

What is Stress?



STRESSED? YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
UNH students report stress being a top concern that negatively impacts academic success.*

Stress is a natural part of life and having a stress self-care plan and support system in place will help you cope with daily stressors.

EVERYONE EXPERIENCES STRESS

Stress is your physical, emotional and mental response to life. Your body experiences hormonal changes and physiological response when you are faced with a stressor. This is known as the stress response. This response occurs in your brain, which triggers your nervous system and then branches out to the rest of your body. This response is what gives you a burst of energy that helps deal with the perceived danger/stressor. This is why your heart beats faster, your skin gets flushed or your hands start sweating when you feel stress.

NOT ALL STRESS IS BAD

Stress can create motivation. Academic performance and wellness can be enhanced with moderate and manageable levels of stress. Without some stress, people wouldn't get a lot done. The extra burst of hormones will energize you to finish your final paper, win at sports, or meet challenges. This is positive stress.

YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO LEARN FROM STRESS

The ability to learn from your stress is also built into your body's stress response. For several hours after you experience a stressful event, your brain is busy rewiring itself to remember and learn from the experience. This brain activity helps you be better prepared to handle similar stressors the next time around. When the danger/stressor has passed, your rest-and-digest response kicks in to help you calm down and return to a natural state.

STRESS HAS MEANING

Aspects of life that cause stress are also aspects of life that are important and provide meaning. The way you view stress has an impact on your well-being and ability to cope and learn from stress.

CHRONIC STRESS CAN BE BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Stress can turn troublesome if you are continually in an aroused state and can't return to a relaxed state. This happens when you avoid what is causing you stress, anticipate a stressor in the future or replay something stressful that happened over and over again in your head. This constant stress can be known as chronic stress and can take a toll on your health and wellness, often leading to mental and physical exhaustion and illness.

SOME CAUSES OF STRESS FOR UNH STUDENTS

- Relationship difficulties with family, friends, partner, roommates
- Loss and grief – of any kind, including death of family member or friend
- Academic pressure
- Balancing social and academic lives
- Roommates and living arrangements
- Homesickness
- Financial concerns
- Body image/personal appearance
- Unrealistic expectations, including perfection
- Physical health, acute and chronic health conditions

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Lack of concentration, memory problems, difficulty thinking clearly and problem solving
- Depression and sadness
- Irritability, frustration, annoyance, anger
- Anxious, nervous, worried, fearful
- Feeling out of control
- Racing heart and rapid breathing
- Upset stomach, constipation or diarrhea
- Stomach "butterflies"
- Weight gain or loss, changes in appetite
- Back, shoulder or neck pain
- Tension or migraine headaches
- Skin problems (i.e., acne, hives)
- Sweaty palms or hands
- Fatigue or trouble sleeping, changes in sleep patterns
- Substance use to cope, including substance abuse

Your body is very smart and has ways of sending you messages that you need to slow down and take care of yourself. If you stay in a stressed state, you will notice that these symptoms intensify and become more and more challenging. When you stop trying to avoid your stress and start tuning into your stress, you will find that these symptoms go away or become less and less of a concern.



Health & Wellness

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Quick Ways to Unwind & Recharge

BREATHE

CONNECT WITH FRIENDS

SHOWER

LIGHT A CANDLE

COLOR

MEDITATE

WALK

STRETCH

ASK FOR HELP

LISTEN TO MUSIC

JOURNAL

EAT YOUR FAVORITE FOOD

PAUSE

DRINK A SMOOTHIE

LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE

BE ALONE

READ A BOOK FOR FUN

MAKE A TO-DO LIST

SNUGGLE WITH AN ANIMAL

GET CRAFTY

AROMATHERAPY

HUG YOURSELF

GRATITUDE

PLAN A DAY TRIP

WATCH YOUR

FAVORITE MOVIE

FITNESS CLASS

CLEAN OUT YOUR

CLOSET AND

DONATE

NAP

COMPLIMENT

SOMEONE

VISIT THE HORSE

AND COW BARNS

CREATE A SCHEDULE

PLAN A LUNCH DATE

WRITE YOURSELF

A LOVE LETTER

DRINK WATER

CREATE A \$ BUDGET

START OVER

DAYDREAM

SELF-MASSAGE

WRITE A LIST OF YOUR STRENGTHS

MUSIC

SELF-MASSAGE

CLEAN OUT YOUR EMAIL

GET INSPIRED

WATCH A TEDX TALK

LAUGH

BUS TO PORTSMOUTH

REST

GAME NIGHT

COOK

DANCE PARTY

DIGITAL DETOX

YOGA



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