength.com)
 - ▶ 73% feel good when they smile whether it was a forced or genuine smile. (Even forcing a fake smile can legitimately reduce stress and lower your heart rate, www.nbcnews.com/better/health/smiling-can-trick-your-brain-happiness-boost-your-health)
 - ▶ 75% of the respondents feel less stressed with a smiling colleague irrespective of the workload and 95% find a smiling colleague more approachable and easier to work with.
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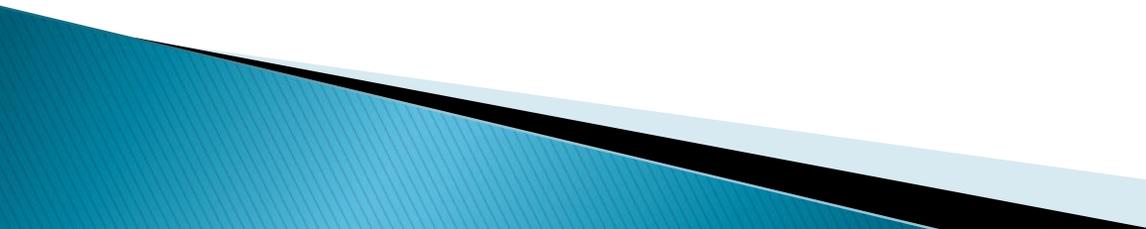
- ▶ 95% of the participants react more positively to colleagues who smile at them and feel significantly less stressed working with such colleagues irrespective of the workload.
 - ▶ 92% of the respondents have been patients in the past and as patients would feel less anxious with a smiling nurse.
 - ▶ 78.9% believe that a smiling nurse is confident and most likely competent.
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- ▶ 94% of the respondents agreed that approachable team members and reduced workplace tension lead to improved team work efficiency.
 - ▶ All the respondents agreed that it is effective to use the smiling technique to reduce or control stress at work and even in their personal lives.
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SUMMARY

- ▶ 92% of the respondents as patients feel more relaxed with a smiling nurse as they believe that she is confident and competent.
 - ▶ 95% of the nurses feel that their colleagues who smile are more approachable and feel less stressed around them irrespective of the workload.
 - ▶ All the respondents agreed that it is effective to use the smiling technique to reduce stress at work and even in their personal lives.
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CONCLUSION

- ▶ Though nurses are under extreme pressure due to staff shortages, immense workload and other sources of stress, yet it is very important to effectively manage these stressors so that their wellbeing is not affected.
 - ▶ So whenever you are stressed, always remember, smile, it is a free therapy. Also, it makes you attractive, it changes your mood, relieves stress makes you stay positive and make people feel comfortable around you.
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Doesn't smiling make you feel better as well? >>>

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING