

Stress Management

University of New England
 Biddeford and Portland, Maine
 207-602-2443
Www.bit.ly/UNESASC

Student
 Academic
 Success
 Center

Stress

Stress is a fairly normal part of our daily lives, it seems. When you're feeling anxious or stressed, your body releases stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol. These cause the physical symptoms of anxiety, such as an increased heart rate and increased sweating. 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 motivators and energizers. However, if your stress level is too high, medical and social problems can result. Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events in themselves are 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 ways in which they respond to such stress.

Symptoms of Stress: There are several warning signs and symptoms you may notice when you are experiencing stress. When you are experiencing stress, you may exhibit one or more of the following:

| Feelings | Thoughts | Behaviors | Physiology |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feeling anxious Feeling scared Feeling irritable Feeling moody | Low self-esteem Fear of failure Inability to concentrate Embarrassing easily Worrying about the future Forgetfulness Preoccupied with other thoughts and tasks | Stuttering or other speech difficulties Crying Acting impulsively Grinding your teeth Increasing use of drugs and alcohol Losing your appetite or overeating | Perspiration /sweaty hands Increased heart beat Trembling Nervous tics Dryness of throat and mouth Tiring easily Sleeping problems Digestion problems Headaches, body aches 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.

| Major Life Changes that can be Stressful | Environmental Events that can be Stressful |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Geographic mobility Going to college Transfer to a new school Marriage Pregnancy New job, or getting fired from a job New life style Divorce, death, separation, loss | Time pressure Competition Financial problems External noise Disappointments World events Traumatic events |

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Reducing and Managing Stress: Many stresses and stressors can be changed, eliminated, or minimized. Here are some things you can do to reduce your level of stress:

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Become aware of your own reactions to stress Focus on your good qualities and accomplishments Avoid unnecessary and/or perceived competition Learn how to develop assertive behaviors | Relax and have fun Exercise regularly Eat a balanced diet daily Talk with friends or someone you can trust Reinforce positive self-statements and affirmations Recognize and accept your limits | Learn to use your time wisely Evaluate how you are budgeting your time Plan ahead to avoid procrastination Make a weekly schedule and try to follow it Set realistic goals and priorities | Distribute study sessions over time Take frequent short breaks Practice relaxation techniques. For example, whenever you feel tense, slowly breathe in and out for several minutes Start a hobby |
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Source: Counseling Services, State University of New York at Buffalo

Counseling Services at the University of New England provides a variety of services that address the psychological and emotional health of the graduate and undergraduate student population. Please contact their office at 207-602-2549 for additional information or to schedule an appointment.