Surviving Summer in a Construction Zone

Faculty and Staff Assistance Program
Confidential guidance and support by licensed professionals

Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine
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Presented by Jim Morris, LCSW-R
“That the birds of worry fly over your head, this you cannot change. That they build their nest in your hair, this you can prevent.”

- Asian Proverb

“When written in Chinese, the word crisis is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other opportunity.”

- President John F. Kennedy
Where does stress come from?
If You’re a Dog ....
If You’re a Human ....

Other stressors might include: Workplace in general  
Internal: physical, emotional, spiritual, behavioral, history  
External: social, weather, local/national/world events, home

Dust!  Parking!  Dirt!  
Claustrophobic!  Change!  Traffic!  Negativity!  
Under Construction  
Stink!  Unpredictable!  Debris!  
Noise!  Detours!  Interruptions!  Helpless!
Construction Stress & You

Be Mindful
Surviving Construction Stress:  
Don’t Panic!
Surviving Construction Stress:
Don’t Be Impulsive!
Surviving Construction Stress:  
Don’t Join the Crew!
Surviving Construction Stress:
Don’t Poke Fun at the Workers (they might hear you!)

Mom, why that sign?

Women work all the time. When men work, they need to put up signs.
Surviving Construction Stress: Use Your Stress Reduction Kit?

Instructions:
1. Place on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in the circle.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.
Surviving Construction Stress: 
Do vs. Don’t

Try to remember to use humor when stressed, it can have:

I. Short-term benefits

✓ **Stimulate many organs.** Intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.

✓ **Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.

✓ **Soothe tension.** Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.
Surviving Construction Stress

Try to remember to use humor when stressed, it can have:

2. Long-term benefits

✓ **Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts ➔ chemical reactions ➔ affect your body ➔ more stress ➔ decreasing your immunity. Positive thoughts ➔ release neuropeptides that help fight stress & potentially more serious illnesses.

✓ **Relieve pain.** Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers. Laughter may also break the pain-spasm cycle common to some muscle disorders.

✓ **Increase personal satisfaction.** It’s easier to cope with difficult situations + helps you connect with other people.

✓ **Improve your mood.** Better mood = feel less stressed.
Pharmacy

“Ever notice how your cat licks her feet, then goes to sleep? This new sleep aid is made from synthetic cat feet!”
Surviving Construction Stress

For Supervisors:

- **Notice and identify**
- **Take necessary steps** to mitigate stressors
- **Ask** staff about what triggers their work anxiety and what their stress levels might be. Use the data to pinpoint trouble spots in the environment.
- **Assist**: promote resources like CU Wellness Program & FSAP & ….
- **Communicate**: effective communication is single best tactic for managing workplace stress.. clearly spell out changes, provide timely updates, listen to concerns, provide effective responses to worries.
- **Prioritize**: supervisors should make reducing job-related anxiety a priority.
- **Be flexible** with schedules and staff
Surviving Construction Stress

The role of control in stress management:

- There are times when something disturbs, upsets, or stresses us, but no matter how troublesome or trivial the situation, we always have choices.
- One crucial choice is whether to focus on what we can control or what we cannot control.
- Many of us focus on what we cannot control.
- This focus feeds stress, frustration, anger, and unhappiness.
Surviving Construction Stress: Choose Wisely

- What I cannot control
- What I can influence
- What I can control
Surviving Construction Stress: Accept Those Things You Can’t Change

• Practice, practice, practice .. acceptance
• A tiny pebble (daily annoyances) or a boulder (an illness, a tragedy, organizational change/uncertainty)
• We have four options for handling painful problems:

  1. “Solve” the problem   [i.e., make it go away via magical thinking]
  2. Change how you feel about the problem
  3. Stay miserable
  4. Accept the problem/how you feel
Surviving Construction Stress:  
*Be Stress Management Active*

- Move: get physical, dance, walk, stretch, jump, swim, play ball
- Play: laugh, relax, enjoy, and commune with others
- Eat a healthy, well balanced diet
- Sleep: 7-8 hours a night
Surviving Construction Stress: 
*Be Stress Management Active*

- Expect change
- Embrace change
- Choose your battles wisely:
  - DNE *(Do Not Engage)*
- Learn to be a good listener!
- Encourage others
- Avoid engaging in rumors, gossip and negativity
- Obtain and share *factual* information

- If possible meet with your supervisor regularly to:
  - Nurture the relationship
  - Inform him or her of your work
  - Get feedback and direction
  - Stay informed
Surviving Construction Stress

Grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

- Reinhold Niebuhr
FSAP Offers:

• Personal consultation and needs assessment
• Short-term counseling
• Information about/referral to:
  Campus or community resources and services
• Consultation:
  With supervisors, managers, HR, and others who are concerned about an employee or workplace situation
• Crisis response and community support
Bert needs to see an FSAP counselor.

"It's just something I do every day at 5:00 to get rid of stress before I go home."
Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

Contact Information:

• For help with personal/family/work issues faculty and staff may call: 255-COPE [255-2673]

• FSAP is located at: 312 College Avenue (Across from The Nines Restaurant)

• [www.fsap.cornell.edu](http://www.fsap.cornell.edu)