



*Li taan paasii. Li taan ki vyayn.
From our past. For our future*

Child Youth & Family

Fall Online Education & Awareness Series

2024

Stress Management & Wellness

October 3rd 2:00pm–3:30pm

Wellness in Indigenous communities and cultures is about being in balance and harmony.

Wellness focuses on strengths rather than deficits or weaknesses. It is about being connected to family, community and nature.

Agenda

- Introductions
- What is Stress?
- Good versus Bad Stress
- Effects of Bad Stress
- What Causes Stress?
- Metis Wellness Wheel- The 4 Aspects of Self
- What is stress management?
- Resources within your community

What is Stress?

- Stress is the body's response to a real or perceived threat. That response is meant to get people ready for some kind of action to get them out of danger. But most of the threats people face today aren't something that they can fight or run away from. These threats are usually problems that people have to work through.
- Stress comes from both the good and the bad things that happen to us. If we didn't feel any stress, we wouldn't be alive! Stress may feel overwhelming at times, but there are many strategies to help you take control.
- Some stress can be a good thing. It can motivate us to focus on a task or take action and solve a problem. In this situation, stress is manageable and even helpful.

What is Good Stress?

- Good stress, also known as eustress, is "the positive stress response involving optimal levels of stimulation.
- Though good stress comes about due to anticipation of something exciting, it is not the only kind of stress with better outcomes. Its opposite, distress—which we think of when stress comes to mind—can also benefit our minds and bodies.

Examples of activities or events that might result in good stress are:

- Going into retirement
- Starting a family
- Preparing for a new job position
- Being involved in an athletic event

Question: Can you think of other examples of good stress?

What is Bad Stress?

- Bad stress, or distress, is harmful and can lead to physical and mental health problems if prolonged.
- It often stems from situations we feel are beyond our control or overwhelming. This type of stress can cause anxiety, depression, and various physical ailments.
- Toxic work environment: constant pressure, unrealistic deadlines, and hostile coworkers can lead to burnout and negatively impact mental health.
- Financial instability: ongoing money worries, debt, or inability to meet basic needs can cause severe anxiety and affect overall quality of life.
- Trauma: experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event can result in long-lasting stress, potentially leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Social isolation: prolonged loneliness or lack of social support can increase stress levels and contribute to depression.
- Major life changes: significant transitions like divorce, relocation, or loss of a loved one can create intense stress, affecting emotional and physical well-being.

The Effects Bad Stress:

You can identify bad stress when:

- It's chronic. Even if it was once something you looked forward to, you now feel as if there's no end in sight.
- You can't control it. You become unable to set effective boundaries or manage them efficiently.
- It prevents you from doing anything else. If the stressor takes up all of your time or prevents you from doing other things you want to do, you may become resentful.
- It feels out of line with your goals. You don't see the long-term benefit, so it no longer feels as if the stress is worth it.
- It comes into direct conflict with another priority or value. Having to choose between conflicting values can make a mildly stressful situation emotionally taxing.

What Can Cause Stress?

Personal:

- Several aspects of your personal life, such as your health, school, work, loved ones, and responsibilities, can trigger stress. Expectations that you and others place on you, uncertainty, and doubt can add to and exacerbate stress.

Health:

Even people in the best shape of their lives stress about their bodies, diets, and fitness levels. In fact, people who take healthy living to an extreme may have some rather unhealthy side effects. For example, people following low-carb diets are likelier to report being sad or stressed out. Likewise, people on any restrictive meal plan, like the ketogenic ("keto") diet, may feel more tired than usual.

Education and Work:

- A college degree boosts your odds of landing a well-paying job. Although you may be less likely to suffer from money-related anxiety, your education can bring on other types of stress.
- One study published in 2014 found that highly educated people are more likely to be stressed out thanks to job pressures, being overworked, and conflicts between work and family.

Loved Ones:

- You are bound to do things that get on each other's nerves even if you have a blissfully happy relationship with your loved ones. For example, living with your partner or spouse can be a source of stress.

What Causes Stress...continued...

Responsibilities:

- Does folding laundry help you feel calm, or does it boil your blood? Even responsibilities you once enjoyed may feel like torture if you live in a situation where you feel like you take on an unfair share of work.
- Multitasking can be another source of stress when it comes to your responsibilities. Often, you are not actually being efficient by taking on four tasks at once. Multitasking can reduce your productivity while boosting your stress.

Stressors...

Expectations:

- When things do not go as planned, do you tend to get upset and act defensively? You could be contributing to a mindset of pessimism that will slowly wear you down, even when things may not be as bad as they seem.

Uncertainty:

- Stress is the body's reaction to any perceived or actual threat. Any doubt looming over your head can contribute to your stress levels daily.
- "When you know something could change at any minute, you always have your guard up, and it's hard to just relax and enjoy anything".

Stressors:

Environmental:

- The world can be full of stressful distractions, such as unwanted noise. Practicing mindfulness or replacing stressful distractions with calming music or noise can help alleviate tension.

Distractions:

- A distraction can be a good thing when it takes your mind off a stressful situation or difficult decision, like taking a break from work to meet a friend for lunch. Distractions work the other way, too: You may be unable to enjoy what is happening around you if you are so busy thinking about something else.

Stressors:

Noise:

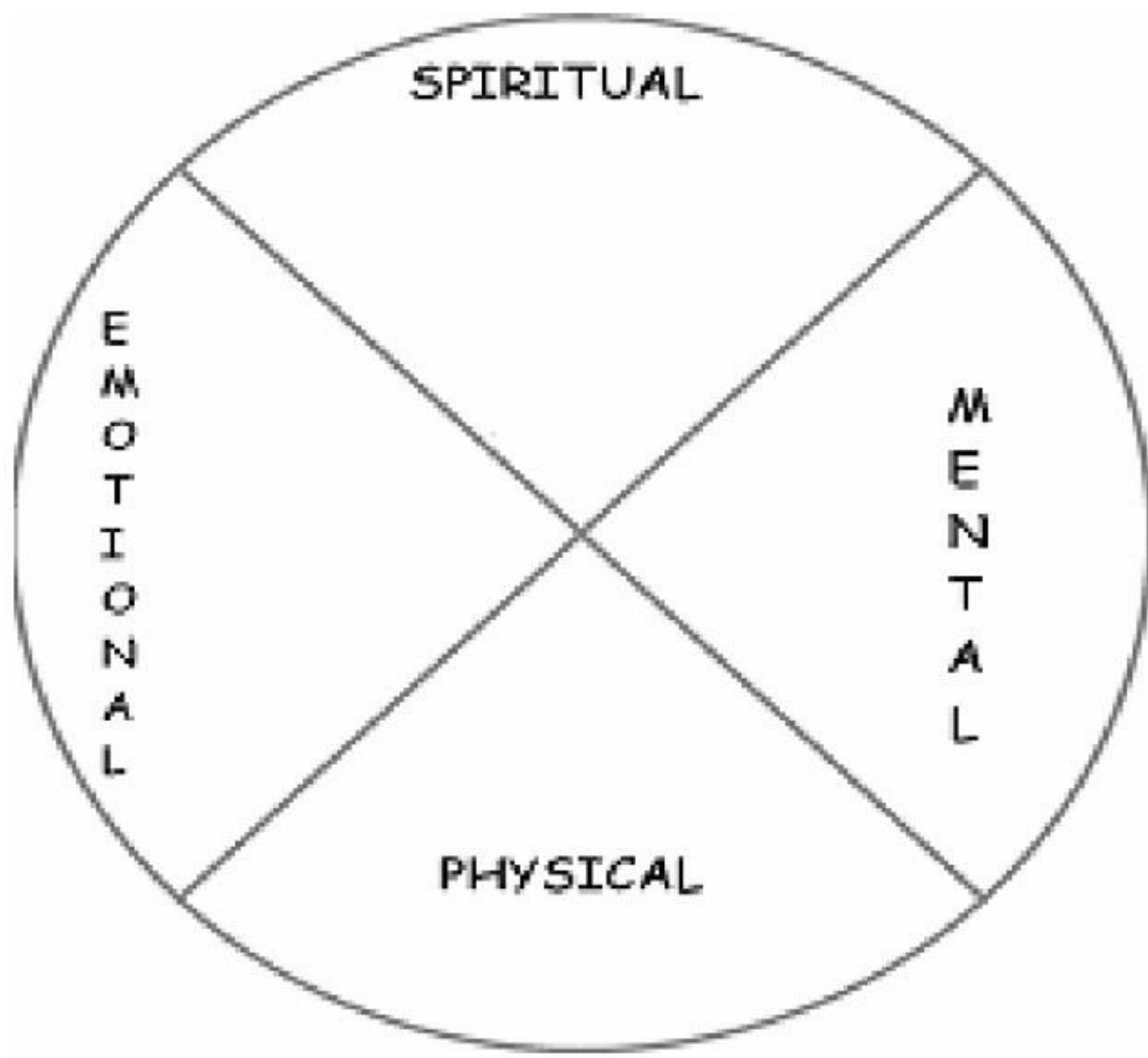
- You may deal with unwanted noise regularly if you live on a noisy street or in a busy city. Research has found that chronic low noise levels can lead to adverse side effects, such as trouble sleeping, which can trigger stress. Noise can directly stress you out if you are conscious of it.

Media:

- Although people depend on them for many things, electronics and social media can be significant sources of stress.

Social Media:

- It may seem like Facebook or Instagram are the only ways you keep up with the friends you don't regularly see. Social media can negatively affect mental health, according to a report published in 2015 by the Pew Research Center.



Metis Wellness Wheel: Aspects

- A wellness wheel is a wellness model that represents eight aspects of wellness: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, social, environmental, financial, and occupational.
- We will only look at the four aspects of the Metis Wellness Wheel- Physical, Emotional, Mental/Intellectual & Spiritual

How Does Bad Stress Affect the 4 Aspects of Self

- Physical Aspect: restlessness, diet, overeat/under eat, too much sleep, drinking –self-medicating to cope
- Mental/Intellectual: listless, making mistakes at work, losing patience
- Spiritual: not doing the things that grounds you, not attending ceremonies or doing things that you enjoy
- Emotional: not talking about feelings, staying away from people, getting upset or angry, crying /sad

Question: How does bad stress affect you

Self- Care:

- Physical- Sleep, diet, exercise
- Mental- try to journal, read, paint, draw
- Emotional-talk about what you are feeling to someone that is a healthy support
- Spiritual- this can be anything that grounds you –creates peace and relaxation

Healthy Ways

- Identify your problems. What is causing your stress? It can be your job, a relationship or another source altogether. Is an unimportant surface problem masking a deeper one? Once you know what the problem is, you can do something about it.
- Work on solutions. Start thinking about what you can do to relieve the problem. Take control over the issues you can manage. This might mean looking for another job, talking with a health professional about personal problems or a financial counsellor. Also ask yourself what will happen if you do nothing. Once you make some changes to deal with the issue, you will take pressure off yourself.
- Talk about your problems. Friends, work colleagues and family members may not know you are having a hard time. If you talk to them about it, it may help in two ways. First of all, just by venting your feelings, you will relieve some stress. Secondly, they may suggest solutions to your problems. If you need to talk to someone outside your circle of family and friends, speak to your family physician or contact a mental health professional.

Healthy Ways of Coping:

- Learn about stress management. In addition to health professionals who specialize in stress, there are many helpful books, films, videos, courses and workshops available to help you learn stress management techniques.
- Reduce tension. Physical activity is a great stress reducer. Walk, do some exercises or garden to relieve your stress. There are also relaxation exercises you can learn that will take the pressure off, such as deep breathing and stretching your whole body. Tension meditation and progressive relaxation are techniques that work for many people.

Healthy Ways of Coping:

- Take your mind off your problems. By reading, taking up a hobby or becoming involved in sports, you can give yourself a `mental holiday' from stress. It will also give you distance from your problems, so that they become easier to solve.
- Try not to be too hard on yourself. Stress can cause lots of negative thinking. You may notice yourself saying things like "I can't, won't, should, must". Be realistic. Find realistic solutions you can achieve in steps that will bring success.

Resources:

- The Mental Health Promotion Unit, Public Health Agency of Canada
- Health Canada's Mental Health section
- The Canadian Health Network, click on "Mental Health"
- The Canadian Mental Health Association
- Contact the local Canadian Mental Health Association in your community, listed in the phone book
- Canadian Psychiatric Association
- The National Network for Mental Health
- The Canadian Psychological Association
- The Mood Disorders Society of Canada

Final Thoughts:

Thank you on behalf of the Child, Youth and Family Department for the BC Metis Federation

For a copy of this presentation please email the Director of Child, Youth and Family:

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