

Module 2

Stress and coping



Stress and coping

- Stress and common reactions to stress
- The difference between normal and extreme stress
- Coping mechanism related to stress
- When to refer for professional help

How do people react?

Work in groups of three to four.

Discuss the following situation:

A friend or a colleague is very stressed –
how do you see it?

Describe at least five types of behaviour or
physical reactions indicating stress

What is stress?

Stress is a normal response to a physical or emotional challenge and occurs when demands are out of balance with resources for coping.

Types of stress

- Day-to-day stress
- Cumulative stress
- Critical stress





Assessment of extreme stress

Work in groups of three to five. Read the hand-out.

- What are the causes of stress and possible reactions to stress?
- Remember to distinguish between different groups – children, men, women and older people
- Write down your findings on a flipchart and prepare a short presentation

Normal reactions to abnormal situations



What are common reactions?

How do people usually cope with stress?

- **Avoidance** – denial and dissociation
- **Approach** – trying to find meaning, seeking support, taking action

Coping

Coping is a way to prevent, delay, avoid or manage stress



Coping strategies

Imagine yourself in one of the following situations:

- You have suddenly lost the job you have had for the past three years. There is no immediate prospect of similar work.
- There is a flood in your community. Your family's income is based on farming, and you lose all your crops and livestock.
- There are strong political fractions in your country. Your father is active in the resistance. He disappears following a political uprising. You have not heard from him for the past three weeks.

Write down at least three actions, thoughts, beliefs, personal characteristics or strengths that would help you cope with or get through the situation.

Examples of coping (1)

- Seeking help from others
- Offering help to others
- Trying to make sense of what happened
- Hiding until the danger has passed
- Remaining fearful and alert to any further danger
- Burying the dead
- Using defences like denial to reduce the impact

Examples of coping (2)

- Gathering remaining belongings
- Following religious practices
- Setting goals and making a plan to accomplish them
- Seeking information about loved ones
- Talking about experiences
- Beginning to repair the damage and get on with life
- Thinking a lot about the event to learn from it

How to assist coping?

- Primary focus on physical care and protection
- Stay close
- Provide comfort and reassurance
- Provide information
- Support activities
- Support emotional adaptation

What is assisted coping?

The goal is not to cope for others, but to provide the minimal necessary assistance to help them begin actively coping in their own best interest.





Assessment of coping strategies

Go into the same groups as before:

Continue the assessment of your case.

- Discuss possible coping strategies in the situations, and how they can be assisted.
- Write your findings on a flipchart and prepare a presentation.

Referral – when assistance is not enough



Anxiety

Depression

Post traumatic stress disorder

Who to refer - when and how?

- A woman becomes seriously ill
- A man loses his wife in a car accident
- A girl gets infected by HIV

When to refer for professional help?

- Severe sleep problems
- Strong emotions
- Talk of suicide
- Persistent physical symptoms
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Behaviour that is a risk to self or others
- Enduring depression or other disorders
- Inconsistent behaviour
- Indication of abuse or criminal activity

Levels of helping

AS THE NEEDS OF THOSE AFFECTED INCREASE, SO DOES THE NEED FOR TRAINING FOR THOSE RESPONDING



Recap

- Explain everyday and extreme stress.
- What kind of different ways do people cope?
- How can you as a volunteer or staff member help?