

Tips for Managing Stress

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Good Stressors: Can help us attain difficult goals and perform at our best. The adrenaline rush before race or competition is an example of a good stressor.

Bad stressors: Prevent us from best performances. Bad stress occurs when too much stress begins to build up in us. This kind of stress can take a huge toll on our physical and mental well-being.

Stress is actually a necessary part of our daily lives. How we choose to deal with it makes all the difference. There are a variety of ways to deal with unhealthy stress in your life. Below are some tips that can be adapted to a variety of situations—school, work family, relationships.

1. **Manage your time effectively.** Keep a to-do list or daily planner and make sure to include time for stress reduction activities. Give priority to the most important activities and do those first.
2. **Get exercise.** Regular physical activity is one of the best ways to deal with stress. It releases endorphins and gives you a natural “high.”
3. **Don’t use drugs or alcohol to deal with stress.** These substances will only mask the symptoms of stress. When you stop using them, the stress will return.
4. **Take a break.** Schedule several short breaks throughout the day to help minimize your stress. Get up and stretch, go for walk, call a friend. When you return to work, you’ll work more efficiently.
5. **Minimize interruptions.** When you have something important to get done, make sure to block off a period of time when you can work without being disturbed or distracted. Put your phone on voice mail, shut your door, turn off your myspace or IM, or go someplace to work where no one can find you.
6. **Eat healthy foods.** Avoid foods high in fat, sugar, and sodium. If you are going to be out all day, make sure to pack healthy snacks and don’t skip meals because this will lower energy levels.
7. **Practice daily relaxation exercises.** Good ones include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and visualization (imagining a relaxing scene, or reflecting on a positive experience)
8. **Think positive and learn to control worry.** Instead of focusing on negative thoughts focus on positive things in your life and say at least one positive thought to your self each day.
9. **Know when you need help and get it.** Seeking help is not a sign of weakness. There are many free resources available to help students deal with stress and academic problems (the counseling center and learning center to name a few). Take advantage of them.
10. **Learn to say NO.** Don’t feel guilty when you have to tell other “no.” Taking on additional projects or work for others when you are busy will only cause you more stress. At times you may need to say no to fun happenings with friends too.
11. **Put stressful situations in perspective.** Ask yourself: “Will it matter a month from now? What about a year from now?”
12. **Get enough sleep.** Most people need 6-9 hours, but most people give up sleep when they’re under stress to finish more work. Use good time management tools so you don’t have to pull the “all-niter”