

Feeling Stressed?

Ways to Relieve Stress

We all need stress in our lives. Stress is with us all the time. Without stress, life would be dull and unexciting. Stress adds flavor, challenge, and opportunity to life. Too much stress, however, can seriously affect your physical and mental well-being. A major challenge in this stress-filled world of today is to make the stress in your life work for you instead of against you.

When stress becomes prolonged or particularly frustrating, it can become harmful and cause distress or "bad stress." Recognizing the early signs of distress and then doing something about them can affect the quality of your life and may actually influence your survival.

Too much emotional stress can cause physical illness such as high blood pressure, ulcers, or even heart disease. Physical stress from work or exercise, on the other hand, is not likely to cause such illnesses. Physical exercise can actually help you to relax and to handle your mental or emotional stress.

While it is impossible to live completely free of stress and distress, it is possible to prevent some distress as well as to minimize its impact when it cannot be avoided. When stress does occur, it is important to recognize and deal with it.

WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS

As you begin to understand more about how stress affects you as an individual, you will find your own ideas to help to ease tension.

Try Physical Activity. When you are nervous, angry, or upset, release the pressures through exercise or physical activity. Running, walking, playing tennis, swimming, or Pilates are just some of the activities you might try. Physical exercise will relieve that "up tight" feeling and help you relax.

Share Your Stress. It helps to talk to someone about your concerns and worries. Perhaps a friend, family member, professor, or therapist can help you see your problem in a different light. If you feel your problem is serious, you might talk with a therapist at the University Counseling Center or with your primary care provider at the University Health Service. Knowing when to ask for help may avoid more serious problems in the future.

Know Your Limits. If a problem is beyond your control and cannot be changed at the moment, do not fight the situation. Learn to accept what is "for now" until such time when you can change it.

Take Care of Yourself. Get enough rest and eat well. If you are irritable and tense from lack of sleep or if you are not eating correctly, you will be less able to deal with stressful situations. If your stress keeps you from sleeping, ask your primary care provider for help.

Make Time for Fun. Schedule time for both work and recreation. Play can be just as important to your well-being as work. You need a break from your daily routine to just relax and have fun.

Adapted from: "Plain Talk About Stress," by Louis E. Kopolow, M.D.

Be a Participant. One way to keep from getting bored, sad, or lonely is to go where it's all happening. Get involved and become a participant. Offer your services in volunteer organizations. Help yourself by helping other people. Get involved in the world and the people around you, and you will find they will be attracted to you.

Check Off Your Tasks. Trying to take care of everything at once can seem overwhelming. As a result, you may not accomplish anything. Instead, make a list of the tasks you need to do, then do one at a time, checking them off as they are completed. Give priority to the most important ones and do those tasks first.

It's Ok to Cry. Crying can be a healthy way to bring relief to your anxiety, and it might even prevent a headache or other physical consequence. Take some deep breaths; they also release tension.

Must You Always Be Right? Do other people upset you, particularly when they do not do things your way? Try cooperation instead of confrontation; it is better than fighting and always being "right." A little give and take on both sides will reduce the strain and make you both feel more comfortable.

Avoid Self-Medication. Although non-prescription drugs and alcohol can help to relieve stress temporarily, they do not remove the conditions that caused the stress in the first place. Drugs and alcohol may be habit-forming and may, in fact, create more stress than they take away. Drugs should be taken only on the advice of your health care provider.

Learn to Relax. The best strategy for avoiding stress is to learn how to relax. Try tuning out your worries about productivity, time, and "doing right." You will find satisfaction in just being, without striving. Find activities that give you pleasure and that are good for your mental and physical well-being. Focus on relaxation, enjoyment, and health, not on winning. *Be good to yourself!*

Talk to Someone. Sometimes it is important to talk to someone in a neutral setting. If you would like to speak with someone at UHS, call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment. If you would like to talk with someone at the University Counseling Center, call 275-3113 to schedule an appointment.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

University Health Service	275-2662
University Counseling Center	275-3113
Interfaith Chapel	275-4321
Learning Assistance Services	275-9049
International Services Office	275-2866
Office of Minority Student Affairs	275-0651