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NASW-NC – 2011 – Summer Clinical Institute Workshop

Relieve Hidden Stress to Treat Depression, Injured Self-esteem, Addiction

Focuses on healing the unhealthy results of obvious and especially hidden stress. Those painful byproducts are depression, injured self-esteem, addiction, more. For additional learning, participants get an Adobe Acrobat version of the book that first exposed human chronic 'hidden stress' and its new audio-book update. Both books are free.

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www.TruthForHealthyLiving.org/RelieveHiddenStress.htm

Need: Stress, mood disorders, self-esteem and addiction are sought-after workshop topics because they are often what we want to and need to treat. Few of us know about hidden stress: a biopsychosocial threat gaining recognition as valid and important in both popular and professional lifestyle health literature. This author's published study (Stress and Self-esteem, Clinical Laboratory Management Association Review, 1993) suggested a significant causal relationship between hidden stress and injured self-esteem. Uncovering and having a test for chronic hidden stress may have enabled recognizing depression as a common byproduct. Consequently, "fight-or-flight" became "fight-flight-or-freeze" or "hit-hike-or-hide."

Objectives: By the end of two hours of presentation and experiential learning, participants have at least a good beginning understanding of human chronic hidden stress, other and related theoretical concepts (subconscious or secret self-esteem and automatic or quick-interpretive thinking) and the theoretical model that proposes how they relate. Participants experience exercises or tools readily applicable to both self-care and treatment and leave with or have access to two texts they're encouraged to use to more fully understand and expand on what they learned.

Presenter: From 1995 until the present, Richard Terry Lovelace has served as a clinical social worker with Winston Clinical Associates (WCA), Winston-Salem, NC. Previously he served more than 20 years in a solo private practice. Except for some addiction practice at WCA and contractual stress management work for Magellan Health Services he is retired and now primarily builds and maintains his clinical social work legacy Web site. Dr. Lovelace is mainstream published in cognitive-behavioral therapy and self-help, body weight management, addiction and stress management.

Lovelace Stress Scale

Directions:

- Read the 10 statements on the next slide.
- As you go, decide how well each statement describes you in recent times. (The last 6 weeks or so.)
- Respond to each statement with a number from 1 to 7. The more you believe the statement describes you in recent times, the higher the number you give.

Not at all like me..... So-so like me.....Just like me

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

- Be sure to write your numbers as you go and avoid skipping items.
- Keep to yourself the first 10 numbers you write and all subsequent numbers you write that suggest your results.

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1. **I believe I have too much stress.** (Remember to rate how well these statements describe you recently on a scale from 1 to 7 and write your numbers as you go.)
2. **I worry about people or things.**
3. **I have a concern or fear that interferes in my life.** (You might relate it to activities such as asserting yourself, calling or meeting with relatives or customers/clients, being rejected, handling objections, dealing with criticism, driving or maybe flying.)
4. **I believe that one or more of my relationships at work or elsewhere suffers because of my irritability or sadness.**
5. **I doubt that I'm as successful as I should be in my work or at home.**
6. **The way I eat and drink is nutritionally poor or I eat too much fattening food so my body shows it. I'm not lean enough.**
7. **I have a physical problem that I suspect, or someone tells me, comes from pressures in my life.** (The problem, for instance, could be headaches, stomach upsets, high blood pressure, back or neck pain, difficulty sleeping, teeth grinding, bitten finger nails, sweating, excess body fat, decreased romantic interest, skin problems or cool hands.)
8. **Most days there are too many tasks that I should or must complete.**
9. **I use something to calm or relax me or I use something to pep me up or to give me energy/excitement.** (You might, for example, use nicotine, caffeine, medicine, dietary supplement, alcohol, forbidden drug, gambling, risky relationship or maybe watching too much television.)
10. **I exercise - not activity done at work, yard or housework - too little or the exercise I do doesn't help that much.**
 - Now add your numbers and write the sum of them.
That number represents your initial Obvious Stress Score.

Stress Scale Results

Adjustment for overstating chronic stress that's obvious:

If your initial Obvious Stress Score was **58 or higher**, check to see how often you gave a **rating of 7**. Deduct **3 points** from your initial score for each response of **7**. If applicable, write that new number.

What your initial or adjusted Obvious Stress Score suggests:

- If **33 or less**, you are **using denial** of how much emotional and physical byproducts of on-going stress you have. Another possibility is that you misunderstood how to do the rating. Be **very upfront with yourself** when retaking this stress scale.
- If **34 to 39**, you have a **low level** of on-going or chronic obvious stress.
- If **40 to 45**, you have a **moderate level** of chronic obvious stress.
Getting relief is clearly indicated.
- If **46 or higher**, you have a **high level** of chronic obvious stress.
Getting relief is more urgently needed.

If you scored **39 or less**, you still may have the most dangerous stress. That's chronic hidden stress. It's the most dangerous because it is difficult to get yourself to work on getting free of what you honestly don't realize is present.

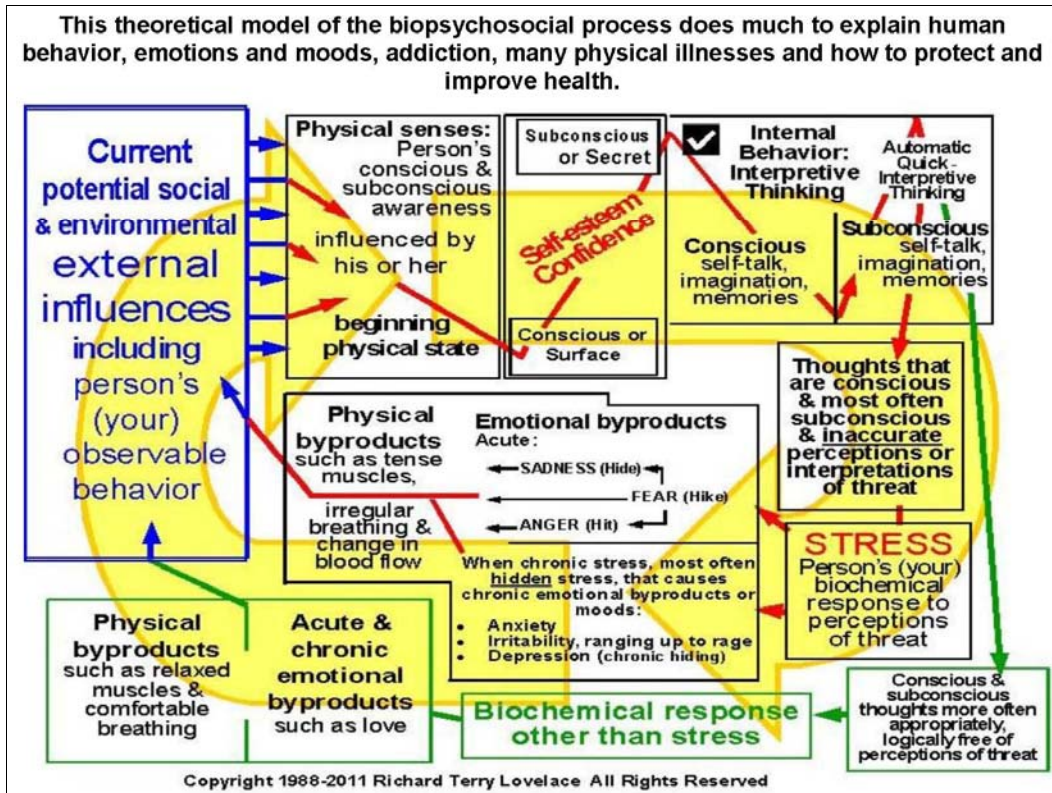
Checking for Hidden Stress

If you scored 39 or less,

- see if you rated yourself with a **5 or higher** on **items 2, 6 or 9**. (Worry, hurtful eating and self-medicating, in our society, are the more common ways we unknowingly use to avoid awareness of the emotional and physical byproducts of our persistent stress.)
- Add **7 points** for each of those.
- Finally, add **3 points** for each rating of **1** that you gave. (It so rarely happens that there is a total lack of something that it's reasonable to consider such a response to be an unknown attempt to ignore it.)
- Write the new total.

What your score, adjusted for hidden stress, suggests:

- If **40 to 45**, you have a **moderate level** of chronic hidden stress.
Using what you learn from this program to gain relief is clearly indicated.
- If **46 or higher**, that suggests you have a **high level** of chronic hidden stress.
Using this program to gain relief soon is highly recommended.



Lovelace Self-esteem and Confidence Inventory

- A 21 item test, the first 20 of which investigate the likelihood of injured subconscious or secret self-esteem and self-confidence. The last, 21 st, item suggests how injured conscious or surface self-esteem and confidence might be.
- That inventory is on **Track 10** of the audio-book workshop handout.
- Completing and scoring it will provide you with evidence of the accuracy of your final stress scale score.
- You will find evidence of the accuracy of the above statement in the following published study of how stress and self-esteem relate.

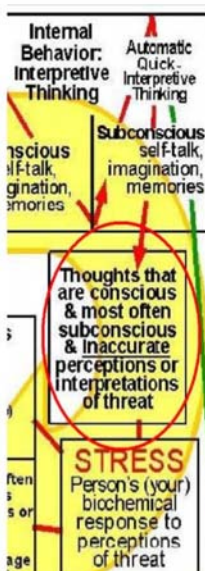
Study

"Stress and Self-esteem," Lovelace, RT, Clinical Laboratory Management Association Review, 1993.
(A copy of that article is on the CD handout.)

With the cooperation of a large organization of healthcare management professionals, a randomly selected sample (330) of its members was surveyed. An acceptable fifty-three percent (n=175) responded by completing and returning by mail the stress and self-esteem instruments provided as parts of this presentation.

Only self-esteem was statistically significant in predicting subjects' level of stress. **When self-esteems were identified as healthier, more accurately representing subjects' value, there was less chronic hidden stress.**

Inaccurate Quick-interpretive HIDDEN STRESS Thoughts



Internal Behavior: Interpretive Thinking

Automatic Quick-interpretive Thinking

Subconscious self-talk, imagination, memories

Thoughts that are conscious & most often subconscious & inaccurate perceptions or interpretations of threat

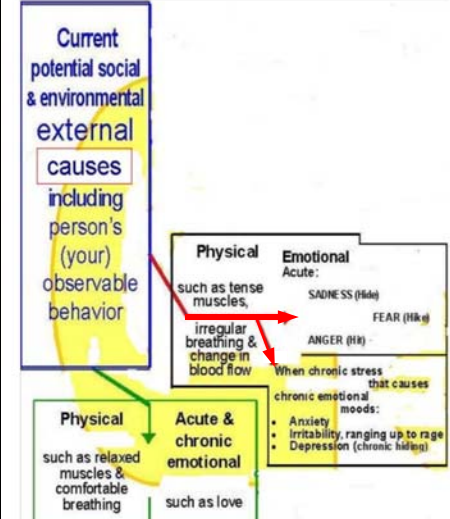
STRESS
Person's (your) biochemical response to perceptions of threat

From the Stress Master audio update handout:
When we have injured (inaccurate) subconscious self-esteem and confidence, we almost constantly make unknown-to-us honest mistakes. We have subconscious (quick) interpretive thoughts that alert us to false threats and so create chronic needless stress that's hidden and over time will disable and kill us.

We have meaningful impact on our own hidden stress and the hidden stress of the people we care for when we help to identify, understand and repeatedly counter the most prevalent inaccurate thoughts that are the immediate cause of hidden stress.

Those most prevalent inaccurate thoughts are:

- **"Makes me feel" thinking.** (Example: Those children playing loudly is driving me nuts.) When our self-esteem is hurting, understandably, we try to avoid taking responsibility for our emotions and moods. We project the responsibility/ blame onto external influences. Fully-enough accepting and absorbing the truthful counter to only this unknown-when-it-happens thought may, by itself, provide sufficient relief from hidden stress.



Current potential social & environmental external causes including person's (your) observable behavior

Physical
such as tense muscles, irregular breathing & change in blood flow

Emotional Acute:
SADNESS (fide) FEAR (fide) ANGER (fide)

When chronic stress that causes chronic emotional moods:

- Anxiety
- Irritability, ranging up to rage
- Depression (chronic illness)

Physical
such as relaxed muscles & comfortable breathing

Acute & chronic emotional
such as love

"Makes me feel" thinking denies that there is more than this small portion of the human biopsychosocial process and alleges it somehow goes in the opposite direction of how the sum of scientific knowledge says and sound reasoning confirms is true.

HIDDEN STRESS Thoughts Continued – 1

- **"I'm my shirt" thinking.** (Example: Recalling being abused as a child says something is wrong with me.) We put unwarranted blame on ourselves when we confuse what we do, think and feel with ourselves – with what is essentially us.
- **"I just know" thinking.** (Example: I just know that when I get to work there will be some crisis.) This nearly always subconscious thought is telling yourself that somehow you know, when you don't, what will happen in the future. When telling ourselves we have this "super power," we are unknowingly attempting to compensate for self-esteem and confidence that's injured.
- **"What people say matters most" thinking.** (Example: My wife just told me she isn't sure she still loves me.) This anything-but-factual notion holds that people most often say what they mean rather than speaking in "rough draft" and represents a failing attempt to increase our sense of self-worth by believing we say what we truly mean.
- **"Terrible" thinking.** (Example: I'm being laid off and am doomed.) When we too-soon judge some happening as being "awful," "the worst," and so on, we kid ourselves into believing -- to hopefully increase self-esteem and confidence -- that we can accurately judge its outcome before the results are known.

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HIDDEN STRESS Thoughts Continued - 2

- **"Making magic" thinking.** (Obsessing on some thought such as: My child is late getting home and that probably means she is hurt.) What most adults identify as "worrying" is "Making magic" thinking. We honestly confuse, with affection and providing protection, dwelling on some real or imagined circumstance or event. We mistakenly believe doing it shows or proves affection for ourselves and others and magically provides protection.
- **"It's not fair" thinking.** (Example: It's wrong and shouldn't happen that social conservatives tell lies to make laws that so seriously hurt my clients.) This thinking, remaining from our teen years, proposes that, like games with rules, people and life should treat fairly us and who and what we value. Like the other "hidden stress thoughts," we deserve zero criticism for having this false notion -- unknowingly meant to increase our secret sense of self-worth and confidence -- that there are and we somehow know rules that don't exist.
- **"Racy" thinking.** (Example: These cars in front of me being driven by old farts and idiots will make me 10 minutes later getting home.) Nearly always when we are in a hurry we're having this hidden stress thought and, like the others, creating hidden stress. Finishing whatever quickly and before some real or imagined competition does is inaccurately perceived as the "winning" that builds hurting self-esteem and confidence.

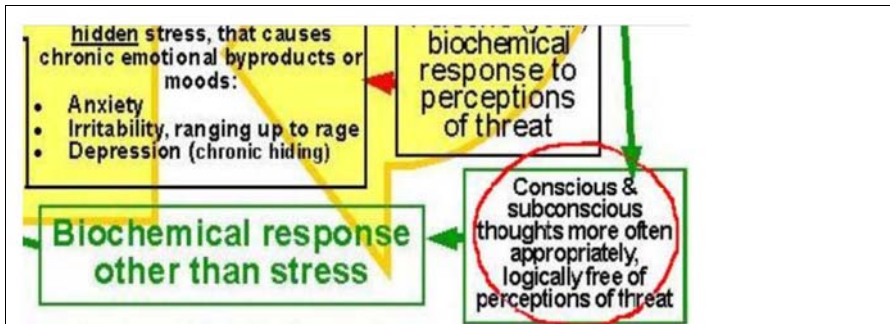
Some of many possible truthful counters

- **"Makes me feel" thinking.** What I believe is true decides my emotions and moods. I take much-needed control by, as I can, taking responsibility for what I feel. Increasingly it helps reminding myself of that fact by thinking of the young father and his sons on the bus.
- **"I'm my shirt" thinking.** I refuse to think as a lovable child does and confuse what's truly me with what isn't. What I came into this world with is honestly me rather than what I think, do and feel. Changing what I do, think or feel that 'smells' is necessary the way changing a smelly shirt is necessary. I'm far more likely to be able to change what I no longer honestly, but mistakenly, believe is an essential part of myself. Sorting through a pile of my clothing to get to that entirely-worthy-self that's truly me is just one thing I can imagine to successfully undo 'I'm my shirt' thinking. If I doubt 'Makes me feel' thinking is untrue, I deserve zero criticism for it. That's a smelly shirt I can change.
- **"I just know" thinking.** I and the people who depend on me stay safer as I take manageable steps instead of pretending I can tell the future. I can imagine walking a wonderful, but temporarily dark, path in the woods and keeping my light in front and near my feet. Besides, I don't have a sign in my front yard with a red hand on it that would permit me to tell the future.
- **"What people say matters most" thinking.** What truly matters isn't what people say but what we mean. People talk and write in rough draft. Keeping in mind that I'm only listening to rough draft is enough. Professionals who write know that the more they get their emotional upset out of their writing, the closer it is to what they mean to say. I can safely assume that what I and others say when upset is even rougher draft and nothing I need to upset myself with by dwelling on it.

Truthful Counters Continued

- **"Terrible" thinking.** When I take the time needed to evaluate what's happening or has happened I'm far more likely to judge the outcome as positive. I and those folks I care for are worth waiting to see. I can think about the story of the family out West and their horse ran away.
- **"Making magic" thinking.** Worrying hurts; it creates the hidden stress and its chronic byproducts that cause pain. If what I worry about happens, I might hurt again. Hurting once is more than enough and far more than I deserve. Worry offers zero magical protection from harm and teaches a false lesson about what's truly love and loving.
- **"It's not fair" thinking.** Fair is where Ferris Wheels are found. I only expect fairness when I see a Ferris Wheel. I can count on other people and organizations doing what they believe is in their better interest instead of doing what I believe is fair. When they are wrong, they will pay a penalty I don't need to know about. I use my resources to be helpful rather than waste them dwelling on an absence of fairness.
- **"Racy" thinking.** Life and living are not races to be won or lost. I am of value when I go more slowly and enjoy my more certain journey to health and happiness.

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Addiction and Untrue Other Than STRESS Thoughts

Our observable behaviors that are potential external influences and are commonly identified by health care specialists as addiction or symptomatic of addiction are more apt to be the result of subconscious interpretive thoughts that indirectly cause stress.

"Don't like" thinking. (Example: I don't like the discomfort that comes from being without my drug.) The part of the human brain that avoids unhealthy dependencies and would end them without equally harmful replacements (essential to recovery) isn't sufficiently formed or connected until our 20's. A teen-like part gets in control of the very hurtful observable behavior/dependency and maintains it with thinking such as 'I don't like.' It is wrongly believed that doing what's not liked is done by people who are inferior.

Untrue Indirectly-Causing STRESS Thoughts Continued

"Getting even" thinking. (Example: I'll get back at my dad for nagging me by smoking cigarettes.)

"Making up for" thinking. (Example: I'm helping myself feel better and rewarding myself by eating candy and drinking beer to compensate for all the strain caused by my work.)

"I'll do better, later" thinking. (Example: The busy time of the year is no time to stop drinking. I will quit drinking so much wine when things slow down this Summer.)

Some Counters to Untrue Indirectly-Causing STRESS Thoughts Associated With Addiction

"Don't like" thinking. I refuse to let the likes and dislikes of a terrific, but teenager-like, part of me decide what my future will be. Besides, without the discomfort I have little opportunity to confirm my progress.

"Getting even" thinking. I'm getting even smarter rather than trying to get even. Doing harm to myself now is no way to retaliate for harm done to me earlier.

"Making up for" thinking. What I'm dependent on hurts me and the people I love or will love someday. A real reward has a rewarding effect now and later.

"I'll do better, later" thinking. I take the manageable steps that focus me on making progress now rather than a future beyond my control.

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How to Successfully Counter What Truly Causes, Directly and Indirectly, the
Most Disabling and Deadly Stress:
Hidden Stress

Since inaccurate self-esteem and confidence make interpretive thinking that's also mistaken, help to make the subconscious self-esteem and confidence of those you serve increasingly, more accurately, reflect their considerable value and ability to trust in their judgment. **Do this in part through subtly modeling having done so yourself.**

- **Add More Truthful Influences to External Influences.** The audio track on your CD handout labeled "Truthful Influences" is a relatively simple way to accomplish this.
- **Add the Lovelace Three-Part Process.**
- **Track Positives.**
- **Constructively Confront.**