

# The Challenges of Mental Health Issues in the Workplace

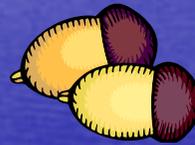
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# How is MH Defined?

- The absence of being:



- The absence of:
  - Mental Illness

# Some definitions:

- Mental Health
  - The successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity

# Some definitions:

- Mental Illness

- The term that refers collectively to all mental disorders, which are health conditions characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning

# Some definitions:

- Mental Health Problems
  - Signs and symptoms of insufficient intensity or duration to meet the criteria for any mental disorder.

# Some definitions:

- Mental Disorders
  - Reflect abnormal functioning of the brain
  - They alter mental life and behaviour
  - Precise cause not known
  - Broadly, genetic, psychological, social & cultural
  - Modern research is focusing on the interaction of these factors.

# Diagnosis and Culture

- What is the potential problem here?
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Culture
- Western Medicine
- Diagnosis
  - History
  - Tests
  - Clinical Opinion

- *Diagnostic assessment can be especially challenging when a clinician from one ethnic or cultural group uses the DSM–IV Classification to evaluate an individual from a different ethnic or cultural group. A clinician who is unfamiliar with the nuances of an individual’s cultural frame of reference may incorrectly judge as psychopathology those normal variations in behavior, beliefs, or experience that are particular to the individual’s culture. (APA, 1994)*

# Your turn

- How would you define mental health?
- What are the key ingredients?
- How do we know if someone is mentally healthy?
- Are you?

# Work as a cause of ill health

(Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1990)

1. Workload and work pace
2. Role stressors
3. Career concerns
4. Work scheduling
5. Interpersonal relationships
6. Job content and control

# Five Concepts:

- **WORK HAS MEANING AND GIVES MEANING**
- **LEARNED HELPLESSNESS**
- **LOCUS OF CONTROL**
- **PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS**
- **DEPRESSION**

**Western, industrialized  
and increasingly high-  
technology societies place  
a great deal of value on  
gainful employment.**

**Acton (1981) identified  
four reasons why work is  
an essential goal for  
disabled persons...**

# Acton:

- a) need for income derived from gainful employment
- b) nearly all cultures place a high value on work as a part of rich and complete life
- c) need to form social relationships

**People's work  
environments may well  
represent the most  
important group  
membership and focus of  
time in their lives.**

Dr. Henry Harder

**In fact, Uris and Tarrant  
(1983) suggested that the  
work group is more  
important than family,  
friends and community.**

# Acton:

- a) need for income derived from gainful employment
- b) nearly all cultures place a high value on work as a part of rich and complete life
- c) need to form social relationships
- d) employment gives structure and discipline to living

# *Learned Helplessness*

Learned helplessness is  
caused by repeated  
experience of aversive,  
noncontrollable situations.

A person caught up in learned helplessness exhibits passive, resigned inflexible behaviour, linked to feelings of depression brought on as a result of repeating these situations.

**The only escape from this  
condition is to exercise  
control over these  
situations.**

# LOCUS OF CONTROL

- Who controls my life anyway?
  - Me or them?

People with an external locus of control are more passive, and generally achieve less.

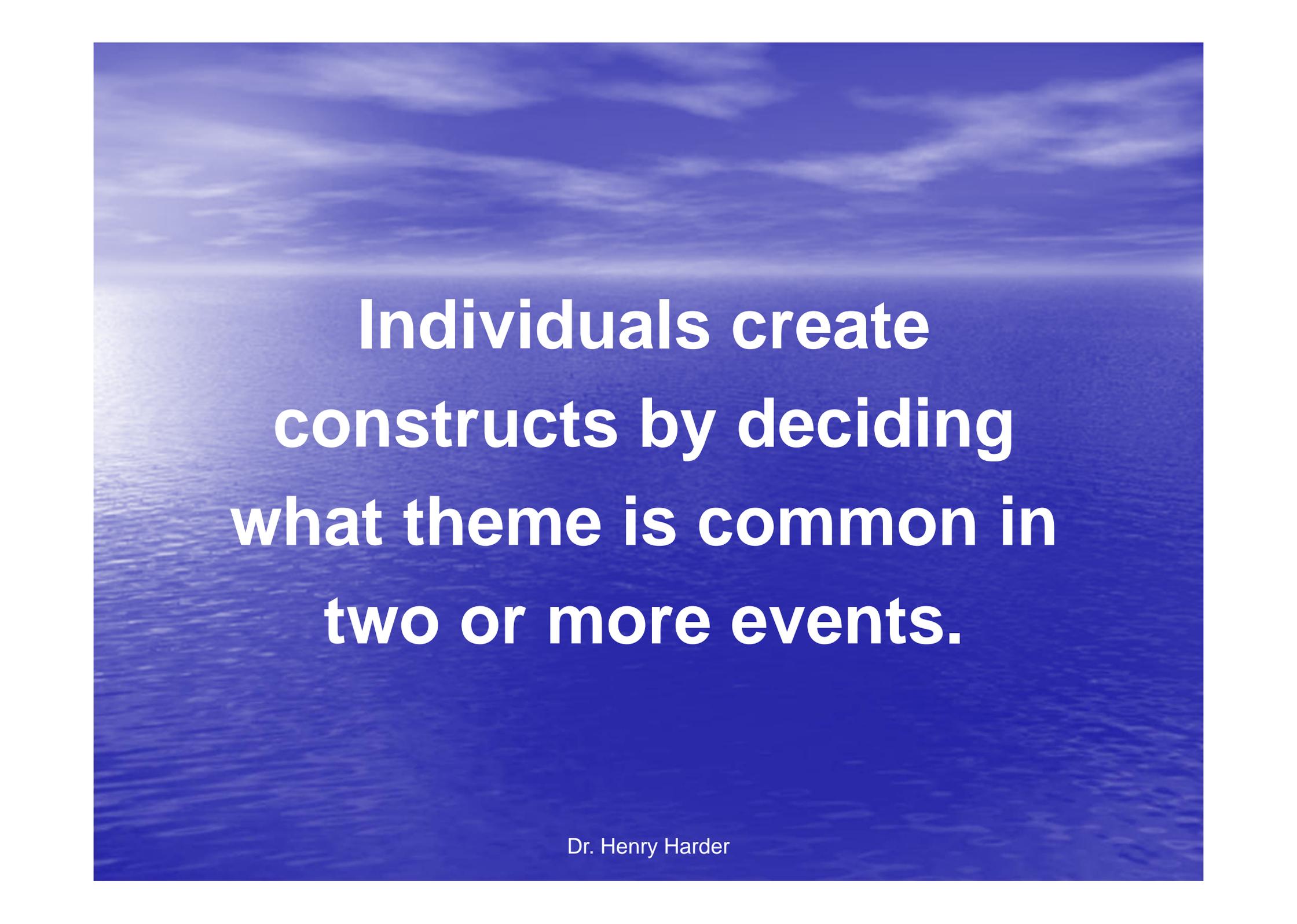
**People with an internal locus of control are more pro-active, and generally achieve more.**

# Locus of Control Matrix

Internal	External
<b>Good</b> I can I'm in charge	<b>Good</b> I can accept help from others Influence of higher power
<b>Bad</b> I can't I'm no good	<b>Bad</b> I have no control Everyone else is to blame

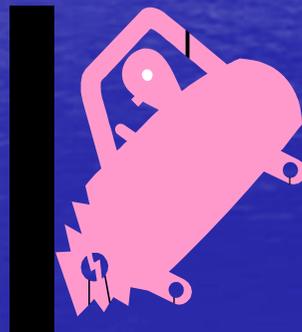
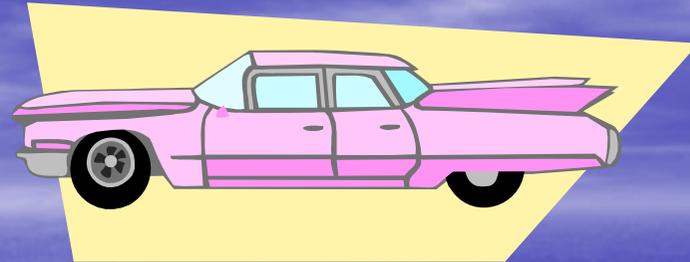
# ***Personal Construct***

**A personal construct is a transparent pattern created by individuals to organize the realities of their world.**



**Individuals create  
constructs by deciding  
what theme is common in  
two or more events.**

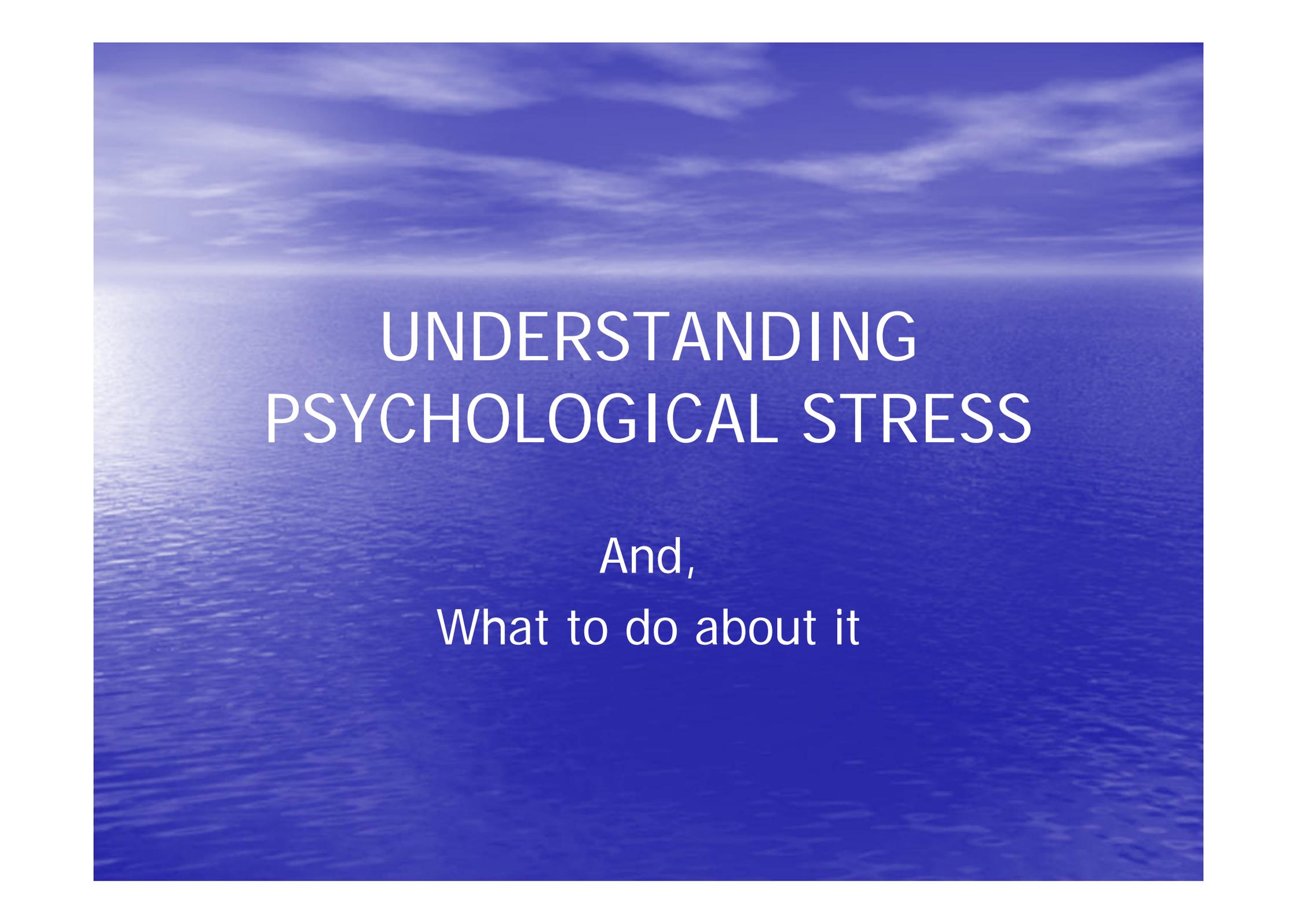
**Constructs provide a window or lens through which people perceive and understand events and also supply a mechanism for anticipating events and experiences.**



I really must  
be a clutz!







# UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

And,  
What to do about it

# What is stress?

- Stress is the "wear and tear" our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment
- Stress has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings
- As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action
- Stress can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective

# What is stress?

- As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

# What is stress?

- With the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a job promotion, or a new relationship, we experience stress as we readjust our lives.
- In so adjusting to different circumstances, stress will help or hinder us depending on how we react to it.

# How can I eliminate stress from my life?

- Our goal is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us.
- Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave us feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling "tied up in knots."
- What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress which will individually motivate but not overwhelm each of us.

# So, what is Optimal Stress?

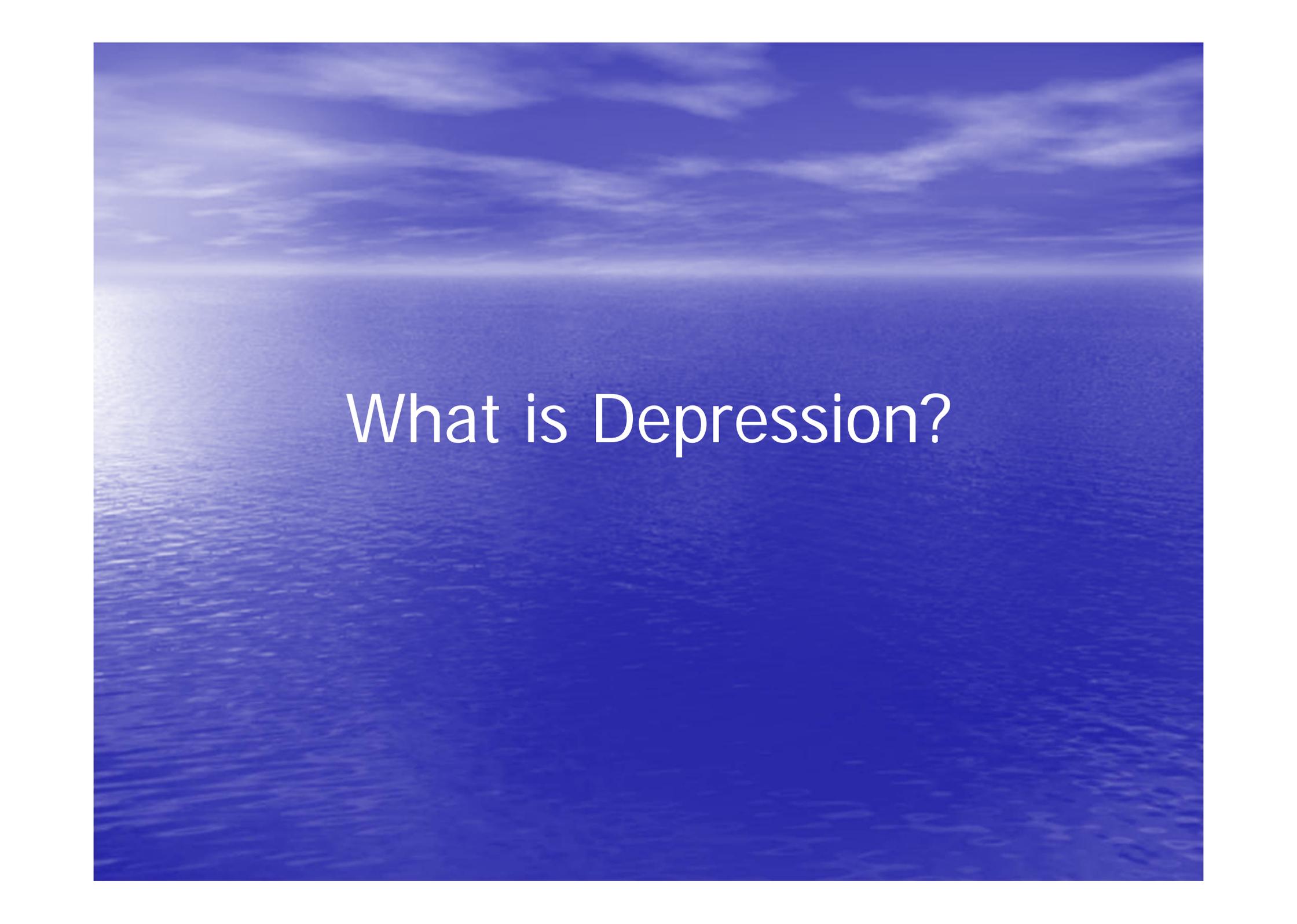
- There is no single level of stress that is optimal for all people.
- What is distressing to one may be a joy to another
- Our personal stress requirements and the amount which we can tolerate before we become distressed changes with our ages.

# So, what is Optimal Stress?

- It has been found that most illness is related to unrelieved stress
- If you are experiencing stress symptoms, you have gone beyond your optimal stress level; you need to reduce the stress in your life and/or improve your ability to manage it.

# How can we manage stress better?

- Become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions
- Recognize what you can change
- Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress
- Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress
- Build your physical reserves
- Maintain your emotional reserves

The background of the slide is a blue-tinted photograph of a vast, calm ocean stretching to a distant horizon. The sky is filled with soft, wispy white clouds, and the water's surface shows gentle ripples. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

What is Depression?

# Definitions of Depression

- In everyday language "depression" refers to any downturn in mood, which may be relatively transitory and perhaps due to something trivial.
- This is differentiated from Clinical depression which is marked by symptoms that last two weeks or more and are so severe that they interfere with daily living
- In Psychiatry the word *depression* can also have this meaning but more specifically refers to a mental illness when it has reached a severity and duration to warrant a diagnosis

# Signs of Depression

- Problems and misfortunes are a part of life.
- Everyone experiences unhappiness, and many people may become depressed temporarily when things don't go as they would like.
- Experiences of failure commonly result in temporary feelings of worthlessness and self-blame, while personal losses cause feelings of sadness, disappointment and emptiness.
- Such feelings are normal, and they usually pass after a short time.
- This is not the case with depressive illness.

# Signs of Depression

- Depression becomes an illness, or clinical depression, when the feelings described above are severe, last for several weeks, and begin to interfere with one's work and social life.
- Depressive illness can change the way a person thinks and behaves, and how his/her body functions.
- Some of the signs to look for are:

# Signs of Depression

- feeling worthless, helpless or hopeless,
- sleeping more or less than usual,
- eating more or less than usual,
- having difficulty concentrating or making decisions,
- loss of interest in taking part in activities,
- decreased sex drive,
- avoiding other people,
- overwhelming feelings of sadness or grief,
- feeling unreasonably guilty,
- loss of energy, feeling very tired,
- thoughts of death or suicide.

# What causes depression?

- There is no one cause of depression, neither is it fully understood. The following factors may make some people more prone than others to react to a loss or failure with a clinical depression:
  - specific, distressing life events,
  - a biochemical imbalance in the brain,
  - psychological factors, like a negative or pessimistic view of life.
- There may also be a genetic link since people with a family history of depression are more likely to experience it.

# How long does depression last?

- The depressed feelings we all experience after a serious loss or disappointment may last for a short or a long time. How long depends on the person, the severity of the loss, and the support available to help the person to cope with it
- Clinical depression may also last for short or long periods. It rarely becomes permanent. Without professional treatment, it may end naturally after several weeks or months. With treatment, it may end much more quickly.

# Does depressive illness follow a pattern?

- Unfortunately, once a person has had a clinical depression, he/she is more likely to suffer from depression again. For example, some people experience seasonal cycles of depression, particularly in winter. This is called Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.).
- Five to ten percent of people who experience depression also experience states of exaggerated happiness or elation called mania. The occurrence of both depression and mania at different times is called bipolar affective disorder, while repeated experiences of depression alone is termed unipolar affective

# How is depression treated?

- Depression is the most treatable of mental illnesses. Most people who suffer from depression are helped by the treatment they get, which usually includes medication and/or psychological counselling. Support from family, friends and self-help groups can also make a big difference.
- Many people who are seriously depressed wait too long to seek treatment or they may not seek treatment at all. They may not realize that they have a treatable illness, or they may be concerned about getting help because of the negative attitudes held by society towards this type of illness.

# How can you help?

- It can be difficult to be with and to help someone who is seriously depressed.
- Some people who are depressed keep to themselves, while others may not want to be alone.
- They may react strongly to the things you say or do.
- It is important that you let them know that it is okay to talk about their feelings and thoughts.
- Listen and offer support rather than trying to contradict them or talk them out of it.

# How can you help?

- Let them know you care.
- Ask them how you can help, and offer to contact their family doctor or a mental health professional.
- Find out about local self-help groups and attend a meeting with them.
- Try to be patient and non-judgmental.
- Most of all, don't do it alone - get other people to provide help and support too.

# Depression, some facts.

- 3 Mil. Canadians
  - 187,500 diagnosed & TX
- 1.4 Mil. Working Canadians
- Cost the Canadian & US economies **\$60 Billion** US annually. Half in lost productivity.
- Growing and getting younger.
- 30% of all disability recorded
- Fastest growing category of disability claims
- Economic cost of mental illness in Canada are 14% of corporate Canada's profits & 3% of our national debt.

# Depression, some facts.

- Early detection is key
  - Seldom dealt with at home
  - Workplace is critical for early detection and referral.
- First 2-3 months
  - Becomes chronic in 15% of cases.
- STD to LTD in 6 months.
- Treatment
  - Inadequate TX is centered on misuse & mis-prescribing of drugs.
- Poor TX creates 'Walking Wounded'
- Wrong or partial Tx contributes to recidivism

# Depression, some facts.

- Depressive disorders account for 30-40% of mental illness in Canada, 50% of mental health \$ spent
- Disability costs are somewhere from 4 to 12% of payroll costs in Canada
- Since 1994:
  - 100% growth in LTD
  - 40% growth in WCB charges to business
  - 55% growth in disability related absence

# Depression, some facts.

- Productivity Issues
  - Working longer but less productive
  - There is direct link between depression and loss of productivity
- The future is mental!
  - Information economy
  - Human capital & the human mind are more important than brawn
  - Depression directly effects out human capital
- Defeating depression must be a corporate priority!

# Depression, some facts.

- Major savings are possible.
- 4.2 to 7.0 Billion Dollars
- Prevention of human suffering
- **Priceless!**

# 12 Step Plan

1. High level education
2. Make depression a Financial Target
3. Insurance Reforms
4. Value Healthy Work Climates
5. Reduce E-Mail slavery
6. DM Strategies & RTW
7. More Specific Education
8. Emotional Work Hazard Audit
9. Life/Work Strategies
10. Rule out rule
11. Health Based Productivity
12. New Policies

# Effective Psychological Treatment

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Systemic Therapies
- Relaxation Training
- Psycho-Educational Groups.

# What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?



- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, or **PTSD**, is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape.
- People who suffer from **PTSD** often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged, and these symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life

- **PTSD** is marked by clear biological changes as well as psychological symptoms.
- **PTSD** is complicated by the fact that it frequently occurs in conjunction with related disorders such as depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other problems of physical and mental health.
- **PTSD** is also associated with impairment of the person's ability to function in social or family life, including occupational instability, marital problems and divorces, family discord, and difficulties in parenting.

- **PTSD** is not a new disorder. There are written accounts of similar symptoms that go back to ancient times, and there is clear documentation in the historical medical literature starting with the Civil War, when a PTSD-like disorder was known as "Da Costa's Syndrome."
- There are particularly good descriptions of posttraumatic stress symptoms in the medical literature on combat veterans of World War II and on Holocaust survivors.

# How does PTSD develop?

- Most people who are exposed to a traumatic, stressful event experience some of the symptoms of PTSD in the days and weeks following exposure.
- Available data suggest that about 8% of men and 20% of women go on to develop PTSD, and roughly 30% of these individuals develop a chronic form that persists throughout their lifetimes.

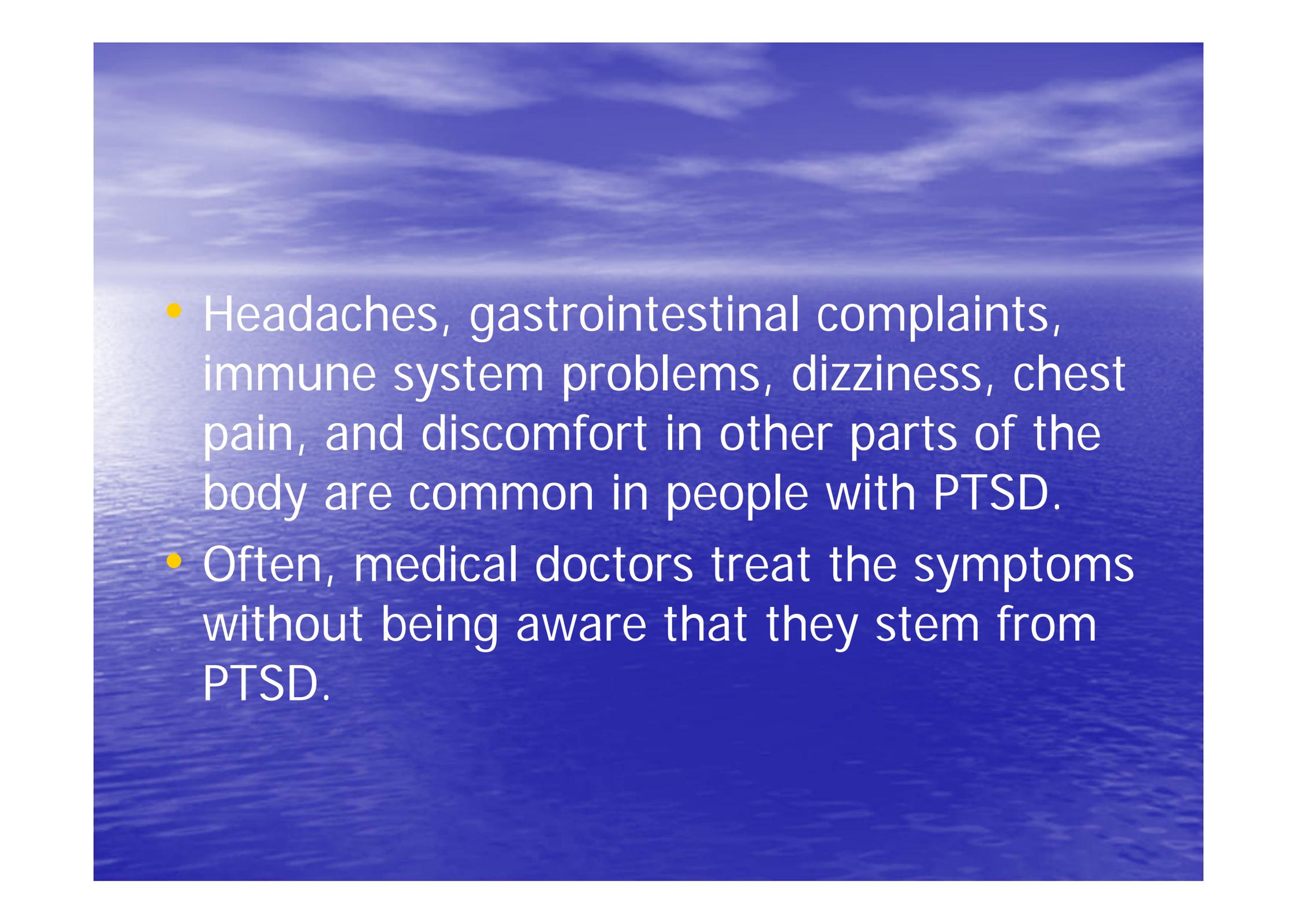
# How is PTSD assessed?

- It is generally thought that the best way to diagnose PTSD is to combine findings from structured interviews and questionnaires with physiological assessments.
- A multi-method approach especially helps address concerns that some patients might be either denying or exaggerating their symptoms.

# How common is PTSD?

- An estimated 7.8 percent of Americans will experience PTSD at some point in their lives, with women (10.4%) twice as likely as men (5%) to develop PTSD.
- About 3.6 percent of U.S. adults aged 18 to 54 (5.2 million people) have PTSD during the course of a given year. This represents a small portion of those who have experienced at least one traumatic event; 60.7% of men and 51.2% of women reported at least one traumatic event.

- PTSD also significantly impacts psychosocial functioning, independent of co-morbid conditions.
- These include problems in family and other interpersonal relationships, problems with employment, and involvement with the criminal justice system.

- 
- Headaches, gastrointestinal complaints, immune system problems, dizziness, chest pain, and discomfort in other parts of the body are common in people with PTSD.
  - Often, medical doctors treat the symptoms without being aware that they stem from PTSD.

# How is PTSD treated?

- PTSD is treated by a variety of forms of psychotherapy and drug therapy.
- There is no definitive treatment, and no cure, but some treatments appear to be quite promising, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy, group therapy, and exposure therapy.
- Exposure therapy involves having the patient repeatedly relive the frightening experience under controlled conditions to help him or her work through the trauma.
- Studies have also shown that medications help ease associated symptoms of depression and anxiety and help with sleep.

- The most widely used drug treatments for PTSD are the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, such as Prozac and Zoloft.
- At present, **cognitive-behavioral therapy** (CBT) appears to be somewhat more effective than drug therapy.
- Recent findings on the biological changes associated with PTSD have spurred new research into drugs that target these biological changes

# Bullying and Harassment

- In BC now covered by workers' compensation
- Must have a causative incident or incidents
- Related to stress and depression

# What do we need to do?

- Address direct & indirect stress
- Redesign work & workplaces
- Increase job challenges and job autonomy
- Educate Train, train, train

# And Remember the Five Concepts:

- **WORK HAS MEANING AND GIVES MEANING**
- **LEARNED HELPLESSNESS**
- **LOCUS OF CONTROL**
- **PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS**
- **DEPRESSION**



- Fragen?

- **VIELEN DANK!!**