

The Pressure is On: Managing Your Academic Stress

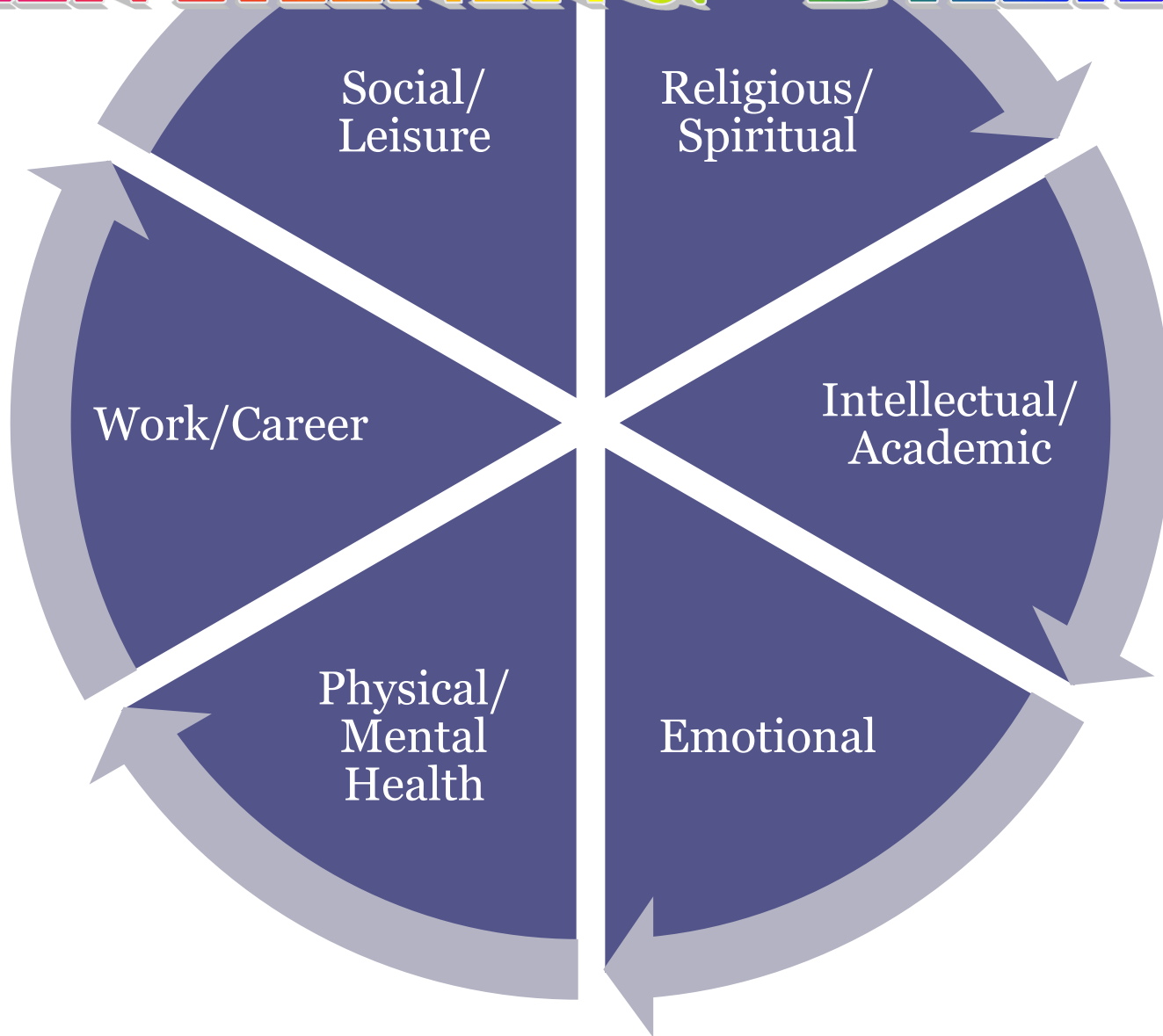


Counseling and Disability Services
Part of the Mendenhall Achievement Center

What makes up your life?

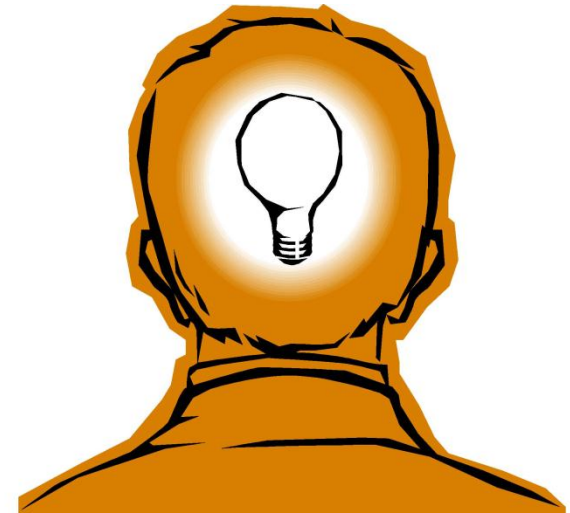


MAINTAINING BALANCE³



This Presentation:

1. Stress
2. Problems associated with excessive stress
3. Coping and Prevention
4. Resilience



STRESS DEFINED

- **Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. (Richard S Lazarus)**

What is Stress?

- Stress is the "wear and tear" our bodies experience.
- It has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings.
- As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action.
- As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression.
- In adjusting to different circumstances, stress will help or hinder us depending on how we react to it.

Our goal is not to eliminate stress...

- Positive stress adds excitement to life.
- Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives.
- Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and excessive stress may leave us feeling "tied up in knots."
- What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress.
- Our personal stress requirements change with our age.
- It has been found that many illness is related to unrelieved stress.

Stages of Stress: The Stress-Reaction Model

- Stage 1: Alarm Reaction
 - Fight or Flight
- Stage 2: Resistance
 - Maintaining high levels of stress, the body adapts
- Stage 3: Exhaustion
 - The body begins to break down

Impact of Stress on the Body

- Elevates blood sugars and metabolism
- Supplies extra glucose to muscles and brain for fuel
- Increases heart rate and blood pressure
- Inhibits the immune system

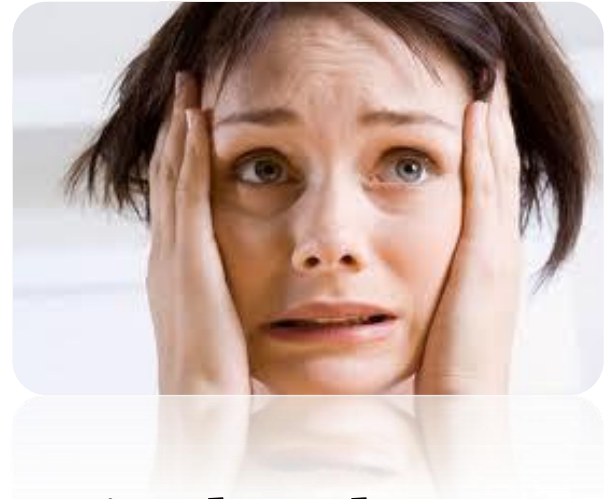


Negative Impacts of Stress on the Body

- Binge eating on junk food
- Smoking and excessive drinking
- Reduces resistance to colds and flu
- Promotes high blood pressure and memory loss
- Can exacerbate heart disease, hardening of the arteries, autoimmune disease, diabetes, and ulcers
- Can speed up the aging process

Stress could lead to...

- Depression
- Anxiety Disorders
- Substance Abuse
- Eating Disorders
- Impulsive Behaviors and Impaired Judgment



Kadison, R. & DiGeronimo, T.F. (2004). *College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What to Do About It*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Know the signs of mental health problems.

- Mood changes
- Change in appetite and/or sleep
- Loss of motivation
- Social withdrawal
- Decreased concentration and attention
- Feeling hopeless or loss of self-esteem
- Loss of interest in activities that are usually pleasurable
- Intense worry without foundation for concern
- Small problems that feel overwhelming
- Physical symptoms of anxiety: rapid heart rate, upset stomach, feelings of panic, headaches, sweaty palms



(Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004, p. 232-233)

Sources of Stress for Students

- **External Stressors:**
 - Poor grade on a test
 - Break-up with boyfriend or girlfriend
 - Financial problems
- **Internal Stressors:**
 - Putting too much pressure on self
 - Unrealistic expectations

Three Approaches to Manage Stress

- Action-Oriented – confront/change the situation itself
- Emotion-Oriented – change your interpretation/the way you feel
- Acceptance-Oriented



Robert Sopolosky's Observations:

- Individuals who can differentiate between situations that are a genuine threat and situations that may be threatening (but really are not) experience less stress than those who perceive threat everywhere (Type-A Personality)
- Individuals who spend considerable time enjoying friends and other relationships are less likely to experience negative stress than those who spend considerable time alone

Ways of Reducing Stress

- Realistic Goal setting
- Avoid procrastination
- Exercise
- Practice good sleep habits
- Meditation/Relaxation
- Limit Stimulants
- Journal
- Find Humor in Situations
- Seek Support
- Manage Thoughts

Goal Setting

Goal-Setting Worksheet



campusmindworks.org

You may find greater success in putting your self-care plan into action if you set and work toward specific goals. This tool is intended to help you set achievable goals and create specific strategies for reaching them.

Here are some steps to follow to think about your goals and create a plan that will work for you:

1. Identify an area or areas you would like to work on: _____
2. Think about your recent experiences in this area: _____

3. Set a standard for this area that you would like to reach over time: _____
4. Set a short-term goal related to the standard you're trying to reach (remember to use the SMART approach when determining your goal – be Specific, make sure your goal is Measurable, Achievable and Realistic, and set a Timeframe for achieving it: _____

5. Make a plan to meet that short-term goal. Include enough detail, and note any barriers that you may face: _____

6. Put your plan into action, and monitor your progress regularly.
7. If necessary, you may need to modify your plan along the way so that you meet your goal: _____

Use the **SMART** approach to goal-setting.

Make sure that your goals are:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Timely

Avoid stressful self-talk.

- **Self-talk traps**
 - Negative personal beliefs:
 - “I’m stupid”
 - “I can’t do anything right”
 - Social beliefs:
 - “I should...”
 - Rationalizing:
 - “I can’t ask for help because...”
 - “I have to do it this way because...”
 - Despair:
 - “It will never get any better”
 - “School’s not for me”



Group Activity

- Develop a list of helpful and healthy ways to cope with stress and prevent burn-out.



What is resilience?

- Resilience is the process of **adapting** well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats and other sources of stress.
- Resilience can be cultivated.
- It is an **ongoing process** that requires time and effort and taking a number of pro-active steps.

Individual Factors Associated with Resilience

- Having caring and supportive **relationships** within and outside the family.
- The capacity to make **realistic plans** and take steps to carry them out.
- Learning how to **manage your time**.
- A **positive view** of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in **communication** and **problem solving**.
- The capacity to **manage** strong **feelings** and **impulses**.

Ten Ways to Build Resilience

- 1) Make connections.
- 2) Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable.
- 3) Accept that change is a part of living.
- 4) Move toward your goals.
- 5) Take decisive actions.



6) Look for opportunities for self-discovery.

7) Nurture a positive view of yourself.

8) Keep things in perspective.

9) Maintain a hopeful outlook.

10) Take care of yourself physically.



Get information on mental health



- Attend programs on campus and in the community
- Talk with professionals
- Read
- Go online
- Visit counseling services at UST

Lending Library in the Counseling and Disability Services' Office

Some titles include:

- **Mind over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think.** Greenberger, Dennis, and Christine A. Padesky.
- **Been There, Should've Done That: More Tips for Making the Most of College.** Tyler, Suzette.
- **Last Minute Study Tips.** Fry, Ronald W.
- **The Power of Positive Thinking.** Peale, Norman Vincent.
- **College Rules!: How to Study, Survive, and Succeed in College.** Nist, Sherrie L., and Jodi Holschuh.
- **Living Successfully with Screwed-up People.** Brown, Elizabeth B.
- **Staying OK.** Harris, Amy Bjork., and Thomas A. Harris.

Final Thought...

“Good grades and impressive jobs don’t mean anything if you feel miserable all the time. There are people—family, friends, peers, and counselors—who can help you, so reach out when you need to.”

Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004, p. 238





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