* **Pioneers of Stress Research:**
  + **Walter Cannon: Described acute stress as the "fight-or-flight" response, which prepares the body to react quickly in dangerous situations.**
  + **Hans Selye: Studied long-term stress, leading to the concept of the General Adaptation Syndrome (Alarm, Resistance, Exhaustion stages), which explains the body’s response to chronic stress.**

**Stress Theories:**

* **Life-Events Theory: Stress occurs when situations require more resources than available. Daily hassles can be more stressful than major events.**
* **Hardiness Theory: Stress is linked to one's attitude toward stressful events, and resilience can buffer against illness.**
* **Social Support Theory: Stress increases when there is insufficient social support.**

**Types of Stress:**

* **Acute Stress: Immediate reaction to challenges, e.g., a deadline or test. It’s the most common and manageable type.**
* **Episodic Stress: Frequent acute stress, typically seen in those who take on too much or worry constantly.**
* **Chronic Stress: Long-term stress that can become "normal." It’s harmful and can lead to serious health conditions like heart disease, cancer, and even suicide.**

**Eustress vs. Distress:**

* **Eustress: Positive stress that motivates and enhances performance (e.g., starting a new job).**
* **Distress: Negative stress that causes anxiety and reduces performance (e.g., a serious illness).**

**Stress Reactivity:**

* **Physical Responses: Increased heart rate, muscle tension, and perspiration.**
* **Psychological Responses: Clouded perception, emotional swings, and difficulty handling additional stressors.**

**Stressors:**

* **Physical Environment: Noise, bright lights.**
* **Social/Relational: Rudeness, loneliness.**
* **Financial: Unpaid bills, taxes.**
* **Lifestyle Choices: Lack of sleep, excessive caffeine or alcohol.**

**Symptoms of Stress:**

* **Physical: Fatigue, headaches, muscle cramps.**
* **Cognitive: Poor attention, problem-solving difficulties.**
* **Behavioral: Changes in activity, increased alcohol consumption.**
* **Emotional: Anxiety, irritability, uncertainty.**

**Perceptions of Stress:**

* **Response to Stress: How one perceives and reacts to stress depends on their coping strategies and resources. The comparison between Valerie and Vincent illustrates how different attitudes can lead to different stress outcomes.**

**Wellness and Stress Management:**

* **Seven Dimensions of Wellness: Physical, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and occupational health are all important for holistic well-being.**
* **Goals for Stress Management: Stress cannot be eliminated, but it can be managed by using it as a motivator for peak performance and developing a culture of wellness.**

**This summary highlights the foundational understanding of stress, its effects, and strategies for managing it effectively**

**Week 2  
  
  
Stress Pathways:**

1. **Autonomic Nervous System**: Comprises the **Sympathetic** ("fight or flight") and **Parasympathetic** ("rest and digest") systems, which balance energy expenditure and conservation.
2. **Endocrine System**: The **adrenal glands**, **thyroid gland**, and **pituitary gland** release hormones like cortisol, adrenaline, and noradrenaline to manage stress, energy levels, and physiological changes (e.g., increased heart rate, blood pressure).

**Stress and Illness:**

* **Direct Effects**: Stress reduces immune function by lowering white blood cell count, leading to increased susceptibility to illness.
* **Indirect Effects**: Behavioral changes such as poor eating habits, smoking, or alcohol consumption can worsen health.

**Physical Impacts of Stress:**

* **Medium-Term**: Muscle tension, headaches, fatigue, and digestive problems.
* **Long-Term**: Chronic stress can lead to severe health issues like heart disease, premature aging, and mental health conditions.

**Stress on Body Systems:**

* **Cardiovascular System**: Stress elevates heart rate and blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart disease.
* **Gastrointestinal System**: Stress can disrupt digestion, leading to issues like acid reflux or altered bowel movements.
* **Muscles**: Stress causes muscle tension (bracing), leading to chronic pain and stiffness.
* **Skin**: Stress aggravates skin conditions, increases oil production, and worsens issues like acne.

**Coping and Stress Management:**

* The presentation suggests the need to activate the **relaxation response** (the opposite of fight-or-flight) through techniques like breathing exercises, meditation, and mindfulness.

**General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS):**

* **Alarm Stage**: The body's immediate reaction to stress.
* **Resistance Stage**: The body tries to adapt to the stress.
* **Exhaustion Stage**: Chronic stress leads to depletion of the body's resources, potentially resulting in illness.

**Zones of Stress:**

* **Positive Stress**: Can be productive and motivating.
* **Overload and Underload Distress**: Either too much or too little stress can be harmful, impacting physical and mental well-being.

The notes reinforce these concepts with reminders that stress affects both mental and physical health, offering links to videos and suggesting mindfulness exercises as a means to manage stress​

Week 3

* **Mind/Body Connection**: Psychological health impacts physical health. Individuals who maintain emotional well-being are less prone to stress and illness. Stress can manifest physically as headaches, muscle pain, and digestive issues.

**Key Concepts:**

1. **Psychosomatic Disease**: Stress-related illnesses have both mental and physical components. The mind can affect the body, leading to conditions like high blood pressure and digestive problems.
2. **Placebo and Nocebo Effects**: Belief in a treatment’s effectiveness can enhance or worsen its effects. This highlights the power of perception over health outcomes.

**Perception of Stress:**

* **Cognitive Interpretation**: How we perceive stress is more important than the stressor itself. If we view events positively, we experience less stress.
* **Selective Awareness**: Focusing on the positive aspects of situations, while acknowledging the negative, helps reduce stress. Practicing gratitude through journals and conversations can build resilience.

**Optimism and Health:**

* **Optimism**: Optimistic individuals tend to have lower mortality rates and better overall health. Conversely, pessimism can contribute to poor health outcomes.

**Humour and Stress:**

* **Humour**: A great coping mechanism that helps reframe stressful situations, reducing their impact on mood. However, negative forms of humor can increase stress.

**Self-Esteem and Locus of Control:**

* **Self-Esteem**: Low self-esteem can lead to unhealthy behaviors. Building self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to succeed) strengthens self-esteem and resilience.
* **Locus of Control**: Those with an internal locus of control believe they can influence outcomes, leading to proactive stress management. Those with an external locus feel powerless.

**Managing Anxiety:**

* **Anxiety**: A response to perceived threats, similar to stress. Techniques like cognitive restructuring, thought stopping, and systematic desensitization help manage anxiety.

**Coping Techniques:**

* **Cognitive Restructuring**: Challenging negative thoughts and reframing them.
* **ABCDE Technique**: A method for building optimism by disputing pessimistic thoughts.
* **Grounding Techniques**: Exercises to focus on the present and reduce anxiety, such as body awareness and mental exercises like counting or observing details.

**Resiliency:**

* **Traits of Resiliency**: Happiness, optimism, self-control, and creativity help individuals cope with challenges and grow stronger from stress.

**Hardiness:**

* **The 3 Cs of Hardiness**: Commitment, control, and challenge. Hardy individuals see stressors as opportunities to grow rather than threats to avoid.

**Taking Control:**

* **Stress Management**: Requires actively exercising control over the stress response. It involves reducing stressors and practicing relaxation or thought management techniques.

By addressing perception and mindset, individuals can significantly influence their stress levels and health