Stress Management

We often find ourselves stressed-out. These tips may help you better manage your stress levels.

Symptoms of Stress

- Boredom
- Change in appetite
- Cold hands
- Difficulty sleeping, restlessness
- Dilated pupils
- Feeling confused
- Feeling depressed
- Frustration, easily annoyed
- Generally anxious feeling
- Headaches
- Inability to concentrate
- Increased susceptibility to colds and other minor infections
- Lack of energy
- Muscle tension: stiff neck, aching back or shoulders
- Perspiring more than usual
- Rapid heartbeat
- Relationship problems
- Upset stomach or stomach pains
- Weight gain or loss

Causes of Stress

- Any threatening situation
- Change of any kind
- Death of a family member or friend
- Environmental influences: too much noise, excessive heat or cold, pollution, overcrowding
- Financial problems
- Illness or injury
- Irrational thinking
- Lack of stimulation or challenge -- underload
- Negative Emotions
- Too much demand or stimulation -- overload
- Underemployment -- not challenged in your job
- Unemployment
- Unsatisfactory personal relationships

Avoid The Following Pitfalls Which Compound Stress, Not Alleviate It

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Overwork
- Panic
Stress Management is a Decision Making Process

- Alter it
  - Remove the source of stress by changing something.

- Avoid it
  - Get rid of the situation.

- Accept it by
  - Building your resistance
  - Proper diet, exercise, rest, relaxation, meditation, support systems.
  - Changing your perceptions
  - Avoid perfectionism, develop good self-esteem, set realistic goals and priorities.

- Managing time is key to reducing stress
  - Get a daily planner and write down what you need to accomplish and when.
  - This will help you avoid rushing things and help you remember your commitments when making plans.

Taking care of yourself helps control the negative influence of stress

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Avoid sugary snacks and caffeine because the short bursts of energy they provide leave a depressant effect after they wear off.
- Exercise regularly to work the stress out of muscle groupings. Your body works more efficiently when it's in good shape, which can increase your stamina. Participating in Recreational Sports programs are excellent opportunities!
- Get enough rest. Adults need 7 to 8 hours of rest per night.
- Make time to relax and do something fun.

What Can You Do To Beat Stress?

- Be patient when dealing with personal problems. Discuss problems honestly without being aggressive or accusing. Hear the other person's side of the story.
- Develop a financial plan! Budget your money and stick to it!
- Use a calendar/planner to manage your commitments and allot time for yourself.
- Make informed choices about classes, majors, transfer options and job opportunities. Visit an academic adviser, a career counselor, a tutor, or your major adviser. The more people you talk to, the more information you will have when making decisions that affect your life!
- Never underestimate the power of five minutes. Whether it's a quick trip to the library to pick something up or taking a couple minutes out of the evening to pick out clothes to wear the next day, those few moments spend planning ahead can make a difference in your stress level on a given day!

Some Do's And Don'ts Of Stress Management

- DO
  - Learn to manage your time
  - Take breaks
  - Recognize your limitations

- DON'T
  - Give in to peer pressure
  - Skip classes
  - Rely on cramming before tests
  - Hesitate to seek help or ask questions
Instant Stress Relievers

- Take six deep breaths. Inhale, hold for 5 counts, and exhale through your mouth.
- Close your eyes and visualize yourself in a pleasant and calm environment.
- Take quick exercise breaks: take a walk at lunch, climb stairs instead of using the elevator, stretch out.
- A good laugh will make you feel better: save cartoons from the newspaper and keep them handy near your work or study space.
- Talk to a friend or write him or her a note or send an email.
- Change your focus for five minutes. Stop what you're doing and concentrate on something else for a few minutes and return to your project with a fresh perspective.
- Finish a small task on your to-do list to feel a sense of accomplishment