

Coping Strategies for Job Stress - Exploring Which Ones Work

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55th Annual Scientific Assembly
Alberta College of Family Physicians

UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY



MEDICINE
AND
SOCIOLOGY

Rimrock Resort Hotel, Banff, Alberta
Friday February 26th, 2010



Conflict of interest disclosure: None





Learner Outcomes

- Identify various types of coping strategies
- Recognize effective coping strategies
- Incorporate effective coping strategies into your life



Defining wellness...

“Wellness goes beyond merely the absence of distress and includes being challenged, thriving, and achieving success in various aspects of personal and professional life”
(Shanafelt et al., 2003).

Wallace JE, Lemaire JB, Ghali WA. Physician Wellness: A Missing Quality Indicator. *Lancet*. 2009;374:1714-1721.



Physician wellness

- Risk of physician ill health
 - Heavy workload
 - Long work hours and on call hours
 - Emotionally charged situations
 - Excessive cognitive demands
 - Structural and organizational changes to practice

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Physician wellness

- Long work hours associated with
 - Personal harm
 - Needle sticks
 - Motor vehicle collisions or near misses on the drive home
 - Poor professional outcomes
 - Failures of attention
 - More errors

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Physician wellness

- Suboptimum attention to self-wellness by physicians as a result of:
 - Individual factors
 - Indifference to personal wellness
 - Neglect of self-care
 - Coping by denial and avoidance
 - Conspiracy of silence
 - Profession factors
 - Culture and stigma that support indifference and neglect to personal wellness
 - Workplace factors
 - Inadequate resources to be well



Physician wellness

- Unwell physicians negatively affect health care systems
 - Job and career turnover
 - Burnout (reduced productivity and efficiency, ordering unnecessary tests, reduced time with patients)
 - Patient safety and medical errors
 - Job satisfaction (better patient adherence)

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Coping with stress: DEFINITION



Oh, no, my son had no problem at all coping with the divorce. He's fine! Why do you ask?

COPING: Complex, multifaceted

- A wide range of cognitive and behavioral strategies that individuals may use in avoiding, evaluating or altering stressful situations or easing their undesirable effects

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"Now a little test to see how you cope under pressure."

search ID : dpan1688

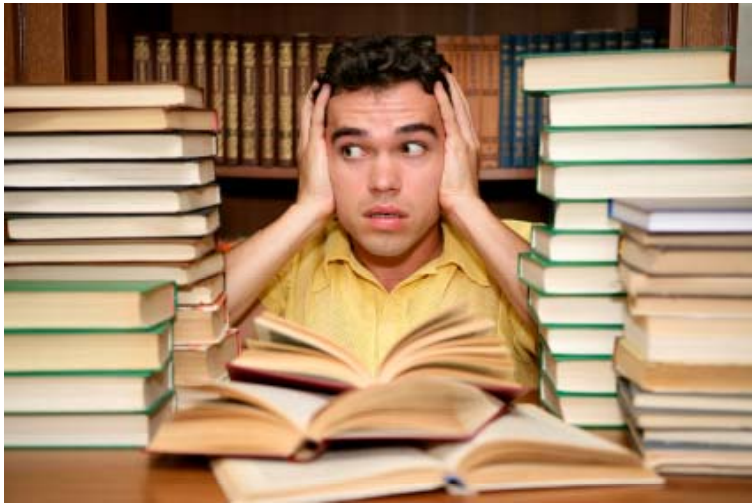
COPING: Complex, multifaceted

- Active or passive attempts to respond to a situation or threat with the goal of removing the threat or reducing emotional discomfort

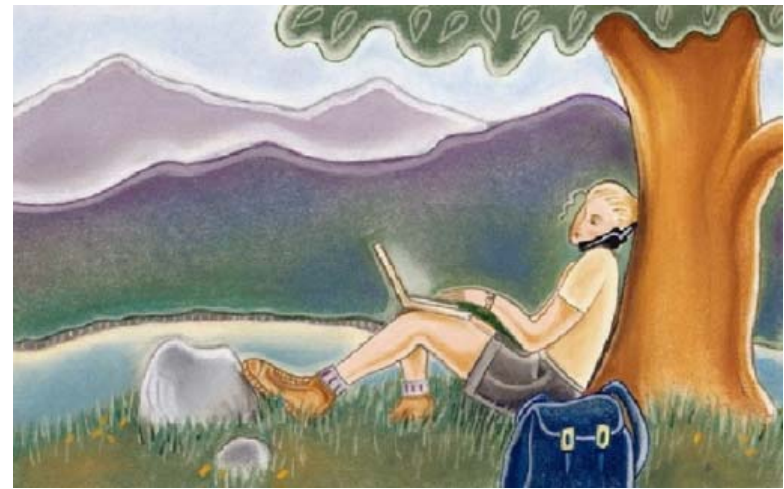


How do you cope with work stress ...

At work?



Away from work?



Types of coping strategies



Problem focused or active coping

- Used when we feel we can have some control over the situation
- Aimed at eliminating or altering the source of stress



Emotion focused

- Used when source of stress is beyond our control
- Aimed at reducing or managing the emotional distress or psychosomatic symptoms

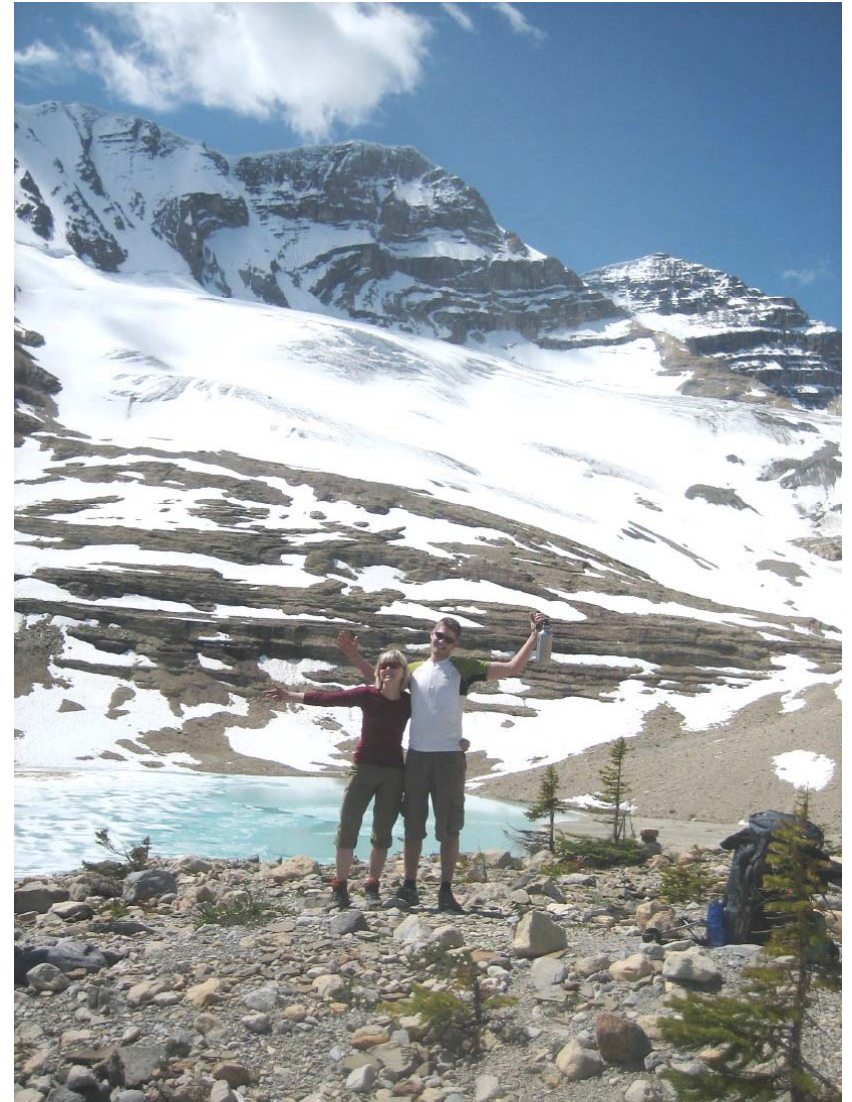


Seeking support



Types of support

- Emotional support
- Informational support
- Instrumental support



Maladaptive coping strategies

- Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs)
- Fail to seek help from others
- Deny or avoid the problem or the feelings of stress
- Keep busy on other tasks
- Distraction
- Disengage from the situation



Review your coping strategies and categorize them...

Problem focused or active
Emotion focused
Support seeking
Maladaptive

How docs cope

- Problem solving
- Seeking social support
- Not blaming oneself
- Wishful thinking
- Avoidance/denial



How residents cope

- Tackle the problem
- Ask for help
- Rationalize the event
- Fail to cope
- Dismiss the event



Determinants of Physician Well Being

DETERMINANTS OF PHYSICIAN WELL BEING:
RESULTS FROM THE PHYSICIAN INTERVIEWS,
SPOUSE INTERVIEWS AND JOB SHADOWS

Stage One Report
June 2008

Prepared by
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Prepared for the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
and the Calgary Health Region

All physicians within the Calgary Health Region

Stage One:

- Physician interviews (N=42)
- Physician job observations (N=44)
- Spouse interviews (N=32)

Stage Two:

- Survey to all physicians in the CHR
- Received 1178 surveys (40% RR)

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**Table 1. Breakdown of Physician Specialty
for the CHR and the Study Sample**

Specialty Area	CHR^a N (%)	Sample N (%)
Anesthesiology	145 (6%)	73 (6%)
Clinical Neurology	72 (3%)	18 (2%)
Diagnostic Imaging	83 (4%)	22 (2%)
Emergency	87 (3%)	58 (5%)
Family	772 (31%)	407 (33%)
Internal Medicine	447 (18%)	199 (17%)
Obstetrics/Gynecology	68 (3%)	24 (2%)
Pathology	66 (3%)	26 (2%)
Pediatrics	198 (8%)	78 (7%)
Psychiatry	123 (5%)	73 (6%)
Surgery	220 (9%)	117 (10%)
Other	NA	83 (7%)
Rural	181 (7%)	82 (7%)
Total	2488 (100%)	1178 (100%)

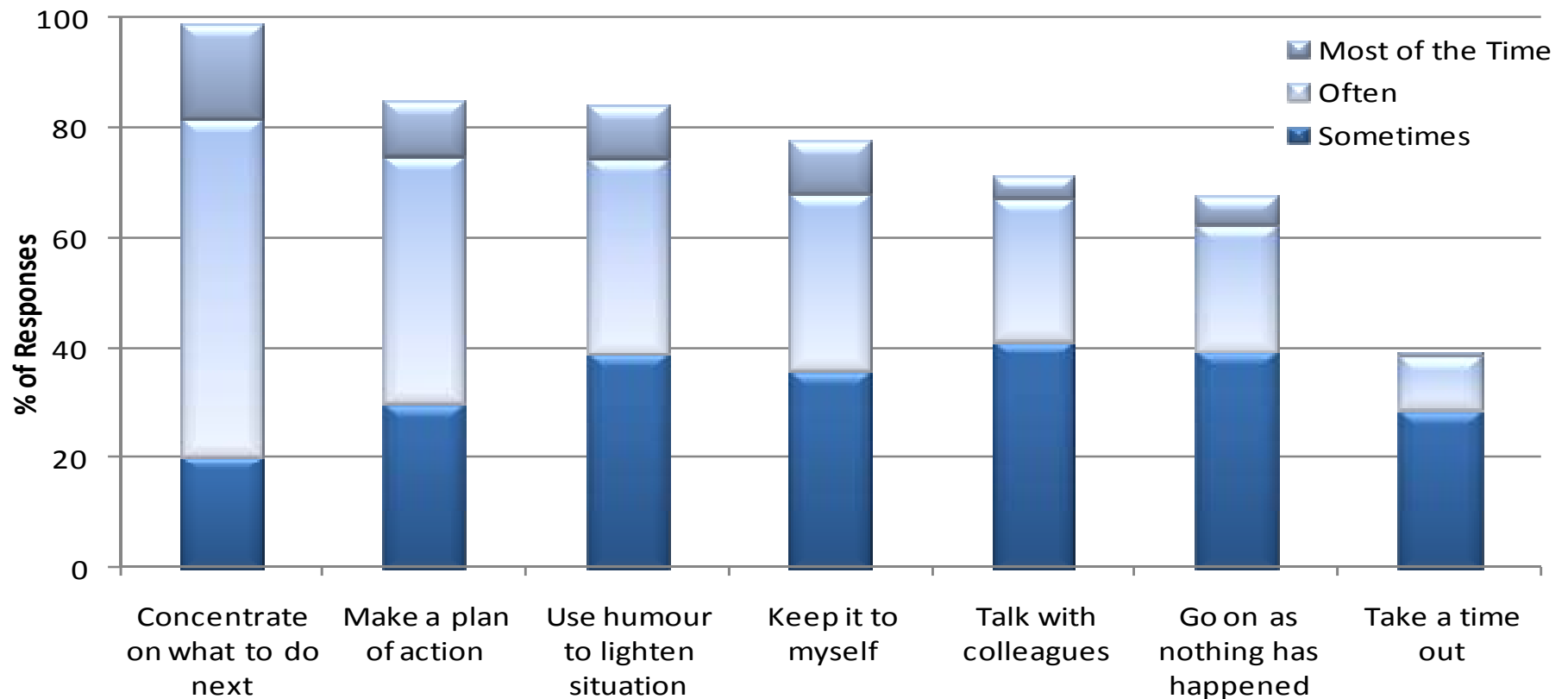
^a Based on Department and Division Counts for the CHR (June 2008)

Coping strategies:

Major themes extracted from the interviews (n=42)

Coping strategies while at work	Coping strategies outside of work
Deal with stress/work through it	Exercise
Talk with co-workers	Have some quiet time
Take a time out	Talk with spouse
Use humor	Spend time with family
Ignore or deny the stress	Leave work at work

Frequency of use of physician coping strategies at work (n=1151)

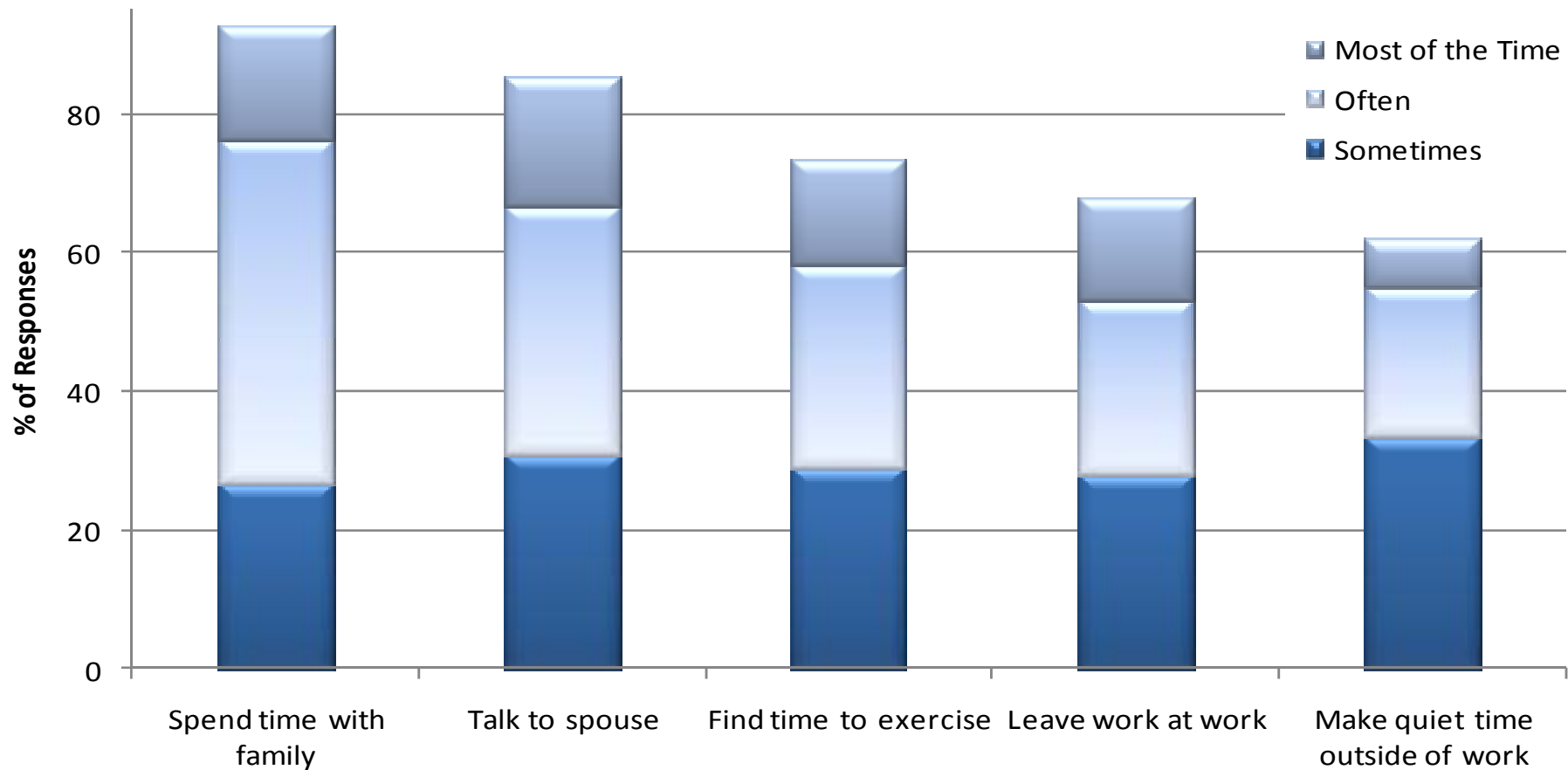


Physician coping strategies at work and how they relate to burnout (n=1151)*

Effective coping strategies that significantly reduce burnout	Harmful coping strategies that significantly increase burnout
Take a time out (r = -.18)	Keep stress to myself (r = .23)
Use humor to lighten the situation (r = -.11)	Concentrate on what to do next (r = .07)
Talk it over with colleagues (r = -.11)	Go on as if nothing happened (r = .07)
Make a plan of action (r = -.10)	

* All zero-order correlations are statistically significant (p<.05)

Frequency of use of physician coping strategies outside of work (n=1151)



Physician coping strategies outside of work and how they relate to burnout (n=1151)*

Effective coping strategies that significantly reduce burnout	Harmful coping strategies that significantly increase burnout
Set aside quiet time outside of work (r = -.22)	
Find time to exercise (r = -.21)	
Spend time with family outside of work (r = -.19)	
Leave work at work (r = -.17)	
Talk about stress with spouse (r = -.06)	

* All zero-order correlations are statistically significant (p<.05)



For physicians

- Taking a time out won't help with an overwhelming workload...
- ...it may help when they encounter difficult interpersonal interactions



For physicians

- Behavioral disengagement (e.g., giving up, admitting defeat) may not be useful...
- ...but mental disengagement (e.g., turning to other activities to take your mind off things) may be an effective short term response



For physicians

- Active problem solving may not always help reduce feelings of burnout...
- ...especially when the stressors reflect unalterable circumstances
- ...emotion focused coping may then be more beneficial



For physicians

- Active problem solving may be ineffective or harmful when involving prolonged or substantial effort...
- ...may result in a cumulative fatigue effect (depletes energy supply)



For physicians

- One third regularly use “seeking support” strategies...
- ...almost one half regularly keep stress to themselves



Summary

- There are various types of coping strategies
- Some are more effective than others in helping to reduce stress and feelings of burnout
- Most of the effective ones are easy to incorporate into our workday

Summary

- Physician wellness is important!
 - Fundamental for doctors, vital for patients
- Physicians do have stressful jobs!
- Effective coping strategies help us deal with stress!

