



# STRESS & YOU



## Introduction

Stress is a part of day to day living. As college students, you may experience it while adjusting to a more challenging environment, social pressures, juggling a full schedule, lack of finances, and changes in eating or sleeping habits, to name a few.

The stress you experience isn't necessarily harmful. Mild forms of stress can actually act as a motivator. However, managing high stress is important to good health and sanity!

## What is Stress?

Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events in themselves are not stressful. **The way in which we interpret and react to events creates the actual stress.**

People differ dramatically in the type of events they interpret as stressful. For example, speaking in public can be stressful for some people and relaxing for others.

## Symptoms of Stress

There are numerous signs and symptoms that you may notice when you are experiencing stress.

### Emotional/Mental

Low self-esteem - Fear of failure - Inability to concentrate - Embarrassing easily - Worrying - Preoccupation - Forgetfulness - Anxious - Depressed - Irritable - Impatient

### Behavioral

Stuttering - Crying for no apparent reason - Acting impulsively - Grinding teeth - Increased smoking, drinking or drugging - Accident prone - Nervous laughter - Withdrawal

### Physical

Increased sweating - Increased heart beat - Trembling - Dryness of throat and mouth - Tiring easily - Urinating frequently - Sleeping problems - Vomiting - Headaches - Pain in the neck and or lower back - Loss of appetite or overeating - Susceptibility to illness

## Causes of Stress

Both positive and negative situations can create stress (a wedding and a funeral). Major life changes are the greatest contributors because they place the greatest demands on resources for coping.

## Evaluate your Stressors

- Things that are important & controllable -- **Take charge of these ASAP**
- Things that are important & uncontrollable -- **Practice coping strategies**
- Things that are unimportant & controllable -- **Prioritize and complete these**
- Things that are unimportant & uncontrollable -- **Develop serenity and acceptance**

(Over)

## 40 Stress Busters

Many stresses can be changed, eliminated, or minimized. Here are some things you can do to reduce your level of stress. Pick and practice a few that work for you!

- Become aware of your own reactions to stress
- Recognize and accept your limits
- Focus on positive self-statements and attitude
- Exercise regularly - a walk around the block is just fine
- Eat a balanced diet and take a vitamin supplement (esp. C and B complexes)
- Watch your intake of caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and sugar
- Talk with friends or someone you can trust about your worries
- Make a daily “to do” list and/or plan ahead with a weekly master schedule
- Schedule “realistic” days - don’t be superman or superwoman
- Set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-oriented)
- Determine priorities (urgent and important takes priority)
- Practice relaxation techniques-deep breathing using the diaphragm
- Let go and delegate tasks to capable others
- Organize your living and work spaces AND don’t let paperwork pile up
- Say “no” to extra commitments and obligations
- Read an uplifting article or listen to a relaxing piece of music
- Schedule in time to de-stress – hot bath, lunch with a friend, etc.
- Relax your standards when appropriate
- Use your peak energy time for the tough-to-tackle issues
- Remind yourself of your strengths, talents, and accomplishments
- Avoid unnecessary competition
- Try a new hobby for relaxation and fun
- Don’t hit the snooze button and/or get up 15 minutes earlier
- Prepare for the morning the evening prior - lunch made, workout bag packed, etc.
- Write things down - appointments, special events, when library books are due, etc.
- Take stretch breaks or a quick walk
- Make friends with non-worriers for a balanced perspective
- Journal your thoughts and feelings as a release
- Do something for someone else/volunteer - walking a dog is great
- Find joy in at least one activity each day
- Take a lunch break, if even for just 15 minutes
- Have a forgiving view of events and people
- Visualize success when approaching a stressful activity or event
- Try to get 15 minutes of sun exposure each day
- Take a mini-vacation in your mind
- Try aromatherapy/light a scented candle - especially lavender
- Give a hug, get a hug
- Tense then relax the major muscle groups one set at a time
- Break it up - Make daily mini tasks for a large and looming project
- Shake it up - don’t do the same activity for more than 2 consecutive hours

**FOR MORE SUCCESS STRATEGIES, VISIT THE CONNECT TO SUCCESS OFFICE**

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