Managing Stress

As adopted by the Center for Student Success (CSS) for the OU 097 Strategies for Success Course at Oakwood University In Huntsville, AL

Adapted from Hopper (2016) by Ruth Piri, CSS Advisor & Instructor OU 097

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.

-PSALM 55:22
Managing Stress

S.T.R.E.S.S.=
Someone Trying to Repair Every Situation Solo
DaveWillis.org
What is Stress?

- **Stress** is a situation that triggers a particular biological response. When you perceive a threat or a major challenge, chemicals and hormones surge throughout your body.
- Stress, in everyday terms, is a feeling that people have when they are overloaded and struggling to cope with demands.
- Stress triggers your fight-or-flight response in order to fight the stressor or run away from it.
- Typically, after the response occurs, your body should relax.
- Too much constant stress can have negative effects on your long-term health.

Stressors

Stressors are physical, psychological, or social forces that put real or perceived demands on the body, emotions, mind, or spirit or an individual.

When you snap at your roommate, spouse, or children, when you have trouble concentrating, when you feel that you just want to be left alone – all may be symptoms of stress.
Common Causes of Stress in College Students

- Maintaining Academic Success
- Dealing With Homesickness
- Building New Friendships
- Balancing the Social Life
- Handling Roommate Drama
- Managing Financial Burden
- Independence and Responsibility
- Multi-Tasking Stress
Clear the Hurdles

There are people that can help students who are stressed out:

- Dorm Deans
- Resident Advisors (RAs)
- Professors
- Academic Advisors
- Counselors
- Family and friends

With the right frame of mind and a positive support system, any of the stressors mentioned above can be conquered.

Preparation, hard work, an open mind and a good attitude can ensure that the college years remain the best years.

Practicing College Learning Strategies by Carolyn H. Hopper
Adapted by Ruth Piri
Recognizing Possible Signs of Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health or Medical</th>
<th>Mental and Emotional</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>migraine or tension headache</td>
<td>irritability</td>
<td>sleep badly</td>
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<tr>
<td>upset stomach diarrhea</td>
<td>lose sense of humor</td>
<td>snap or shout at those around you</td>
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<tr>
<td>high blood pressure</td>
<td>often on the verge of tears</td>
<td>Tiddle with your hair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shortness of breath</td>
<td>crying spells</td>
<td>high pitched or nervous laughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of appetite</td>
<td>feeling that you can’t cope</td>
<td>trembling, shaking, excessive blinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent or lingering colds</td>
<td>are suspicious of others</td>
<td>find it difficult to talk to people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acne or pimples</td>
<td>difficulty concentrating</td>
<td>have trouble completing tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cold sores on mouth</td>
<td>difficulty making decisions</td>
<td>Over eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dizziness</td>
<td>making poor decisions</td>
<td>drink or smoke more that usual</td>
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<tr>
<td>lack of energy</td>
<td>just can’t think</td>
<td>reduced sex drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryness of the throat and mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td>grinding teeth or clenching jaw</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If you can’t avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it.

- Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.
- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.
- Be willing to compromise but be more assertive.
- Manage your time better.
If **YOU** can’t change the stressor, change YOURSELF.

- Reframe problems.
- Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective.
- Look at the big picture.
- **Take perspective** of the stressful situation.
- Focus on the positive; this simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Take a Break from a Stressor.

- It may seem difficult to get away from a big work project, a crying baby, or a growing credit card bill, but when you give yourself permission to step away from it you can gain a new perspective and **feel less overwhelmed**.
- It’s important to not avoid your stress (these assignments have to be done sometime), but even 20 minutes of self-care is helpful.
Breathing is the foundation to de-stress and heal.

- Our normal shallow breathing starves the body and brain of oxygen, which affects the immune and cardiopulmonary systems.
- Develop the practice of taking several deep diaphragmatic breaths in a tense moment; it clears the mind, body, and soul.

Scientific research supports the practice that quieting the mind, body, and soul offers great health benefits.

- Find a quiet place, get comfortable, focus on a one- to five-word phrase you fancy and repeat it over and over.
- Take deep diaphragmatic breaths, in and out, in and out.
- You may want to set a timer in the beginning for 10 minutes so you won’t worry about time.
- The practice sends healing hormones into your body for relaxation and health.
Be aware of your unhealthy coping methods to dealing with stress.

- Avoid those unhealthy coping mechanisms from the start.
- Turning to food, alcohol or drugs often just turns one set of problems into another that can balloon out of control.
- It’s better to avoid those unhealthy coping mechanisms from the start, and find good ways to keep your stress under control.

The practice of journaling has health benefits.

- Journaling reduces stress by removing the worry and thoughts racing over and over in your mind.
- You move these worries, concerns, hopes or dreams out of your body onto the paper.
Affirmations can affect our health.

- Research indicates every thought and emotion creates a chemical release into our bodies, which affect our mental, physical and spiritual health and well-being.
- **Negative self-talk** can be damaging; giving positive messages wards this damage off.

Friendships are strong indicators of mental, physical and spiritual health.

- Friendship is not a luxury, but is essential to work-life balance and your health.
- Studies show that isolation decreases immune functioning and increases mortality risk.
Exercise regularly, sleep, and eat a healthy diet.

- Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress.
- Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress.
- Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week.
- Aerobic exercise does wonders for releasing pent-up stress and tension.
- Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- Reduce caffeine and sugar. Get enough sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body.
- Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Heighten your awareness of the moment by focusing intently on an object.

- Notice a pencil’s shape, color, weight and feel. Or slowly savor a raisin or a piece of chocolate.
- Mindfulness leads to relaxation. Realize that managing stress is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Everyone is different, and reacts to stress differently.
3 Rules for Turning Stress Into Success

1. Accept the unchangeable.
   - Everything that has happened in your life to this minute is unchangeable. It’s history.
   - The greatest waste of energy is looking back at missed opportunities and lamenting past events.
   - By forgiving your trespassers—whoever or whatever they are—you become free to concentrate on going forward with your life and succeeding in spite of those detractors.

2. Change the Changeable.
   - Change your reaction to what others say and do, and you can control your own thoughts and actions by dwelling on desired results instead of the penalties of failure.
   - The only real control you have in life is your immediate thought and action.
3. Avoid the Unacceptable.

➢ Go out of your way to get out of the way of intolerable or perilous behaviors and environments.
➢ Always be on the alert for negative situations that can be dangerous to your health, personal safety, financial speculation and emotional relationships.
Coping Strategies for Alleviating Stress Symptoms

1. Musical background
2. BREATHE System
3. Progressive relaxation routine
4. Visualization
5. Clearing your mind
6. Energy-release activities
7. Talking it out
8. Laugh

BREATHE System

- **Breathe** – relax your neck & shoulder and just breathe
- **Repeat** – take another breath
- **Emotion** – become aware of your emotional condition
- **Access** – access your actions and behaviors
- **Talk** – don’t let your voice reflect a negative emotional condition
- **Hear** – continue to talk and listen
- **Exit** – go back to the place of security, calmness, and hope.

Try listening to music – Look for relaxing music.
Assertiveness

People often fall into three primary behavior patterns:

1. **The passive person** – does not know how to communicate his feelings to others. He wants to avoid conflict, so he usually just says nothing and usually ends up being the victim.

2. **The aggressive person** – wants her way regardless of rights and needs of others. Her behavior is based on getting her way no matter what. She may have the tendency to lose her temper, criticize, argue, or bully to get what she wants.

3. **The assertive person** – clearly expresses his needs. He respects himself, but he also respects the rights and needs of others.
“Be careful how you are talking to yourself because you are listening.”

- It’s not what you say out of your mouth that determines your life; it’s what you whisper to yourself that has the most power.
- What do you whisper to yourself on a daily basis?
- What do you tell yourself when you’re feeling rushed, stuck in traffic, facing failure, going through a breakup, fighting with a loved one, relapsing into self-destructive behaviors, or overwhelmed by any difficulty?
- Do you repeat negative thoughts to yourself, or supportive, solution-minded statements?
- When you’re stressed out, which thoughts are you inclined to reach for?

Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.

Hans Selye

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STRESSED?
Jeremiah 29:11
Proverbs 29:11
Proverbs 3:5-6
Ephesians 4:26
Ephesians 4:31-32
Matthew 6:19-21
Hebrews 12:6

POWER of PRAYER
References