

ISMA COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT PRACTITIONERS

Knowledge Required to Match Membership Categories

ISMA COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE SECTIONS	MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES		
	Complementary Therapist	Personal	Corporate
A UNDERSTANDING STRESS 2 Basics 3 Physiology 4 Short and long-term responses 5 Stressors	Core Knowledge in A2-5 required by all categories		
B MANAGING STRESS 6 Behavioural strategies 7 Psychological strategies and techniques 8 Physiological strategies 9 Therapeutic approaches 10 Complementary therapies	Core Knowledge Required in B8 Expert in B10	Core Knowledge Required in Sections B6-9	
C STRESS AND THE WORKPLACE 11 Stress and Organisations 12 Stress and the Law 13 HSE Guidance on work-related stress 14 Workplace stress management interventions			Expert in all these
D CONTROVERSIES	Core Knowledge Required		

ISMA Requirement for Personal Stress Management Courses

A. UNDERSTANDING STRESS – Basics of stress

This section outlines the basic level of understanding that should be achieved by all Stress Management Practitioners, no matter which branch of stress management they choose to pursue. It starts with recognition that there is no universally accepted definition of stress and knowledge of some of the key definitions that are currently in use. It includes understanding that the stress concept and stress management practice include issues relating to both causes and effects of stress. An overview of the types of intervention that can be used to prevent and manage stress is also included – looking at both individual and organisational level. Finally, an understanding of the range of models of stress that exist and what they contribute completes this basic level of stress management comprehensive knowledge.

1. Definitions of stress

- UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) definition*
- Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (IOSH) definition
- ISMA^{UK} definition*

Core Knowledge Requirement – The HSE definition and one other.

2. Models of stress

- Recognition that there is a range of different models of stress and different ways of categorising them*
- General Adaptation Syndrome*
- Yerkes-Dodson/Human Function Curve*
- Process Models
- Cognitive/psychological Models
- Transactional Models
- Micro-/macro-stressors Model
- Demand-Control-Support Model
- Person-Environment Fit Model
- Cybernetic Models

Core Knowledge Requirement – models marked *

Overview of interventions to prevent and manage stress

- Understanding of the distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary interventions
- Examples of primary interventions at individual and organisational level – identifying and tackling sources of stress
- Examples of secondary interventions at individual and organisational level – modifying responses to stress
- Examples of tertiary interventions at individual and organisational level – recovering from stress related problems

Core Knowledge Requirement – All of the above

A. UNDERSTANDING STRESS – Psychophysiology

This section deals with the psychophysiology of the stress response. Stress Management Practitioners need to have an understanding of the biology of the stress response in order to appreciate:

- how to recognise signs and symptoms of stress
- how stress can lead to ill health problems
- the way in which stress can arise through the way we behave

1. Basic anatomy and physiology

- Concept of homeostasis
- Structure and function of the body systems:
Cardiovascular, respiratory, skeleto-muscular, digestive, renal, immune, endocrine, reproductive

Core Knowledge Requirement – both of the above

1. Structure and function of the nervous system

- Peripheral and Central Nervous systems *
- Autonomic nervous system:
parasympathetic and sympathetic *
- Nerves, nerve impulses, synapses and neurotransmitters *
- Brain: main structural divisions and functions
- Hypothalamus and vegetative functions
- Limbic system and emotions
- Cortex and cognition

Core Knowledge Requirement – those above marked * and one other

+

2. Stress response

- Alarm / fight and flight response
- Resistance/Adaptation response
- Adrenaline, Noradrenaline and Cortisol
- Normal signs of stress response activity:
physical, mental and behavioural
- Signs of over-activation of stress response activity:
physical, mental and behavioural

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

3 Mind body connection

Core Knowledge Requirement – the above

A. UNDERSTANDING STRESS – Short and Long Term Outcomes

This section focuses on the ways in which over activation and prolonged action of the stress response can lead to illness, poor performance and relationship difficulties. Proposed biological mechanisms of the effect of prolonged and excessive stress, for example immune system suppression and coronary heart disease, are considered.

1. Stress related disorders and diseases

- Cardiovascular
- Respiratory
- Digestive
- Musculoskeletal
- Immunological including cancer, infections and allergies
- Others including diabetes, skin disorders, fertility
- Behavioural including eating, sleep and sexual disorders, substance use and abuse
- Emotional including anxiety, fear, phobias, obsessive disorders, depression

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above



UNDERSTANDING STRESS – Stressors

This section outlines what could be described as the *sources* of stress, whether originating in the environment or within the individual themselves. Understanding of stressors also includes gaining clarity on a certain muddled use of language in relation to the stress concept.

Firstly, many people routinely use the word “stress” (instead of “stressors”) to describe the external conditions, or pressures they face. ISMA(UK) acknowledges, and adopts, the Health & Safety Executive’s use of the word stress only in relation to the *reaction* experienced; the word *pressure* or *stressor* being reserved for the input to, or source of, that reaction.

Secondly, many people claim that certain situations “make” them stressed. The word “stressors” would in this case describe the *causes* of stress. However, although certain external factors such as physical discomforts, significant life events and psychosocial hazards in the workplace are commonly associated with stress in many people, it is important to recognise the role played by the individual’s perception and cognition. It can be argued that stressors do not cause stress without certain internal factors.

So, this section is divided into two major parts: the external stressors, or pressures, and the internal causes of stress, representing the way people take their experiences.

Practitioners should further be aware of differing perspectives on the link between stressors and stress, including criticisms of the prevailing discourse on stress for being overly individualistic or failing to treat the stress concept in its sociological and historical context: see Section D: Controversies.

1. External sources of pressure

- For risk factors for stress in the workplace (such as demands, control, support, relationships, change, role), see section C.13
- Life Events including knowledge of the debate regarding the applicability of the Holmes-Rahe Life Events Rating Scale and knowledge of versions of the scale allowing for individual appraisal of events
- Relationships / Bullying
- Cultural / Diversity issues
- Cumulative effects of minor stressors: hassles and uplifts
- Impact of changing work life: 24/7 culture; dual career or single-parent families etc
- Information Society: email management, information overload, technological management
- Work-Life balance
- Modern-day societal frustrations: email spam / viruses; traffic jams / road rage etc

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above



Drivers of stress (representing the way people interpret an event as stressful)

- Negativity
- Workaholism
- Type A behaviour

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

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B. MANAGING STRESS – Behavioural strategies

This section lists the key behavioural strategies for managing stress at individual level. These are skills that can be learned by individuals in a training, coaching or self-taught context. They are generally intended to be preventative in nature. Mostly they are at the primary intervention level, meaning that their objective is to prevent stress from occurring by tackling causes of stress at source. However, they may also have a secondary intervention aspect, helping individuals to deal with inevitable pressures by modifying their responses in order to prevent negative stress-related outcomes.

Some of these strategies, such as analysis of sources of stress, are focused on reducing stress directly. Others, such as time management and assertiveness, do not have stress as their primary focus, but are useful for stress management. It is essential for all Stress Management Practitioners to have an awareness of the range of behavioural strategies available and what they involve, but in depth understanding of individual strategies will only be required for certain branches of stress management practice.

1. Behavioural strategies focused on reducing stress

- Analysis of sources of stress and targeted action to reduce exposure to stressors
- Behavioural rehearsal and role play/case studies to improve management of stressful situations
- Changing type A behaviour (behavioural aspects)
- Exposure programmes

Core Knowledge Requirement – Overview of all plus detailed knowledge of 2.

Overview +

2. Behavioural strategies that are useful for stress management

- Prioritisation
- Time management
- Assertiveness
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Conflict management
- Goal-setting
- Tools and techniques (e.g. Stephen Covey's Circle of influence)
- Work-life balance strategies
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Social support

Core Knowledge Requirement – Overview of all plus detailed knowledge of 5

overview +

B. MANAGING STRESS - Psychological strategies and techniques

This section lists the main psychological strategies and techniques that can be used to help people manage stress and deal with stress-related disorders. If some of these strategies are used in coaching or training contexts they could be considered as preventative. However, if used within stress counselling or psychotherapy they would be considered as a tertiary stress management intervention.

The strategies and techniques have been divided into four main headings to help distinguish between them. General strategies usually encompass techniques taken from a combination of the cognitive, emotional or imagery modalities.

For the stress management Core Knowledge, it is not essential to have in-depth understanding of all the listed strategies and techniques below. However, an awareness from each section would be considered a minimum. If these techniques are applied by the practitioner, it is important to know when strategies are indicated or contra-indicated and for the practitioner to receive on-going supervision of their practice.

1. General psychological strategies and concepts

- Anger management
- Anxiety management
- Emotional management
- Stress Management
- Problem-solving training
- Improving emotional intelligence
- Laughter and humour
- Spiritual/religion
- Self-esteem and self-acceptance concepts
- Cognitive underpinnings of emotions

Comprehensive Knowledge Requirement – overview + supervision

2. Cognitive techniques

- Thinking errors and thinking skills (i.e. cognitive distortions)
- Thinking errors audit
- Cognitive rehearsal
- Coping statements
- Challenging perceptions and beliefs
- Downward arrow and inference chaining
- Socratic questioning
- Stress diary
- Stress thought records/forms
- Thought blocking/stopping
- Hypnosis based on a cognitive script
- Rational-emotive
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Core Knowledge Requirement – 5 of the above

3. Emotional techniques

- Feeling identification
- Emotional expression
- Empty chair technique
- Shame attacking

Core Knowledge Requirement – Overview of all of above

4. Imagery techniques

- Aversive
- Coping
- Imaginal exposure
- Imaginal rehearsal
- Implosion/flooding
- Motivation
- Positive
- Relaxation
- Time projection
- Trauma coping
- Imagery exercises to improve images

Core Knowledge Requirement – Overview of all of above above

B. MANAGING STRESS – Physiological Techniques

This section deals with techniques for managing stress that are based on biological principles. Does the course provide knowledge on

1. Musculoskeletal and Mental

- Muscular relaxation
- Stretching
- Yoga
- Massage
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Alpha feedback
- Hypnosis
- Imagery
- Visualisation
- Autogenic Training
- T'ai Chi
- Colour Therapy
- Music/Sound Therapy

Core Knowledge Requirement – an understanding of benefits/usefulness of 4 of above.

2. Breathing

- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Deep breathing
- Quieting Reflex

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

3. Sleep

- Napping
- Day Dreaming
- Dealing with insomnia
- Dreaming

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

4. Exercise

- Fitness
- Exercise regimes
- Aerobic exercise

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

5. Nutrition and diet

- Balanced diet
- Vitamin and Mineral Supplements
- Water intake to avoid dehydration

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

6. Substance use and prescription drugs

- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Nicotine
- Drugs; anti-anxiolytic, antidepressants, beta-blockers

Core Knowledge Requirement – all of the above

8. Humour and Laughter

Core Knowledge Requirement

9. Biofeedback

- Galvanic skin response
- Skin temperature
- Alpha waves

Core Knowledge Requirement – overview of the above

10. Use of Senses in reducing stress response activity:
visual, olfactory, auditory, somaesthetic/kinaesthetic, taste

Course Requirement - overview

B. MANAGING STRESS – Therapeutic approaches

This section lists the main counselling and psychotherapy approaches that can be used to help clients experiencing stress and stress-related disorders. Therapy is usually considered as a tertiary stress management intervention and may help a person to recover from the deleterious effects of stress and stressful events. Some of the approaches listed below have been adapted to the fields of coaching and training and could be viewed as preventative in nature. Some of the therapeutic approaches such as Behaviour, Cognitive, Cognitive-Behaviour and Problem-solving psychotherapy have been underpinned by substantial amounts of academic research which highlight their effectiveness in dealing with clinical disorders such as depression, anxiety, panics, phobias, Post Traumatic Stress.

For a course on Stress Management, it is not essential to have in-depth understanding of all the listed therapeutic approaches below. However, a general knowledge of the main approaches and when they are indicated or contra-indicated is important for the purposes of referral of stressed clients or trainees to appropriately qualified practitioners. These approaches have been asterisked.

1. Counselling and psychotherapeutic approaches

- Adlerian
- Behaviour*
- Cognitive*
- Cognitive Analytic
- Cognitive-Behaviour*
- Eclectic
- Existential
- Gestalt
- Hypnotherapy
- Integrative
- Multimodal
- Solution Focused
- Neuro Linguistic Programming
- Person-Centred*
- Personal Construct
- Primal
- Problem-solving/problem-focused
- Psychosynthesis
- Psychodynamic (Freudian)*
- Psychodynamic (Jungian)
- Psychodynamic (Kleinian)
- Rational Emotive Behaviour*
- Reality
- Transactional Analysis

Course requirement – basic information on those asterisked plus an awareness of 6 others

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B. MANAGING STRESS – Complementary therapy

This section lists a number of the popular complementary therapies. Often stressed clients will wish to use alternative approaches either alone or in conjunction with more conventional approaches and methods. It is important to note that these approaches have been included for purposes of reference only and do not necessarily form part of the ISMA Core Knowledge. Certain therapies such as Candle Therapy are not recommended. However, a general knowledge of complementary therapies may be useful for stress management practitioners.

1. Complementary therapies

Acupressure	Kinesiology
Acupuncture	Kosmed
Alexander technique	Mactimoney Chiropractic
Aromatherapy	Manipulative Medicine
Aqua Touch	Massage
Auricular Acupuncture	Osteopathy
Ayurveda	Oxygen Therapy
Bach Flowers	Pilates
Bates Method	Polarity Therapy
Biodynamic Massage	Pranic Healing
Bowan Therapeutic Touch	Qi Gong
Candles	Radionics
Chelation Therapy	Reflexology
Chiropractic	Reflex Touch
Chinese Medicine	Reiki
Colonic Hydrotherapy	Rolfing
Colour Therapy	Shiatsu
Cranial Osteopathy	Sports Massage
Crystal Healing	Swedish Massage
Dolphin Therapy	Tai Chi
Feldenkrais	Traditional Chinese Medicine
Flotation in water	Tragerwork
Geopathic Stress	Transcendental meditation
Gerson Therapy	Tuina
Healing	Yoga
Hellerwork	Zero Balancing
Herbal Medicine	Zone Therapy
Homeopathy	Meditation
Hydrotherapy	Music Therapy
Hypnotherapy	Naturopathy
Iridology	Nutritional Therapy

Core Knowledge Requirement – An awareness of the variety of therapies available



International Stress
Management Association UK

Promoting well-being and stress prevention

I affirm that the

.....(Name of Course),

provided by(Name of Provider),

meets all of the requirements detailed above.

Signed:

Dated: