

Stress Management

Introduction

Stress is a part of day-to-day living. As college students you may experience stress meeting academic demands, adjusting to a new living environment, or developing friendships. The stress you experience is not necessarily harmful. Mild forms of stress can act as a motivator and energizer. However, if your stress level is too high, medical and social problems can result.

What is stress?

Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, the actual event is not stressful. Rather, it is the way in which we interpret and react to events that makes them stressful. People differ dramatically in the type of events they interpret as stressful and the way in which they respond to such stress. For example, speaking in public can be stressful for some people and relaxing for others.

Symptoms of stress

There are several signs and symptoms that you may notice when experiencing stress. These signs and symptoms fall into four categories: Feelings, Thoughts, Behaviors, and Physiology. When you are under stress, you may experience one or more of the following:

Feelings

1. Feeling anxious.
2. Feeling scared.
3. Feeling irritable.
4. Feeling moody.

Thoughts

1. Low self-esteem.
2. Fear of failure.
3. Inability of concentrate.
4. Being embarrassed easily.
5. Worrying about the future.
6. Preoccupation with thoughts/tasks.
7. Forgetfulness.

Behavior

1. Stuttering and other speech difficulties.
2. Crying for no apparent reason.
3. Acting impulsively.
4. Being startled easily.
5. Laughing in a high pitch and nervous tone of voice.
6. Grinding your teeth.
7. Increase cigarette smoking.
8. Increased use of drugs or alcohol.
9. Being accident-prone.
10. Losing your appetite or overeating.

Physiology

1. Perspiration/sweaty hands.
2. Increased heart beat.
3. Trembling.
4. Nervous ticks.
5. Dryness of throat and mouth.

6. Tiring easily.
7. Urinating frequently.
8. Sleeping problems.
9. Diarrhea/indigestion/vomiting.
10. Butterflies in stomach.
11. Headaches.
12. Premenstrual tension.
13. Pain in the neck and or lower back.
14. Loss of appetite or overeating.
15. Susceptibility to illness.

Causes of Stress

Both positive and negative events in one's life can be stressful. However, major life changes are the greatest contributors of stress for most people. They place the greatest demand on resources for coping.

Major life changes that can be stressful:

1. Geographic mobility.
2. Going to college.
3. Transferring to a new school.
4. Marriage.
5. Pregnancy.
6. New job.
7. New life style.
8. Divorce.
9. Death of a loved one.
10. Being fired from your job.

Environmental events that can be stressful:

1. Time pressure.
2. Competition.
3. Financial problems.
4. Noise.
5. Disappointments.