

MANAGING THE CHALLENGES OF ACADEMIC WORK AND STRESS

University of St. Thomas
Counseling & Disability Services

Presentation Topics



- Procrastination
- Time Management
- Scheduling
- Goal-setting
- Stress Management

Procrastination is like a credit card;
it's a lot of fun until you get the bill.

-Chinese Fortune Cookie



Why People Procrastinate...

- Poor habits
- Low motivation/Lack of energy
- Feeling overwhelmed by the size and scope of the task, not knowing where to begin
- Anxiety about meeting expectations: yours as well as others'
- Perfectionism



The Procrastination Toolbox

- Identify the project.
- Make a stronger connection between you and the project.
- Visualize the project completed and yourself enjoying the rewards for doing it.
- Determine how close you are to completing the project.
 - What steps need to be taken to finish it?
 - Set deadlines.

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AND THEN AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, I SPENT TWELVE YEARS IN
COLLEGE AND MAJORED IN PROCRASTINATION.

SEARCH ID: 1141959

Keys to Effective Scheduling

Block out

- planning time: daily and weekly
- committed time: class, commute, work, etc.
- study time
- mark important deadlines

Keys to Effective Scheduling

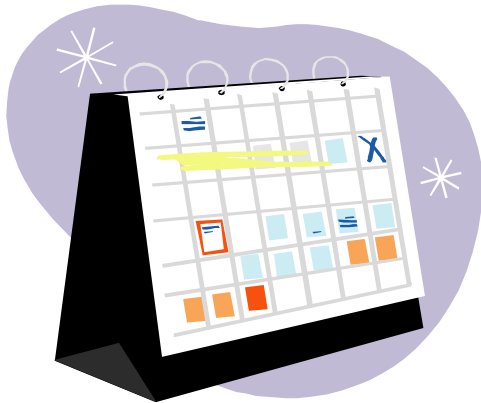
Design a flexible schedule

- swap time when needed
- avoid over-commitment; learn your limits
- plan for free time and recreation
- make the most of prime time (your peak energy period)
- capitalize on committed time; use waiting time



“I combine the dates from all the course syllabi onto *one* calendar and hang it where I can see it *daily*. It’s a visual thing. You have to see it.”

University of Wisconsin Student



It's All in the Planning

Know three things:

1. Everything takes longer than you think it will.
2. Focus on priorities
3. Keep it flexible. Allow for some unscheduled time daily.



Make A List



“In high school you can do it when it comes to mind or when someone reminds you. In college there’s too much to remember and nobody’s going to remind you!”

Adelphi University Student

Source: Tyler, Suzette (2001): Been There Should’ve Done That: More Tips For Making The Most Of College; Front Porch Press; Haslette, MI; pp. 104-105

Time Management Tips

- You CHOOSE how you spend your time (personal responsibility)
- Learn to say NO
- Skipping Class = MORE stress
- Sleep SAVES time

Academic Organization

- Go over work the day you have class.
- Keep up on reading – e.g. one chapter per week, vs 5 before the test.
- If read ahead, then study highlights/notes vs. all material.
- Create question notes – fold a paper, write questions.

Goal Setting

1. Goals

- provide guidelines for decision making and actions
- defined by value system and beliefs
- guide the general direction of your life



Goal Setting



2. Motivation

- stating/writing a goal produces momentum
- motivation increases as you advance towards your goal

Goal Setting

3. Reinforce self-esteem

- self-worth improves with goal attainment
- strengthened self-worth leads to greater effectiveness and satisfaction.

Goal Setting



4. Ask

- What are my long-term goals?
- What are my short-term goals?
- How do my goals and decisions impact me?
- How do my goals impact other people?

Goal Setting

5. Make goals measurable & reasonable

6. Objectives

- establish your most important objectives
- be aware of your time frame:
 - four years, one year, this semester, etc.
- finally, set today's objectives
 - do something about it!



Source: Author Unknown. Why Manage Time?

Calano, J. & Salzman, J.(1987). Career Tracking. Simon P. Schuster.

Schultz, J. Ralston, P., Rougvie, B., Torrie. M. & Boyd, J. (1981). Sexuality and the Adolescent: A Teaching Guide. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press.

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

Stress Defined

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- 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?

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- 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.

Sources of Stress for Students

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- 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

Our goal is not to eliminate stress...

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- Positive stress adds excitement to life.
- Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives.
- Insufficient stress (boredom) may act 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 illnesses are related to unrelieved stress.

The Stress-Reaction Model

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- Alarm Reaction
 - ▣ Fight or Flight

- Resistance
 - ▣ Maintaining high levels of stress, the body adapts

- Exhaustion
 - ▣ The body begins to break down

Impact of Stress on the Body

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- ❑ 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

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- ❑ 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...

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- 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.

Three Approaches to Manage Stress

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



Dr. Robert Sopolsky, an American neuroscientist, observes:

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- 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.
- Individuals who spend considerable time enjoying friends and other relationships are less likely to experience negative stress than those who spend significant time alone.

Ways of Reducing Stress

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

Avoid stressful self-talk

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- 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

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



Want more information?



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