

Managing Stress

After entering your new program of study, odds are you are feeling stressed at times! This is normal and to be expected when you start an academic training program. However, while you may be experiencing stress, you don't have to suffer. By learning ways to recognize and manage stress, you will be able to minimize the emotional distress as well as the stress-related illnesses that often go along with unmanaged stress.

Signs to look for:

- ❑ Physical: Headache, dizziness, sleep and concentration problems
- ❑ Feelings: Moodiness, anxiety, irritability
- ❑ Behaviors: Exaggerated normal behavior (hard workers turn into workaholics; quiet people become isolated), withdrawal, sharing fewer satisfactions with family and friends
- ❑ Thoughts: e.g., "This is terrible," "I can't manage this."

Ways to Manage:

- ❑ If you feel out of control, take steps (e.g. talk to a professor, get additional resources) to put you in control.
- ❑ If you feel stressed because of a certain activity, review your reasons for committing to doing the activity and attempt to find personal value and meaning in the activity.
- ❑ Nurture and maintain social networks which can provide emotional, informational, and tangible support

The importance of Thoughts:

Your brain interprets information from the body and environment and decides when to turn on the stress response. A stress researcher, Lazarus, held that stress begins with one's appraisal of a situation. Stressed people often think that an internal or external event is dangerous, difficult, or painful, and that they don't have the resources to cope. So, in dealing with stress, it is particularly important to appraise your stress realistically and positively and to develop and implement healthy ways to manage it. Try to view stress as a challenge and opportunity for growth, not just misery.

Ongoing Self Support:

- ❑ Exercise regularly
- ❑ Manage your sleep and awake time wisely
- ❑ Maintain a healthy diet and ensure nutritional completeness
- ❑ Take care of your body by minimizing excess sugar, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.
- ❑ Drink plenty of water to eliminate biochemical waste
- ❑ Practice meditation
- ❑ Seek counseling if you are having difficulty functioning or you are consistently feeling poorly

Additional information is available at www.stresstips.com.

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