



Managing Stress

Relaxation Tips and Resources

What is Stress?

Stress is your body's mental, emotional, and physical response to help you manage the changes and challenges in your daily life. It can be useful or challenging - stress during an exam can help you focus, and stress while studying can cause ambivalence and lead to procrastination and anxiety. Ideally, your body will return to a state of rest after a stressful event.

What are the Symptoms?

High levels of chronic stress can cause symptoms including physical and mental exhaustion, sleep problems, headaches, upset stomach, irritability, inability to concentrate, and feeling low or anxious.

Things to Avoid

Stress causes some people to turn to food, drugs, or alcohol. While sugar may provide a quick burst of energy, it quickly leaves you lethargic. If you don't have healthy eating habits, you may feel depressed, irritable, nervous, or forgetful. Drugs like caffeine and nicotine speed your system up, while alcohol slows it down. Either effect puts additional stress on your body.

Stop-Breathe-Reflect-Choose

- **Stop.** Just for a few seconds, stop what you are doing and stop the flow of negative thoughts about the situation.
- **Breathe.** Take a deep breath, feeling your abdomen rise and fall, releasing any tension as you exhale.
- **Reflect.** Consider what is really going on. Is the situation a crisis? Will worrying help solve it? Will this situation matter in two weeks? Two months? Is there any thing productive you can do to improve the situation? Ask yourself rational questions and listen to your answers. *Continued on back...*

- **Choose.** Now, make a choice to react in a positive manner. Through this process you can begin to realize that you have the power to choose your attitude in the face of stress. With practice, you can take control of your reactions and reduce your stress.

General Time Management

- At the beginning of each semester, plot out all your classes, major assignments, exams, work shifts, family responsibilities, and extracurricular activities. How does the big picture look?
- Learn to prioritize and say no to some optional activities. Creating short and long-term goals can help you develop a strategic plan.
- Make weekly schedules and daily to-do lists. Unclutter your brain by putting it on paper or in your computer. The key to physical and mental health is leading a balanced life, so don't forget time to eat, sleep, exercise and spend time with friends and family.
- Learn to avoid procrastination by breaking up large tasks into smaller pieces. These pieces are much less intimidating and can jumpstart your motivation. On your free days, break up your time by making plans with friends to exercise or study together. This prevents the lack of structure that can lead to procrastination.

Relaxation Techniques

- **10 Deep Breaths.** Stop everything you're doing and take 10 slow, deep, belly breaths. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
- **The Lighter Side.** Think of something funny that happened recently and laugh out loud.
- **Five-Minute Vacation.** Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Visualize a relaxing vacation spot and let your imagination take you there.
- **Have Fun.** Do something that you enjoy every day.

Resources

- **Health Coaching.** Stress and wellness appointments. (510) 642-7202.
- **CAPS.** Individual and group counseling. (510) 642-9494.
- **Social Services.** Alcohol/drugs counseling and more. (510) 642-6074.
- **Student Learning Center.** Academic support services. (510) 642-7332.
- **Career Center.** Online, individual, and group resources. (510) 642-1716.