

Ways to Manage Your Stress

Student Success Workshop Series



What is Stress?

- * Stress is the way we react or respond physically, mentally, and/or emotionally to any new, threatening, or exciting situation.
- * The stress we experience is rooted in the “fight or flight” response, which is the physical changes we undergo to prepare us to respond to an exciting or dangerous situation.



Common Causes of Stress for College Students

- * Perceived obstacles to goal achievement
- * Life challenges
- * Periods of significant transition

Ongoing everyday chronic stressors for college students can be grouped into the following categories:

- * School
- * Time
- * Money
- * Relationships

Symptoms of Stress

Physiological Symptoms

- * More frequent headaches than normal for you
- * Frequent muscle ache and/or tightness
- * Changes in eating patterns or loss of appetite
- * Changes in sleep patterns; taking longer to fall asleep; waking up tired and not well rested
- * Recurring colds and minor illness

Symptoms of Stress

Emotional Symptoms

- * Shorter temper than is normal
- * Impatience
- * Frustration
- * Difficulty controlling emotions
- * Low self esteem
- * Depression



Symptoms of Stress

Behavioral Symptoms

- * Difficulty relaxing
- * Difficulty concentrating
- * Difficulty in decision making
- * More disorganized than normal
- * Increased difficulty in task completion
- * A greater sense of persistent time pressure

Symptoms of Stress

Relationship Symptoms

- * Intense family blow-ups
- * Communication breakdowns
- * Parent-child conflicts



The Good and the Bad of Stress

- * While not all types stress affects academic performance negatively, stress-related behaviors and conditions, such as sleep difficulties, anxiety and depression can be factors
- * Some students struggle more with stress. These students experience feelings of distress such as feeling so depressed it is difficult to function, and seriously considering and/or attempting suicide. These feelings are not common and are an indication that the student is in need of assistance from family, friends, and professional staff.

The Good and the Bad of Stress

- * Stress is not always bad and can be motivating and energizing. In some instances, stress can be helpful because it gives you extra energy that you need to help meet physical challenges, solve problems, and reach goals.
- * Stress about school can motivate students to study to achieve the grades they desire. Being strapped for money can motivate students to work harder to get a promotion or a better paying job. Relationship conflicts or stress in a relationship can motivate students to build communication skills. Having a busy schedule can motivate students to prioritize and clear up their calendar for important activities.
- * But on the other hand, too much stress is negative. Stress can be harmful when it continues for long periods of time without relief.

Ways You Can Manage Your Stress

1. Develop a Balanced Lifestyle

- * Add a physical workout to your schedule at least every other day. One does not need to be gifted athletically to accomplish this. You can jog, power walk, use a stepper, rowing or biking machines, swim or any other form of exercise. Do not see this as 'recreational time' that can be blown off. Physical activity is a great way to insure that life's minor stresses do not build.
- * Set both long term (this semester or this year) and short term (this day or this week) goals. Write them down. Make them part of your time management schedule.
- * Manage your time. Develop a schedule that provides for academic, social, and physical time. After you create your schedule, don't forget to follow it!

Ways You Can Manage Your Stress

2. Gain Perspective by Discussing Problems

- * Talking to a person who you trust be they a friend, roommate, family member, professor, significant other, or co-worker about issues of concern is helpful.



Ways You Can Manage Your Stress

3. Choose New Behaviors

- * Each day find twenty minutes of 'alone time' to relax. Take a walk, write in a journal, or meditate.
- * Don't sweat the small stuff...always ask yourself if the issue at hand is worth getting upset about. If it isn't affecting your goal achievement, it may not be worth fretting over.
- * Adhere to proper money management by following a budget. This is a great way to reduce financial stress!
- * Remember that you do not have to do everything yourself all of time. Delegate tasks or enlist the help of others!
- * Learn to say “no” by understanding your boundaries. Do not feel guilty about saying no to someone.
- * Sometimes it is your negative thoughts or worries that create tension. Practice thinking positive thinking instead of putting yourself down.

Ways You Can Manage Your Stress

4. Make Studying Less Stressful

- * Studying demands all of your attention. Choose a place that's free of noise and other distractions.
- * Learn to manage your study time by creating a study schedule. Each week, plan to study the same subject at the same time.
- * After each hour of studying, take a break. Breaks can also serve as a reward for finishing part of your work.
- * Try to do well in your classes, but don't be discouraged if you don't. Discover what resources you can utilize to overcome your weaknesses (i.e. tutoring, study groups, discuss concerns with your instructor).

Ways You Can Manage Your Stress

5. Practice Relaxation Techniques

- * Use meditation to consciously relax your body and focus your thoughts on one thing for a sustained period. This occupies your mind, diverting it from the problems that are causing you stress. It gives your body time to relax and recuperate, and to clear away stress hormones that may have built up.
- * Use music or relaxations tapes in order to reduce stress. This approach takes no effort on your behalf. This may be very welcome at the end of a long, hard day's work!
- * Use Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR). The idea behind PMR is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as possible. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then, relax the muscles to their previous state. Finally, consciously relax the muscles even further so that you are as relaxed as possible.

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6. Clarify Your Values and Develop a Sense of Life Meaning

- * People sometimes wind up making choices and living life styles that really don't fit them. A student may be studying accounting when he or she really wants to be an artist, or he or she may have a wide circle of friends, but not really have the kind of intimate relationships that feel fulfilling. Clarifying your values and deciding what you really want out of your life, can help you feel better about yourself and have that sense of satisfaction and centeredness that helps you deal with the stresses of life.

More ways to manage stress

- * Become aware of what causes your stress and how you react to stress.
- * Reinforce positive self-statements by focusing on your good qualities and accomplishments.
- * Avoid unnecessary competition.
- * Recognize and accept your limits. Remember that everyone is unique and different.
- * Learn to use your time wisely to plan ahead, avoid procrastination, meet your deadlines, and stick to your schedule.
- * Set realistic goals and priorities.
- * Develop your skills: communication skills, study and writing skills, test taking skills can all assist in lowering stress levels.

Information retrieved from:

- * <http://www.campusblues.com/stress.asp>
- * Stress Symptoms Farm Resource Center
- * <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/moneymanagement.html>
- * http://www.counsel.ufl.edu/brochure.asp?include=brochures/stress_and_college_students.brochure
- * <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/timemanagement.html>
- * Understanding Test Anxiety from the Purdue University website
<http://www.mindtools.com/stress/RelaxationTechniques/IntroPage.htm>
- * <http://www.twu.edu/o-sl/counseling/SelfHelp001.html>
- * <http://students.asu.edu/wellness/stressmanagement>