

The Connection

Inside this issue:

Everyday Stress!	1
What is Stress?	1
The Signs	2
Stress Questionnaire!	2
Causes of Stress	2
How it Affects College Students	3
Ways to Reduce Stress	3

The FACTS:

- 75% of Americans report experiencing some stress every two weeks.
- 43% of adults suffer from adverse health effects from stress.
- 1/2 of Americans sat that stress has a negative impact on their professional and personal lives.

Source: American Psychological Association study, 2007.

For more information, check out these websites:

- www.stress.org
- www.campusblues.com
- www.campuscalm.com

College Stress

College students, especially freshmen, are a group prone to experience stress. New students on campus face the challenges of adjusting to a new living environment, and for many this is their first time away from home. Being in college also adds more pressure and competition with other students to get high grades. And no matter what year in college, all students will face the challenges that come with finding a career and forming long-lasting relationships with peers.

With college students being involved in more extracurricular activities, working, studying, and hanging out with friends, it is no wonder why college students are so busy all the time! It is pretty easy for someone to get frustrated with the long list of things they have to accomplish. Often times students are in a time-crunch and find themselves experiencing even more stress as they try to find time to get things done. Often students complain about staying up all night studying for exams or skipping

meals during the day to find time to do work. Stress can impact our lives in negative ways if we don't know how cope with it!

The pace of modern life is much faster than before and many times we are overwhelmed with the long list of things we have to do everyday. Stress is now a part of our day-to-day lives and is experienced by everyone who is living or working!

However, not all stress is bad! **Milder forms of stress can be good** for some people and act as a motivator and energizer for completing desired goals. However, stress can be a harmful experience for those who have high stress level and can cause medical and social

problems. The major difference between those who are overwhelmed by stress and those who are not is in the way they recognize stress when it occurs and how they respond. That is why it is important to identify how we respond to stress and learn better ways of managing the stress in our lives.



What is Stress?

Stress is a state of mental or emotional tension resulting from demanding circumstances. Stress comes from change one must adapt to in one's life. The level of stress one suffers varies in intensity from being mild and more positively motivating for helping one complete their goals to a negative extreme of being physically harmful.



We tend to think of stress as caused by external events, but the events in themselves are not stressful! Instead, it is the way in which we necessarily interpret and react to events that makes them stressful. Some people may consider some events more stressful than others and react differently, for instance, some people enjoy shopping during the holidays while others find it frustrating and avoid the holiday rush!



Signs of Stress

There are several signs and symptoms that you may notice if you are having symptoms. These signs can be classified into the following categories: behavior, thoughts, feelings, and physical symptoms. Someone who is under stress may experience one or more of the following symptoms:

BEHAVIOR

- Increased use of smoking, drugs and/or alcohol.
- Pretending that nothing is wrong.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.
- Getting into more fights
- Blaming others by finding faults or being too critical and hard to please.

FEELINGS

- Fearful and being afraid to make decisions.
- Feeling anxious such as being tense, nervous and unable to relax.
- Increased anger and irritability.
- Feeling moody and depressed.



THOUGHTS

- Low self- esteem.
- Worrying about the future.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Fear of failure.

PHYSICAL

- Loss of appetite or overeating.
- Increased heartbeat.
- Trembling and jerky movements.
- Dryness of throat and mouth.
- Sleeping problems and lack of energy,
- Headaches and pains in the neck and/or lower back.
- Digestion and urinating problems.
- Susceptibility to illness.

Source: <http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/stressmanagement.shtml>

Stress Questionnaire

Here's a few questions to help you get a better understanding of what stress really means. If you find yourself answering 'yes' to a lot of questions, it could mean that you are under a lot of stress.

- Do you have trouble falling or staying asleep?
- Do you constantly worry about the future?
- Do you feel like you're under pressure to get things done?
- Do you feel pressured to do more things than you have time for?
- Do you have trouble finding time to relax and have fun?
- Do you use drugs or alcohol to relax or reduce tension?
- Do you often have headaches or stomach aches?
- Do you find it hard to find satisfaction with your life?

Source: www.counseling.uci.edu

Causes of Stress

The majority of college students today experience stress everyday but many people don't realize that if they don't manage their stress, it can have a big impact on their life! All changes in life, good and bad, are stressful but usually the major life changes are the greatest cause of stress because it requires more adjusting and coping to the new changes. It is important to identify the events that produce stress in one's life so that we can look at how well we cope with stress and if need to change our behavior.

The most common causes of stress for college students are:

- Adjusting to a new living environment.
- Choosing a major and deciding on a career.
- Transferring to a new school.
- Financial problems.
- Failure or Disappointment.
- Academic Achievement.
- Unrealistic Expectations.
- Taking on too many responsibilities and activities.
- Getting a new job/ Being Fired from a job.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Forming new relationships and maintaining existing ones.
- Loss of a family member, friend, or loved one.
- Suffering from an illness.



Source: <http://www.ou.edu/oupd/stress.htm>



End of the semester—Yikes!

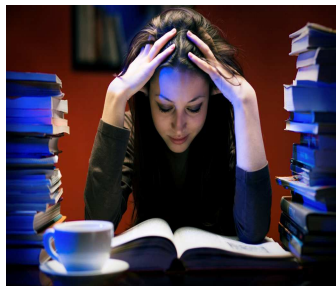
As the end of the semester is coming to a close, I hear students who are struggling to get papers and projects completed. I am also aware that students are gearing up for studying late into the evening, Some not getting any sleep at all before their exams. So what suggestions, if any, could I offer to students at this time?

Keep up the routines! Many students abandon their 30 minute run or their 15 minute catch up with a friend or their 30 minute meditation for more time to study. I would argue to any student that those breaks are not only important but also assist with blood flow to the brain (such as through running), problem solving (such as talking with a friend) and clearing the mind (through meditation) which assists the student in studying.

Make sleep a priority! Many people forgo sleep for their exams. Lack of sleep has been linked to some mental health conditions including depression. Sleep assists a person in doing better on their exams because the brain is alert and functioning. Our military uses sleep deprivation techniques, such as waking a person up every couple of hours, because when people go without sleep for a day or two, they tend to hallucinate and not

be accurate in their facts. This same example could be applied to college students during mid-terms and finals which is why sleep is so valuable.

Make time to release stress! Some people like to talk to other folks, while others like to listen to music. Whatever a person does to relieve stress, it is important to work that into their routines of finals.



Give oneself a break by learning something new! Some people try to keep their routines but may find that some of the activities they usually do to relieve stress are not successful during this time frame. That is OK! Don't stress out further due to a technique that is currently not working for

whatever reason. Now might be the time to look into a new simple technique, such as Health Education's breathing exercises online. Visit our website at: www.healthed.uconn.edu to find more ways of relieving stress. Something new may be more effective at this time.

Know the resources! If a student is feeling really stressed, the Health Education Office has a Relaxation Station in the office located in South (the same building as the dining

hall) on the ground floor. This station has several massagers for students including vibrating and shiatsu. The office also offers ear plugs that students can take with them and eye masks that students can use while they visit the office. The Health Education Office also offers Relax Packs with more resources around campus, a healthy snack and another item (such as a stress ball or balloon) that students can use to assist them in relieving stress.

If a person is having a difficult time, it is important to talk to someone who can assist them. We have a great Counseling and Mental Health Department that offers a variety of services to students throughout the year. If a person is feeling too overwhelmed, please contact Counseling and Mental Health—they want to help and services are confidential.

It is important for people to have a variety of techniques to assist them not only in studying but also in stress reduction. Many people think that they have to put a lot of time into "de-stressing" however, even 5-15 minutes a day can provide a person with a new outlook, better focus and refreshed way of looking at their work.

Special thanks to Joleen M. Nevers, Health Education Coordinator, for her contribution.

What You Can Do to Relieve Stress!

It is important to find ways and strategies of how to support yourself and cope with your stressful reactions. Many of the stressors in our life can be changed, minimized, and even eliminated. Here are a list of ways you can reduce the stress in your life:

- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, mediation, and yoga. Try breathing slowly for several minutes with your eyes closed and head slightly bowed down and focus on calm and relaxing places and things.
- Avoid negative and discouraging thoughts and talking down on yourself.
- Learn from past mistakes. Let go and move on!
- Practice saying positive and encouraging things about yourself!
- Focus on your accomplishments and the good qualities about yourself.



- Become aware of your reactions to stress and learn how to modify your behaviors.
- Talk about your concerns and worries with those close to you.
- Learn time management strategies such as keeping a weekly schedule and following it!
- Set realistic goals for yourself and recognize and accept your limits!
- Avoid taking on too many responsibilities or obligations.
- Eat a balanced diet everyday to help you stay healthy and give you the energy you need to get things done!
- Get a good sleep every night and try to get over six hours of sleep.
- Take up a hobby or spend time doing things you like to do. Remember to relax and have fun!



University of
Connecticut

Counseling and Mental Health Services

Monday - Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Come to the CMHS Annex

(located behind SHS) or call 486-4705

After hours, weekends and holidays call 860-486-4705, stay on the line and follow instructions.

*****Check out our Winter Break hours at:**

www.shs.uconn.edu***

Mental Health Online Screenings

On the CMHS website, we offer Mental Health

- Screenings that allow you to assess yourself regarding
- anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders.** The screenings ask basic demographic information from you
- and you then answer a series of questions to determine
- whether or not you have any of the symptoms associated with the concerns above.

***Go to www.counseling.uconn.edu and click on our

- Self-Help Page to learn more about our Screenings. ***

Relaxation Exercises

- Feeling stressed? These easy to use Stress Management MP3 exercises, courtesy of our friends at Health Education, can really make the difference. Try these out and see how they can help you reduce stress and tension in your everyday life. You can add them to your iPod or other portable and take them with you whenever and wherever you may need them. Relax, reduce your stress, and feel better!

***Visit www.counseling.uconn.edu/self-help.html to find our downloadable relaxation exercises. ***

Have a nice break!

See you in 2009!



University of Connecticut Student Health Services

Counseling &
Mental Health
Services

CMHS

Check us out Online!!!

www.counseling.uconn.edu

Mission Statement

The mission of Counseling and Mental Health Services is to provide the highest quality clinical services to promote the emotional, relational, and academic potential of all students. We are committed to the core values of respect, responsiveness, innovation and quality to enhance the unique experience of each individual at the University of Connecticut.

Multicultural Statement

We value and appreciate the uniqueness and diversity of all individuals. Our commitment is to create an environment where all people feel welcome. We recognize the right of human beings to be treated with dignity and respect. We are dedicated to enhancing cultural sensitivity and cultural competency in all of our work. This promotes our growth as individuals and as a community.