

Ways to Adapt

Sometimes you can't change a situation.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO ADAPT:

Evaluate the importance of what you're worrying about. Put things in perspective. Think about what you typically worried about a year ago. Chances are you can't even remember what it was or now you don't think it was as important as it seemed at the time.

Take note of what's causing you stress and how you're responding. Each body has some outlet for stress. It could be insomnia, back-aches or other symptoms.

These are indicators that you're overstressed. The more you know about your stress response, the better able you will be to deal with its effects.

Get the worry out of the way. Don't let worry fill up your whole day. If you need to worry, schedule time to worry and consider all of the possibilities.

It might help you realize things are better than they seemed. It might also allow you to get on to something else that needs to be done.

Make sure it's your problem. If it is, decide whether you can do something about it now. If you can, do it. If not, then deal with it later.

HELP YOUR FRIENDS...UP TO A POINT

Be helpful to your friends, but don't allow their life stresses to be added to yours. Friendship doesn't mean solving your friends' problems. Try to direct them to resources that can help them. Then you can concentrate on being a friend.

Managing Stress

You can't avoid all stress. If you find that you're showing signs of too much stress for too long, pick and choose from the following strategies to manage it:

Take a 2-hour mini-vacation. You don't have to go to the Bahamas. Go see an enjoyable movie. Listen to your favorite CD. Talk with a friend.

Spend some time alone every day—even if it's just in the bathroom.

Find out how much sleep you need and get it. Set your alarm for 8 hours. If you wake up refreshed for 4 days in a row, set it back 15 minutes. Keep doing this until you're getting just enough sleep to feel rested.

Pick a form of exercise that is stress reducing. Some possibilities include:

- tai chi
- bike riding
- walking
- swimming

Be aware of competition. Competition can be stressful. Competing for grades might be enough competition in your life right now. If that's the case, avoid competitive sports or activities that might increase your stress level.

Have a good friend to talk to. Talking things through can help reduce your stress. If you don't have a good friend, seek out your health educator or counselor.

Wash your hands often to avoid catching colds.

MORE STRESS-BUSTERS

Eat a stress-busting diet. A diet high in complex carbohydrates, a moderate amount of protein and only 20% fat will help you adapt to changes.

Don't depend upon alcohol and other drugs to relieve the stress. The use of alcohol and other drugs can generate more stress than it relieves. Knowing your limits and how you react to substances will help you determine if or how much use can be relaxing.

Be aware of what stresses you out and how your body reacts. Then practice the skills that can help you relieve excess stress.

Making Stress Work FOR You



This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.

Series Editor: Barbara A. Cooley, MA, CHES.

Text: Dawn Graff-Haight, PhD.

© 1996 ETR Associates. Reviewed 2007. All rights reserved. It is a violation of U.S. copyright law to reproduce any portion of this publication.

ETR
Associates

1-800-321-4407
www.etr.org

A nonprofit organization

Title No. H237

Stress? You Bet!

WHEN YOU CHOSE TO GO TO COLLEGE
YOU CHOSE TO HAVE STRESS.

College is full of change and stressors.
You might feel stress from your:

- schedule
- relationships
- jobs
- instructors and classes
- major
- roommates
- grades
- living arrangements

Besides the stressors of school life, there
are also everyday physical stressors, such as:

- lack of sleep
- other illness
- colds and flu
- inadequate diet

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU.
A LITTLE STRESS IS HEALTHY.

Why Would I Want Stress?

Your body reacts to stressful situations by releasing chemicals into your system. This provides your body with more energy. Your mind is more alert. You have more acute eyesight and greater strength.

A certain amount of stress enables you to meet the day's challenges. What's unhealthy are large amounts of stress or prolonged periods of unrelieved stress.

The key is to adapt to changes and figure out how to deal with the stresses of life.

Making Stress Work for You

THESE ARE THE FIRST STEPS:

Discover what situations cause you stress and why. Usually stress is coming from just a few sources. Knowing your stressors gives you the best opportunity to deal with them.

Evaluate your stressors. Decide whether you should be worrying about each one. Decide if it's really important.

Your stressors will either be situations or things that can be changed or modified or things that need to be accepted and worked with.

SIGNS OF STRESS

You will have a unique combination of stress symptoms. They may include:

- trouble sleeping
- headaches
- upset stomach
- feeling tired
- fast heart rate
- irritability
- poor concentration
- cold sweat
- hunched shoulders
- clenched jaw

Being aware of your own stress signals is the first step to managing your stress.

Change What You Can Change

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO PREVENT STRESS BEFORE IT HAPPENS:

Avoid common daily annoyances that can cause stress. Many everyday stressors can be planned for. If you find you're always rushing or late, leave a little earlier. If you have a hard time parking near campus, find alternate transportation.

Make a "to-do" list. Put "Making a to-do list" as the first item. Mark it off. Then go to the next item. Develop a hierarchy of priorities and stick to it. Make it realistic!

List items that can be completed. For example: "Complete first draft of history paper," or "Complete research for biology assignment." Avoid open-ended items that begin with "Work on..."

Choose what you'll give your best effort to. If something is good enough, let it be. Focusing your effort is better than running out of time on important things or giving mediocre effort to everything.

Do things step by step. Concentrate on the task at hand. Try not to worry about all the other things you need to do.

Make decisions far enough ahead of time. Decisions are usually better when you plan for deadlines and have time to reflect on your long-term goals.

Improve your communication skills. Before you respond to someone, paraphrase what he or she said. This will ensure that what you heard is what was meant.

Ask for help. Everybody needs help sometime. If you need help, get it.

- If you need help with your studies, ask the instructor to suggest a tutor or seek out a class study group.
- If you need someone to talk to, ask a friend.
- If you're having financial difficulties, talk to the financial aid office or work study program.
- If you're having difficulties handling some of the stresses of college life, most schools have counselors to help you sort through your priorities.

Look for win-win solutions to conflict. Be open to ideas. State what would work for everyone.

Keep your social and academic commitments within limits. Learn how much time you need to complete assignments, sustain relationships and maintain yourself (eating, sleeping, clothes washing, etc.). Keep a log. Plan around these necessities.

Look for opportunity. Sometimes stressful situations can lead to better outcomes. Finding out that you're not really committed to your major can be stressful. But it can lead to finding a more satisfying field of study or career.