



Stress Management



Stress is a natural and important part of life.

Stress helps keep us alert, motivates us to face challenges and drives us to solve problems. Stress can appear in outward signs such as loss of appetite or overeating, stomach aches, depression, headaches, insomnia or oversleeping, and crying. Unhealthy habits like drinking, smoking or drug use can also result from too much stress.

Imagine yourself in the following situations.

Take a moment to let the scene play out in your mind. Pay attention to your physical and mental reactions. 1.) Your teacher does not accept late work, and you can't find your assignment in your backpack. 2.) You are really making progress typing your research paper and then your computer locks up. 3.) Your teacher hands back an exam. You scored considerably lower than you expected.

Being able to handle stress lies in how well we can modify our reactions to a potentially stressful conflict.

Stress management is the ability to maintain control when situations, people or events make excessive demands. Using the following suggestions will help you manage your stress.

Relax.

Unwind by taking a quiet stroll, soaking in a hot bath or listening to calming music. Find a quiet place where you can be alone. You may choose to practice other techniques like meditation or yoga. Hobbies are also good antidotes for daily pressures.

Embrace challenge.

View problems as challenges to overcome instead of obstacles to avoid. This change in mental focus will give you an edge to avoiding stress.

Learn from mistakes.

Accept a mistake as your fault; everyone makes errors. Don't condemn yourself with "I should have," but think about what you can do differently next time. Watch out for perfectionism — set realistic and attainable goals.

Get organized.

Use a daily "things to do" list. Keep your room, backpack and computer files free of clutter. Use your time and energy as efficiently as possible. Be careful of procrastination.

Smile.

Enjoy life. Be thankful for your talents and treasures.

Exercise.

Find a physical activity that you enjoy. Try aerobics, walking, jogging, dancing, swimming or whatever meets your physical needs and the time allowed. Get a friend to exercise with you.

Watch your habits.

Maintain a consistent sleep schedule. Eat sensibly — a balanced diet will provide the necessary energy you need during the day. Minimize caffeine and sugar. Avoid nonprescription drugs, cigarettes and alcohol use.

Diversify yourself.

Try new experiences, new foods and new places. Don't let one thing, such as school, work, relationships, sports, etc., dominate your time or your thoughts. Review your obligations to make sure they are still good for you. If not, let them go.

Maintain friendships.

Friends can be good medicine. Associate with people you enjoy and who are supportive of you. Daily doses of conversation and occasional sharing of deep feelings and thoughts can reduce stress quite nicely.