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Counseling Concepts and Applications for Student Affairs Professionals (CNS 577)

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Coping with Stress [brochure and video]

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CNS577 COUNSELING FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

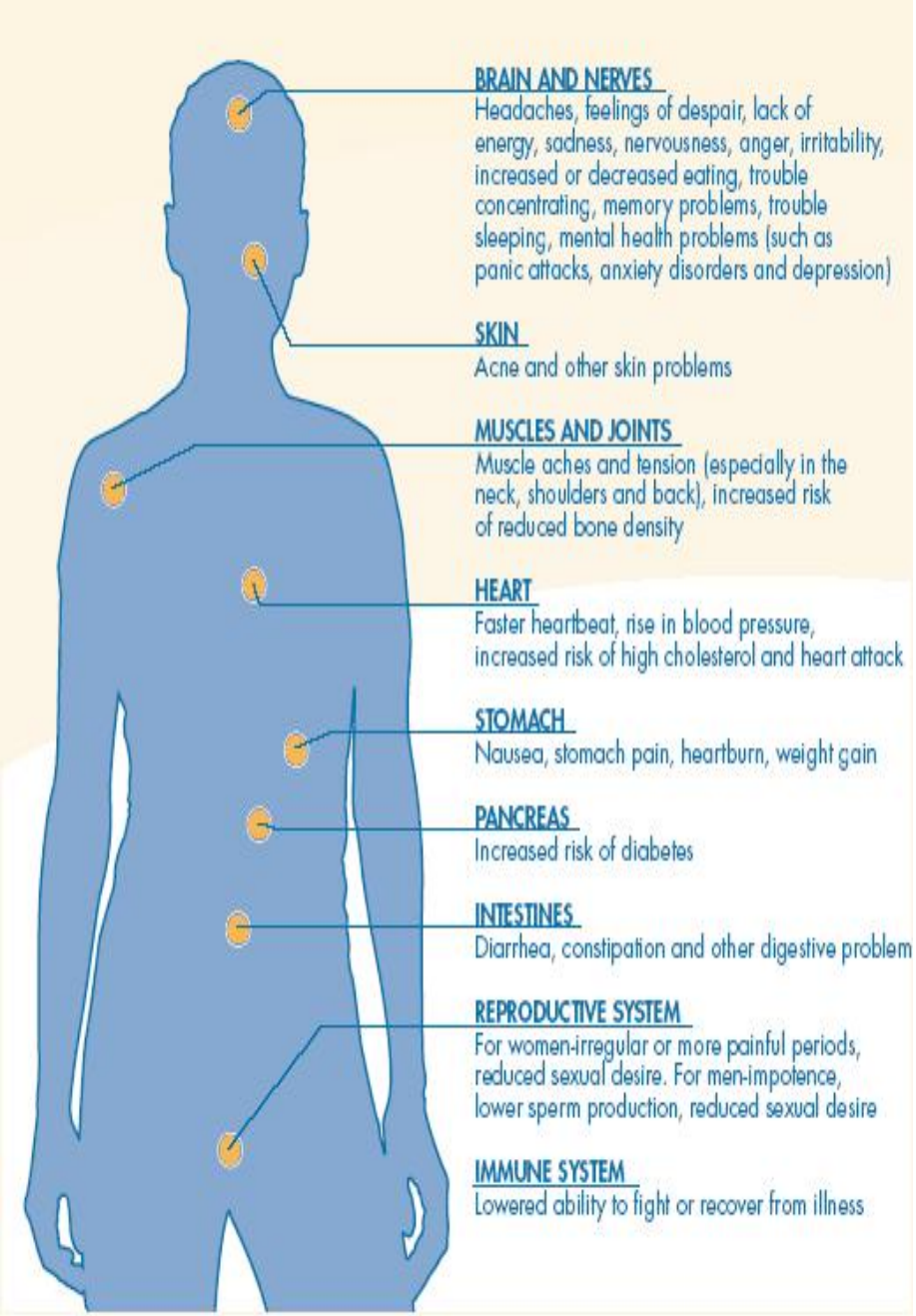
Video Pamphlet Project

Coping with Stress

Healthy/Unhealthy Stress

Network and Computing Support

3/18/2010



Coping With Stress

In small doses, stress can actually be a good thing. It keeps us motivated, moving, meeting deadlines, accountable, etc…

Stress is the body's instinctive way of defending itself.

However, too much stress can debilitate. Stress makes our bodies work in overtime constantly. That can lead to immediate feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and fears, but stress can also cause some major health problems. Following are some health problems that can result from stress. Not to mention those who already have serious health problems that can be aggravated by stress.

- Anxiety
- Back pain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Trouble sleeping or insomnia
- Problems with relationships
- Shortness of breath
- Stiff neck or jaw
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss
- Feeling a sense of loss, sadness, frustration, helplessness, or emotional numbness
- Experiencing troubling thoughts of the stressor
- Having nightmares or difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Avoiding things that remind you of the stressor
- Having no desire for food or a loss of appetite
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling nervous or on edge
- Feeling irritable or crying easily
- Prolonged or excessive stress — the kind that overwhelms your ability to cope — can take a severe psychological and physical toll. High stress levels have been linked to depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal problems, an impaired immune system and cancer.

DID YOU KNOW…

…We decide what stresses us out?

…We can control our levels of stress?

Bet you're wondering how!

Identify your stressors and ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY for the role you play in creating or maintaining it, or your stress level will remain outside your control.

- Do you explain away stress as temporary even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?
- Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life? or as a part of your personality?
- Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?
- Some things are obvious stressors: job loss, divorce, death of a family member or friend.
- Daily hassles can be less obvious stressors: commute, classes, homework, etc.

Ok, I can accept responsibility, BUT how can I identify my stressors and begin to change?

1. Keep a daily stress journal for a week.
    a. Write down events that evoke a negative physical, mental, or emotional reaction.
    b. Record the 5 W's and H. Who was there?, What was happening?, When did it happen?, Where did it happen?, Why does it feel stressful to you?, How did you feel physically, mentally, emotionally? How did you react? What did you do to make yourself feel better?.
    c. Rate the level of stress on a scale of 1 to 10.
2. Make a master schedule of your life.
    a. Record all activities that demand your time and energy (job, activities, leisure, homework…everything!)
    b. Rate every activity's level of stress on a scale of 1 to 10.

- **What activities did you rate as particularly stressful?**
- **The key to de-stressing your life lies within!**

UNHEALTHY WAYS OF COPING WITH STRESS

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Overeating or under-eating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

If we want the way stress affects us to change, we have to change!

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but here are some general tips.

- Learn how to say "no"
- Avoid people who stress you out
- Take control of your environment
- Avoid hot-button topics
- Pare down your to-do list
- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Be more assertive.
- Manage your time better—use a planner, to-do lists, self-imposed deadlines and project reviews. Get rid of unimportant papers.
- Reframe problems.
- Look at the big picture.
- Adjust your standards.
- Focus on the positive.
- Don't try to control the uncontrollable.
- Look for the upside.
- Share your feelings.
- Learn to forgive.
- Set aside relaxation time—It's necessary, not luxurious.
- Connect with others.
- Do something you enjoy every day.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.
- Get enough sleep.

Healthy ways to relax and recharge

- Go for a walk.
- Spend time in nature.
- Call a good friend.
- Sweat out tension with a good workout.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Light scented candles
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy

HERE ARE SOME USEFUL RESOURCES:

- http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/coping-with-stress/SR00030
- http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.ht
- http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/coping_with_stress_tips.html
- http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/mentalhealth/stress/167.html

Stress has nothing to do with how many hours you work

And everything to do with how you feel during those hours

"STRESS"

THE CONFUSION CREATED WHEN ONE'S MIND OVERRIDES THE BODY'S BASIC DESIRE TO CHOKE THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF SOMEBODY WHO DESPERATELY NEEDS IT !

Pictures courtesy of:

http://www.nmha.org/images/may/stress_2.gif

http://dyad14.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/stress.jpg

http://www.wolfescape.com/Humour/NonMedThumbs/Stress-ConfusionChoke.gif