

How to Help

If you know someone who is under stress, there are many things you can do to help:

- ◆ Be available to talk and give the individual 100% of your attention.
- ◆ Listen with care, attention and acceptance.
- ◆ Help the student define what is causing the stress, the effects of the stress, what he or she is doing to cope and how effective the coping skills are.
- ◆ Encourage the individual to think of ways he or she has coped in the past or which might be effective currently. Doing so empowers the student to rely on his or her own judgment and to assume responsibility.
- ◆ Then, suggest alternative ways of viewing the situation and other ways of coping with or minimizing the stress.
- ◆ Take the time to follow up.
- ◆ If necessary, refer the individual to campus' counseling center to speak with a trained professional. (Southern Methodist University, n.d.)



References for Additional Information

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Stress and its effects on college students

Learn the signs and symptoms of excessive stress, how to cope, and what you can do to help.



Is This Really a Problem?

It's no surprise that **college can be a stressful time** in a person's life. What may be surprising is the degree and extent to which college students are affected by stress.

In fact, nearly **30% of college students have reported feeling overwhelmed a great deal of the time.**

(Pryor et al., 2011)

Furthermore, **self-rated emotional health** for incoming freshmen is at an **all-time low**, since a study began measuring this 25 years ago. (Pryor et al., 2011)

A student's susceptibility to stress becomes a major concern.

What is Stress?

Stress arises when the combination of internal and external pressures exceeds the individual's resources to cope with their situation. (Williams, 1999)

Students are very likely to experience some or many stressors which may test their ability to cope: adapting to a new environment, balancing a heavy work load, making new friends, becoming more independent, and dealing with a myriad of other issues.

Know the Signs of Stress

Stress that can have a profound impact on college students' well-being. It is critical to be able to identify the signs and symptoms of too much stress.

Physical symptoms:

- ◆ Increased frequency of headaches.
- ◆ Recurring colds and minor illness.
- ◆ Frequent muscle aches and/or tightness
- ◆ Fatigue

Emotional symptoms:

- ◆ Increased levels of frustration and anger.
- ◆ Being more irritable or disorganized than usual.
- ◆ Greater sense of persistent time pressure.
- ◆ Increased difficulty in getting things done.
- ◆ Feelings of hopelessness in coping with life

(The University of Illinois at Chicago, 2006)

Such feelings can be extremely dangerous as students may turn to unhealthy choices to cope including alcohol or drug abuse, or worse. What's more, as a person becomes stressed more and more frequently, it could cause long-term health problems, including heart problems, high blood pressure, chronic pain, skin problems. There is even some evidence that chronic stress may lead to diabetes in certain people. (Collingwood, 2007).

Help! I'm Stressed!

What can you do if you're feeling stressed? A few suggestions from the University of Texas at Austin's Counseling and Mental Health Center include:

- ◆ Take a deep breath!
- ◆ Get in touch. Hug someone, hold hands, stroke a pet. Physical contact is a great way to relieve stress.
- ◆ Talk it out.
- ◆ Get at least 7 hours of sleep nightly
- ◆ Spend time each day with at least one relaxation technique – imagery, daydreaming, prayer, yoga, etc...
- ◆ Go for a walk.
- ◆ Take care of your body with exercise and proper nutrition.
- ◆ Laugh.
- ◆ Know your limits.
- ◆ Have a good cry.
- ◆ Avoid self-medicating with alcohol or drugs.
- ◆ Look for the positive in your situation and in life. (University of Texas at Austin, n.d.)

