

STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT

STUDY SKILLS



WHAT IS STRESS?

Physical and psychological responses to the pressures of daily life

- **Stress** is a fact of life, wherever you are and whatever you are doing. You cannot avoid
- stress, but you can learn to manage it, so it doesn't manage you.

Changes in our lives—such as going to college, getting married, changing jobs, or illness—are frequent sources of stress. Keep in mind that changes that cause stress can also benefit you. Moving away from home to attend college, for example, creates personal-development opportunities—new challenges, friends, and living arrangements. That is why it's important to know yourself and carefully consider the causes of stress.

Learning to do this takes time, and although you cannot avoid stress, the good news is that you can minimize the harmful effects of stress, such as depression or hypertension.

The key is to develop an awareness of how you interpret, and react to, circumstances. This awareness will help you develop coping techniques for managing stress.

Defining Stress

Stress is the way human beings react both physically and mentally to changes, events, and situations in their lives. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on your perception of an event or situation. If you view a situation negatively, you will likely feel *distressed*—overwhelmed, oppressed, or out of control. Distress is the more familiar form of stress. The other form, *eustress*, results from a “positive” view of an event or situation, which is why it is also called “good stress.”

Causes of Stress

The most frequent reasons for “stressing out” fall into three main categories:

- 1. The unsettling effects of change**
- 2. The feeling that an outside force is challenging or threatening you**
- 3. The feeling that you have lost personal control.**

Life events such as marriage, changing jobs, divorce, or the death of a relative or friend are the most common causes of stress. Although life-threatening events are less common, they can be the most physiologically and psychologically acute. They are usually associated with public service career fields in which people experience intense stress levels because of imminent danger and a high degree of uncertainty—police officer, fire and rescue worker, emergency relief worker, and the military.

You may not plan to enter a high-stress career, but as a college student, you may find that the demands of college life can create stressful situations.

The more common stressors for college students:

- Increased academic demands
- Being on your own in a new environment
- Changes in family relations
- Financial responsibilities
- Changes in your social life
- Exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations
- Awareness of your sexual identity and orientation
- Preparing for life after graduation.

Symptoms of Distress

Symptoms of stress fall into three general, but interrelated, categories—**physical, mental, and emotional**. Review this list carefully. If you find yourself frequently experiencing these symptoms, you are likely feeling *distressed*:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart problems, such as palpitations
- Inability to focus/lack of concentration
- Sleep disturbances, whether it's sleeping too much or insomnia
- Sweating palms/shaking hands
- Anxiety
- Sexual problems.



Managing Stress

As noted in the Introduction, you can learn to manage stress. The first step is understanding yourself better—how you react in different situations, what causes you stress, and how you behave when you feel stressed. Once you’ve done that, take the following steps:

Set priorities. Use the time-management tips you are going to learn in few moments. Make a To-Do list. Decide what is really important to get done today, and what can wait. This helps you to know that you are working on your most immediate priorities, and you don't have the stress of trying to remember what you should be doing.

Practice facing stressful moments. Think about the event or situation you expect to face and rehearse your reactions. Find ways to practice dealing with the challenge. If you know that speaking in front of a group frightens you, practice doing it, perhaps with a trusted friend or fellow student. If the pressure of taking tests causes you to freeze up, buy some practice tests at the school bookstore or online and work with them when there are no time pressures.

Examine your expectations. Try to set realistic goals. It's good to push yourself to achieve, but make sure your expectations are realistic. Watch out for perfectionism. Be satisfied with doing the best you can. Nobody's perfect—not you, not your fellow Cadet, nobody. Allow people the liberty to make mistakes, and remember that mistakes can be a good teacher.

Live a healthy lifestyle. Get plenty of exercise. Eat healthy foods. Allow time for rest and relaxation. Find a relaxation technique that works for you—prayer, yoga, meditation, or breathing exercises. Look for the humor in life and enjoy yourself.

Learn to accept change as a part of life. Nothing stays the same. Develop a support system of friends and relatives you can talk to when needed. Believe in yourself and your potential. Remember that many people from disadvantaged backgrounds have gone on to enjoy great success in life.

At the same time, avoid those activities that promise release from stress while actually adding to it. Drinking alcohol, drinking caffeine, smoking, using narcotics (including marijuana), and overeating all add to the body's stress in addition to their other harmful effects.

Stress Test

Directions: Answer "yes" or "no" to the questions below.

1. ___ Do you worry about the future?
2. ___ Do you sometimes have trouble falling asleep?
3. ___ Do you often reach for a cigarette, a drink, or a tranquilizer in order to reduce tension?
4. ___ Do you become irritated over basically insignificant matters?
5. ___ Do you have less energy than you seem to need or would like to have?
6. ___ Do you have too many things to do and not enough time to do them?
7. ___ Do you have headaches or stomach problems?
8. ___ Do you feel pressure to accomplish or to get things done?
9. ___ Are you very concerned about being either well-liked or successful?
10. ___ Do you perform well enough in life to satisfy yourself?
11. ___ Do you get satisfaction from the small joys or simple pleasures of life?
12. ___ Are you able to really relax and have fun?

NB: A score of more than 4 "yes" answers indicates you are under significant stress.



TIME MANAGEMENT

Time is a finite resource. Balancing responsibilities at your job, home, and school is not easy. No matter what, you're always left with the same 24 hours in a day to check items off to-do lists, spend time with family and friends, and unwind. By planning ahead and using your time wisely, you'll be able to accomplish more and enjoy added free time.

Does it seem like there's never enough time in the day to get everything done? Feel like you're always running late? Here are some tips for taking control of your time and organizing your life.

1. ***Make a "to do" list every day.*** Put things that are most important at the top and do them first. If it's easier, use a planner to track all of your tasks. Don't forget to reward yourself for your accomplishments.
2. ***Prioritize your tasks.*** Time-consuming but relatively unimportant tasks can consume a lot of your day. Prioritizing tasks will ensure that you spend your time and energy on those that are truly important to you.
3. ***Use spare minutes wisely.*** Get some reading done on the bus ride home from school, for example, and you'll kill two birds with one stone.
4. ***It's okay to say "No".*** If your friend asks you to go out with him or help him and you have a final exam the next morning, realize that it's okay to say no. Keep your short- and long-term priorities in mind.
5. ***Find the right time.*** You'll work more efficiently if you figure out when you can best concentrate. For example, if your brain handles math better in the afternoon, don't wait to do it until late at night.

6. ***Review your notes every day.*** Review your notes immediately after class. Thus, you'll need less time to study later. You'll also be ready if your teacher calls on you or gives a quiz.

7. ***Communicate your schedule to others.*** If phone calls are proving to be a distraction, tell your friends that you take social calls from 7-8 p.m. It may sound silly, but it helps.

8. ***Break large, time-consuming tasks into smaller tasks.*** Work on them a few minutes at a time until you get them all done.

9. ***Don't waste time agonizing.*** Have you ever wasted an entire evening by worrying about something that you're supposed to be doing? Was it worth it? Instead of agonizing and procrastinating, just do it.

10. ***Limit distractions.*** Block out time on your calendar for big projects. During that time, close your door and turn off your phone, pager and e-mail.

11. ***Take a break when needed.*** Too much stress can derail your attempts at getting organized. When you need a break, take one. Take a walk. Do some quick stretches at your workstation. Take a day of vacation to rest and re-energize.

12. ***Get plenty of sleep, have a healthy diet and exercise regularly.*** A healthy lifestyle can improve your focus and concentration, which will help improve your efficiency so that you can complete your work in less time.

13. ***Evaluate how you're spending your time.*** Keep a diary of everything you do for three days to determine how you're spending your time. Look for time that can be used more wisely. For example, could you take a bus or train to work and use the commute to catch up on reading? If so, you could free up some time to exercise or spend with family or friends.

In brief, manage your time effectively and set priorities that fit your lifestyle. This way you'll have a better chance of achieving your goals.

PROCASTINATION

What is Procrastination?

Procrastination is putting off or avoiding doing something that must be done. It is natural to procrastinate occasionally. However, excessive procrastination can result in guilt feelings about not doing a task when it should be done. It can also cause anxiety since the task still needs to be done. Further, excessive procrastination can cause poor performance if the task is completed without sufficient time to do it well. In short, excessive procrastination can interfere with school and personal success.

Why Do Students Procrastinate?

There are many reasons why students procrastinate. Here are the most common reasons:

- a. ***Perfectionism***. A student's standard of performance may be so high for a task that it does not seem possible to meet that standard.
- b. ***Fear of Failure***. A student may lack confidence and fear that s/he will be unable to accomplish a task successfully.
- c. ***Confusion***. A student may be unsure about how to start a task or how it should be completed.
- d. ***Task Difficulty***. A student may lack the skills and abilities needed to accomplish a task.
- e. ***Poor Motivation***. A student may have little or no interest in completing a task because s/he finds the task boring or lacking in relevance.
- f. ***Difficulty Concentrating***. A student may have too many things around that distract him/her from doing a task.
- g. ***Task Unpleasantness***. A student may dislike doing what a task requires.
- h. ***Lack of Priorities***. A student may have little or no sense about which tasks are most important to do.

How Do I Know if I Procrastinate Excessively?

Directions: Indicate if you agree with the statements below by ticking the box.

- ☐ I often put off a task in which I have little or no interest.
- ☐ I often have difficulty getting started on a task.
- ☐ I often give up a task as soon as I start to find it difficult.
- ☐ I often try to come up with reasons to do something other than a task I have to do.
- ☐ I often ignore a task when I am not certain about how to start it or complete it.
- ☐ I often cannot decide which of a number of tasks I should complete first.
- ☐ I often try to do so many tasks at once that I cannot do any of them.
- ☐ I often start a task but stop before completing it.
- ☐ I often find myself thinking that if I ignore a task, it will go away.
- ☐ I often find my mind wandering to things other than the task on which I am trying to work.

NB: You procrastinate excessively if you agree with four or more of the above statements.

An abstract graphic design featuring a dark background with a light gray circuit-like pattern. The pattern consists of thin, interconnected lines and small circles, resembling a stylized electronic circuit or a network diagram. The lines are more prominent on the left side, where they form a dense, vertical structure, and become sparser towards the right. The circles are scattered throughout the pattern, often at the junctions of the lines.

THANK YOU