IBD INFORMATION FORUM

FLARE-UPS: MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY

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Overview

- Mind-body integration
- Connection between IBD and stress/anxiety
- Recognising symptoms of stress and anxiety
- Managing stress and anxiety
Mind-Body Integration

- **Thoughts**
  "people might notice if I'm in the bathroom for too long at the party"

- **Feelings**
  Anxiety, Embarrassment, Shame

- **Behaviours**
  Avoid eating at the party in order to avoid needing the bathroom

- **Physical Sensations**
  Stomach pain, Tightness in abdomen

- **Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours** are all connected and influence one another.

  “In mind-body medicine, the mind and body are not seen as separately functioning entities, but as one functioning unit. The mind and emotions are viewed as influencing the body, as the body, in turn, influences the mind and emotions” (Selhub, 2007)
Effect of Stress

- Alteration of cytokine profile
- Increases permeability
- Activates mucosal mast cells
- Stimulates the secretion of central CRF
- Stimulates the secretion of peripheral CRF

**Direct effects**

- Exacerbates immune dysfunction
- Reduces mucosal barrier function
- Exacerbates immune dysfunction
- Regulates ACTH-cortisol system
- Influences gastrointestinal motility

**Indirect effects**

- Stimulates behaviours promoting relapse
- Stopping medication
- Smoking and drinking
- Poor diet

Source: Sajadinejad, Asgari, Molavi, Kalantari and Adibi (2012)
Recognising Symptoms of Stress

- What is *helpful* stress?
- What is *unhelpful* stress?

**Feeling Irritable or Angry?**
You may be more easily upset when under increased stress, such as when dealing with a new diagnosis or adjusting to ongoing stress of a chronic illness.
Recognising Symptoms of Anxiety

Over the past two weeks how often have you been bothered by the following issues?

- Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge
- Not being able to stop or control worrying
- Worrying too much about different things
- Trouble relaxing
- Being so restless that it is hard to sit still
- Being easily annoyed or irritable
- Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen

Source: beyondblue
The fight-or-flight response (also called hyperarousal, or the acute stress response) is an automatic physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival. It prepares the body to take action.
Thoughts Racing

Changes to Vision

Dry Mouth

Heart Beats Faster

Nausea and “Butterflies” in Stomach

Muscles Tense

Dizzy or Lightheaded

Breathing Becomes Quicker and Shallow

Hands Get Cold

Adrenal Glands Release Adrenaline

Palms Become Sweaty

Bladder Urgency

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Bladder Urgency
Managing Stress and Anxiety

- **Focus on making changes with yourself** – we have more control over our own reactions than the reactions of others.

- **Change your physical response to stress through relaxation** – e.g. leisure time, specific relaxation and breathing exercises or meditation.

- **Regular exercise** – make sure to pace yourself as needed.

- **Be aware of unhelpful habits** – e.g. always rushing, taking on too much work, getting upset at trivial things.

- **Identify your triggers of stress and anxiety.**

- **Understand all you can about your illness.**
Thank you for listening!

Resources