

Stress Management

In order to learn how to effectively deal with stress, we must first understand it and how it affects each of us differently.

FACTS ABOUT STRESS

Keep the following stress facts in mind as we explore the various things in a student leader's life that cause stress:

- Stress is caused by how we respond to events, not by the events themselves. Each individual may respond differently to the same event.
- Stress is not inescapable. Trying to avoid it will create more of it.
- Not all stress can or needs to be controlled. We need positive high-energy stress: it's the stress that helps to give motivation and challenge. What we need to learn to control is negative, emotional and physical stress.
- False perceptions are often stress-producing agents. Find out the facts before you get all stressed out about a situation.

COPING WITH STRESS

There are three basic approaches that people take to cope with stress:

1. AVOID
2. SUFFER
3. MANAGE

Managing stress is the best way to deal with it!

TECHNIQUES

Since stress is a holistic concept involving the total self, it must be managed by a number of different techniques:

- **STRESS SELF-ANALYSIS:** It is important to recognize those aspects of your life that contribute to your stress. After recognizing these areas, try to determine how they contribute to your stress. By looking at these situations you can sometimes see them from different perspectives, enabling you to better analyze your reactions and feelings.
- **TIME MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING:** By managing your time and prioritizing tasks, you can organize your time so that you will have personal time to relax and socialize with your friends. Make lists of the tasks you need to complete (both short and long term) so you can use your time effectively and not have to worry about doing 10 major projects in one night.
- **EFFECTIVE PLANNING** will help to eliminate the stress of last minute or unorganized work. An effective planning tool is a month-at-a-glance calendar: this will help you to see the big picture and the whole scheme of events going on in your life. Also, this will serve to alert you to upcoming stressful weeks, for which you may want to complete some of the work in advance.

- **ORGANIZE YOUR FILES.** By developing good files it will be easier for you and other members of your organization to find important information, will eliminate the stress of trying to find lost items, and will help to eliminate the stress of future club leaders.
- **RELAXATION AND MASSAGE.** Below are some techniques that help to slow down the body both physically and mentally:
 1. Meditation
 2. Praying
 3. Mental Imagery
 4. Reading
 5. Deep Breathing
 6. Progressive Relaxation
- **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 intensify stress.
- **ADEQUATE SLEEP** is very important for alleviating stress: it allows your body to reenergize so you will not be continually exhausted. Lack of sleep can make a person become irritable, moody, and can make small trivial problems seem extremely important. Getting enough sleep can help you to put things in proper perspective and not get too stressed out.
- **STROKE AND REWARD.** Give yourself a reward for following the stress reduction techniques. For example, if you follow your time management strategy for a week, maybe you can let yourself sleep in for a day, or take yourself to a movie.
- **SHUN THE “SUPERPERSON” URGE.** It’s extremely easy as a student leader to feel that you need to be doing tons of projects, you must do every project perfectly, and if you don’t do the work the whole organization will suffer. This type of attitude will lead to additional stress. Realize that you are only human and that you can only do so much.
- **LEARN TO SAY NO:** this will keep you from over committing yourself. If you take on additional projects that you don’t have time for, you probably will not be helping yourself or the organization. Prioritize what you want to be doing 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.** Orient and train your organization so that they can help you with planning and doing the work. There is no reason that you should feel that you have to do everything yourself. After training your organization, be sure to delegate tasks: this will help to relieve some of your organizational stress. Delegate to someone you know can do the job, and then let them do the job and don’t worry about it. An advantage of delegating is that it helps to eliminate some of the stress and pressure in your life. If you spend all your time worrying about how your delegated task is going, you’ve wasted this advantage.
- **DEVELOP A SUPPORT SYSTEM.** An effective way to deal with stress is to talk about it. Talking about one of your stressful situations may help you to gain new insights, get some things off your chest, and help to keep things in perspective. Your support system could consist of talking about things with your roommate, your friends, or your family. You might also use some of the counseling services at the University.

Remember that learning how to deal with stress is a very important life skill. In order to live a healthier, happier life, you must learn to accept and cope with the stress in your life. Practice is the key.