

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Have you ever thought to yourself: “Oh, I’ll think about that problem later.” Or told your friends, “I work better under pressure.” Or have you ever been a little apprehensive about going to the first meeting of a club you want to join? These are common occurrences in the life of a student leader, and all of them can cause stress. To effectively live with stress, we must first understand how it affects us.

COPING WITH STRESS

There are three basic approaches people use to cope with stress:

1. Avoid
2. Suffer
3. Manage

Managing stress is the best way to deal with it. Since stress is a holistic concept, involving the total self, it must be managed by a number of different techniques.

Stress Self-Analysis

Recognize aspects of your life that cause you stress. By looking at these situations, you can see them from a different perspective and analyze your reactions and feelings.

Time management and planning

By managing your time and prioritizing tasks, you can have personal time to relax and to socialize. Make lists of the things you need to be working on (for the short term and long term) so you can use your time effectively.

Effective planning will help eliminate the stress of last minute work. One effective tool for planning is a month-at-a-glance calendar. This will help you to see the big picture and help you plan ahead for upcoming stressful weeks.

Get Organized

Try to keep organized files for your organization. This will make it easier for you and other members to find important information and will eliminate the stress of trying to find lost items. Also, developing good files will help eliminate the stress of future student leaders.

Shun the “superperson” urge

It’s easy to feel that you need to be doing multiple projects, all perfectly, and if you don’t the whole organization will suffer. This will lead to additional stress. Realize that you are human and you can only do so much.

Sleep

Sleeping allows your body to re-energize so you will not be continually exhausted. Lack of sleep can make a person become irritable and moody and can make small trivial problems seem extremely important. Getting enough sleep can help you to put things in perspective and not get too stressed out.

Relaxation and massage

These techniques help to slow down the body both physically and mentally. Techniques to consider include:

STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Meditation
- Praying
- Mental imagery
- Deep breathing
- Progressive relaxation
- Reading

Eat right and exercise

Good nutrition and exercise can help to reduce tension. Be sure to eat nutritious meals or snacks... trying to work while suffering from low blood sugar can further intensify stress. Also, getting adequate physical activity can help you to work off the stress and tension while helping you to stay in shape.

Reward yourself

Give yourself a reward for following the stress reduction techniques. For example, if you follow your time management strategy for a week, maybe you'll let yourself sleep in for a day or take yourself to a movie.

Learn to say "no"

If you take on projects you don't have time for, you probably will not be helping anyone. Prioritize and learn to say "no" to projects you can't handle or don't have time for (even if you really want to do them).

Learn to delegate

Train your organization to help you plan and do the work. After training your organization, be sure to delegate tasks. Delegate to someone you know can do the job; then don't worry about it. One of the advantages of delegating is that it eliminates some of the stress and pressure in your life. If you spend your time worrying about how your delegated task is going, you've wasted this advantage.

Develop a support system

Talking about some of your stressful situations may help you gain insights, get some things off of your chest and help keep things in perspective. Talk about things with your roommate, friends or family. You might also use some of the counseling services at the university.

Learning how to deal with stress is a very important life skill. To live a healthier, happier life, you must learn to accept and cope with the stress in your life. Practice is the key.