Everyone feels stressed from time to time, But...

What is stress? How does it affect your health? And what can you do about it?
Stress is how the brain and body respond to any demand. Every type of demand or stressor—such as exercise, work, school, major life changes, or traumatic events—can be stressful.

Stress can affect your health. It is important to pay attention to how you deal with minor and major stress events so that you know when to seek help.

5 Things You Should Know...

1). Stress affects everyone. Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Some people may cope with stress more effectively or recover from stressful events more quickly than others. There are different types of stress—all of which carry physical and mental health risks. A stressor may be a one time or short-term occurrence, or it can be an occurrence that keeps happening over a long period of time.
Examples of stress include:
- Routine stress related to the pressures of school, finances, work, family, and other daily responsibilities
- Stress brought about by a sudden negative change, such as relationship conflicts/break ups, illness, loss
- Traumatic stress experienced in an event like a major accident, war, assault, or a natural disaster where people may be in danger of being seriously hurt or killed.

2). Not all stress is bad. Stress can motivate people to prepare or perform, like when they need to take a test or interview for a new job. Stress can even be life-saving in some situations. In response to danger, your body prepares to face a threat or flee to safety. In these situations, your pulse quickens, you breathe faster, your muscles tense, your brain uses more oxygen and increases activity—all functions aimed at survival.

3). Long-term stress can harm your health. Health problems can occur if the stress response goes on for too long or becomes chronic, such as when the source of stress is constant, or if the response continues after the danger has subsided. With chronic stress, those same life-saving responses in your body can suppress immune, digestive, sleep, and reproductive systems, which may cause them to stop working normally. Different people may feel stress in different ways. For example, some people experience mainly digestive symptoms, while others may have headaches, sleeplessness, sadness, anger or irritability. People under chronic stress are prone to more frequent and severe viral infections, such as the flu or common cold. Routine stress may be the hardest type of stress to notice at first. Because the source of stress tends to be more constant than in cases of acute or traumatic stress, the body gets no clear signal to return to normal functioning. Over time, continued strain on your body from routine stress may contribute to serious health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other physical illnesses, as well as mental health concerns like depression or...
4). **There are ways to manage stress.** The effects of stress tend to build up over time. Taking practical steps to manage your stress can reduce or prevent these effects. The following are some tips that may help you to cope with stress:

- Recognize the Signs of your body’s response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.
- Get Regular Exercise. Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and reduce stress.
- Try Meditation, Yoga, Tai Chi, or other mindful activities. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy and relaxing activities. The Center for Health and Wellness and the Rec Center have classes and groups to try!
- Set Goals and Priorities. Decide what must get done and what can wait, and learn to say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload. Note what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.
- Stay Connected with people who can provide emotional and other support. To reduce stress, ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious organizations.

5). **If you’re overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a professional.** You should seek help right away if you feel you cannot cope, or are using drugs or alcohol to cope. Call PACS to set-up individual counseling and/or check on group counseling options.

---

**T.H.I.N.K**

Hallmarks of anxious communication include negative self-talk, reacting in the heat of the moment, over-explaining yourself, and obsessive attention to overanalyzing decisions. Before you speak (to others as well as yourself) ask the following:

- Is it **T**ruthful?
- Is it **H**elpful?
- Is it **I**nsightful?
- Is it **N**ecessary?
- Is it **K**ind?

Adapted from https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/anxiety-zen/201703/4-awesome-acronyms-anxiety-relief

---

**Psychological and Counseling Services (PACS)**

3 Garrison Avenue, Smith Hall - 3rd Floor, Durham, NH 03824

Tel: 603-862-2090  Website: www.unh.edu/pacs

---