Whether you are aware of it or not...

You already have the capacity to survive and thrive during your HSC years
What has helped you survive challenges?
The HSC is a challenge
Your senior school years CAN be the best years of your life!!
But be aware of the potholes!
Senior School

- Considered a transition year
- Step up in volume and depth of work
- More commitments to juggle
- Entering late adolescence
- Different relationship with teachers
- Different relationship with parents
- 9 out of 10 students surveyed said year 11 was the most challenging year of their school life
...AND YOU THINK YOU HAVE STRESS...
“Learn to Love the Hills”
WHAT IS STRESS?

• Physiological reaction to an external stimuli
• Fight or flight response
• Stressors in 2012 are very different
• Our brains can’t tell the difference between bears and exams
• All stressed up and nowhere to go
• Bodies in overdrive
Some stress is good for us
The Biology of Stress

- Increased heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased ventilation
- Hands & feet get cold
- Increased muscular strength
- Digestive system stops
- Increased perspiration
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Pupils dilate
- Hearing sharpens
Chronic Stress

- Adrenal glands start to secrete cortisol = Long-term effects
- Inhibits digestion
- Inhibits reproduction
- Disturbs sleep patterns
- Inhibits tissue repair
- Immune & inflammatory systems affected
- Blood sugar imbalance
- Increases abdominal fat
- Raises blood pressure
The worst symptom of chronic stress for students is when their capacity to learn starts to shutdown....
It’s not just the HSC

- Making decisions about the future
- Peer conflict/fitting in
- Getting a license
- Supporting friends
- Falling in and out of love
- Managing finances/job
- Family stress/separation
- Peer pressure
- Traumatic events
ADDING TO THE LOAD……

• Students can feel expectations from themselves & teachers
• Added to this is parental expectations
• Media attention on the HSC
• Intense competition for university places
• Nature of the students? Perfectionists & worriers…
Recognising the Signs of Stress
• Angry outbursts
• Disorganisation
• Persistent illness
• Unkempt appearance
• Mood swings
• Isolating self
• Talking faster than usual
• Erratic behaviour

• Nightmares
• High risk behaviours
• Memory loss
• Unable to stay on a topic for long
• Tears for no reason
• Irritability
• Sensitivity
• Concentration problems & restlessness
• Not finishing sentences
• Lack of motivation
• Exhaustion – despite sleeping
- Changes in eating
- Changes in appearance
- Changes in sleeping
- Carelessness
- Putting in long hours but having little to show for it
- Excessive time on the computer or watching TV
So, how do you know when stress turns into distress?
STRESS & COPING

Ideally the amount of stress a student perceives they are under should be equal to the amount a student believes they can cope with.
Stress & Not Coping

In reality some students feel that there is more stress in their lives than the coping resources they have to deal with it - leading to a feeling of being overwhelmed.
Beware of Burn Out Before You Get There!

- Pace yourself
- Keep a balance
- Be realistic
- Slowly adjust your other commitments
- Look after your health
When stress turns into distress…

- Identify the source of stress
- Improve it (empty out the stress bag)
- Wear it (fill up the coping bag)
- Get out (dump the bags & run)
Research tells us that prolonged stress is a risk factor for depression.
Seek support if the change is significant & is there for more than 2 weeks
How Parents Can Help

• Know your child
• Remain positive
• Ask how you can help
• Praise all efforts no matter how small
• Provide a nurturing environment
• Listen
• Give space if required
• Talk about personal bests
Why do some students find it difficult to get motivated?

- Many students naturally find motivation in Year 11
- A small percentage don’t
- There is no one reason
- Get onto it early!
Why do students procrastinate?

1. Repulsive Tasks
2. Mental Mountains
3. Emotional Avoidance
4. Lack of Energy
5. Loneliness
6. Patterns of behaviour
How Parents Can Help With Motivation

• Try and find the reason for lack of motivation
• Consider the conditions in which your child works
• Intrinsic motivation is the key
• Praise your child no matter how small the effort
• Be conscious about the messages you give your child about success
• Focus on your child’s strengths
• Avoid comparing your child to another
• Tell your kids you love them regardless of their academic results
What Students Can Do To Help Themselves

• GET ORGANISED!
• CALM BREATHING
• POSITIVE SELF TALK
• HELP OTHERS
• FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND
• FORM A STUDY GROUP
• LAUGH

• NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS
• BREAK TASKS DOWN
• TAKE TIME OUT
• BALANCE WORK, REST AND PLAY
• REWARD YOURSELF
• CUT BACK ON EMPLOYMENT IN YEAR 12
• PUT THE HSC INTO PERSPECTIVE
GETTING THE BALANCE

• Are you having fun?
• Are you getting enough exercise?
• Are you eating well?
• Are you getting enough rest?
Managing Stress, Hardship and Trauma

It’s not about the fall. It’s how you get up that counts.
Develop Strategies for Coping

- De-catastrophise
- Get perspective - help someone worse off than you
- Practice realistic thinking - what is the worst thing that could happen?
Avoid Over-thinking and Social Comparison

- Minimising opportunities for rumination
- Seek distraction
- Accept your personal best
Practice Positive Thinking & Gratitude
Nurture Relationships
Practice Acts of Kindness

“Go and find somebody worse off than you are, and see if you can help them,”

Brian Egan - Aussie Helpers
Live in the Present
Concentrate on what’s going right for you
Savour Life’s Joys
Commit to Goals
Remember that there is more than one way to get there.
Take Care of your Body and Soul
Exercise regularly
Monitor what you put into your body
Get Good Sleep

• Adolescents should be getting around nine hours sleep a night
• Sleep deprivation affects the brain
• Cat naps are OK – keep them under 40 minutes
• Catch up on weekends is OK but not sustainable
Eat well
Identify and USE Your Strengths
Share the Journey with Your Peers

The better you do as a group the better you do!!
Foster a Positive Relationship With Your School

• Develop communication between parents, teachers and students
• Voice any concerns early on (that goes for students too)
• Be supportive of extra curriculum school involvement
• Get to know who to talk to when issues or questions arise
"I may not be there yet, but I'm closer than I was yesterday."

Author Unknown
Questions?

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Megan Booth is a Visual Arts teacher with training in positive psychology. She has a passion for working with children and families to help them get the most out of life. She is the co-founder of Hollyhox Positive Resources & creates visual resources that give people the tools to start positive conversations. In 2008 she travelled on a study tour to North America to investigate issues relating to the increasing rate of adolescent depression in the western world. Megan has a wealth of experience working with young people and their families, particularly utilizing positive psychology to help people cope with the challenges of everyday life. She has presented at numerous seminars, conferences and schools, both in Australia and overseas, addressing issues relating to adolescent mental health and welllbeing. Megan is currently implementing a number of positive psychology wellness programs in schools, communities and work places.
Traditional psychology is about moving people from -5 to 0

Positive Psychology is about moving people from 0 to 5
Positive psychology isn’t just about being happy
Positive Psychology is...

• Concerned with strengths rather than weaknesses.

• Interested in building on the best things in life, not just repairing the worst.

• Concerned with making the lives of ordinary people fulfilling - not just healing pathology.

• Building strengths and maximising peoples’ ability to cope with adversity

Happy

Ordinary

Sad
Positive Psychology is for Everyone