

The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.

*John  
Ruskin*

## MANAGING STRESS

The key to managing stress is recognizing what stresses you. Once you know those things are, you can learn to **reduce your stress** using a number of techniques. Not all will work for everyone, but you may **find one that will work for you**.

### Signs of Stress

\*PHYSICAL: Excessive weight gain or loss, skin problems, lack of appetite or a desire to eat when problems arise, insomnia, constant fatigue, headaches, backaches, muscle spasms, stomach and intestinal problems, nervous energy

\*MENTAL: Uneasiness, irritability, boredom with life, impatience, anxiety, constant worrying, suppressed anger, loss of humor, fear of being unsuccessful, decreased attention span, apathy, withdrawal.

### Identifying Stressors

Define home stressors, work stressors and personal relationship stressors. Make a list of everything you feel contributes to your stress. Mark the ones that are most important to you. Mark the ones least important to you. Mark the ones you feel you can control. Finally, mark the ones you feel are out of your control.

Stressors that are unimportant and out of your control (weather, traffic) are hassles. Let them go. Stressors that are unimportant and controllable (errands) are hassles. Manage your time so they get done efficiently and effectively so they don't stress you unnecessarily.

Those stressors that are important and controllable (meeting deadlines) need to be acted on. Personal planning and goal setting reduce these kinds of stress. Stressors that are important and uncontrollable (death of a loved one) are the most difficult to handle. Counseling is recommended if you have difficulty with this type of stress.

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## **8 Steps to Beat Stress**

- **Know Yourself:** Identify how different situations affect you. Learn to say no when you sense an overload coming on.
- **Change the Environment:** Remove yourself physically from a stressful situation whenever possible. A walk around campus will help clear the air and your head, but it may not solve the problem. Improving your conflict resolution or negotiating skills will be beneficial to use in repeat situations where a collaborative approach of win/win is possible.
- **Habituation:** If you face similar situations over and over, get used to it. Thinking through the situation may help take away some of the mystery or anxiety.
- **Keep Fit:** If you're physically and mentally fit and active, you'll better deal with stress. Good nutrition, exercise and sleep all make coping with stress easier.
- **Develop Leisure Time Activities:** This can take your mind away from problems as you allow hobbies and other pursuits to serve as distractions. And this may also incorporate beneficial elements like exercise or travel.
- **Don't Be Alarmed about Feeling Stress:** Recognizing, accepting and dealing with stress will allow you to use the experience to expand your personal awareness.
- **Help Others:** Humans are social animals and need others. By sharing, taking risks and opening up to others in a reciprocal manner, we can help others while helping ourselves.
- **Learn to Lower Your Stress Level through Relaxation:** Develop techniques (muscle relaxation, yoga, meditation, self hypnosis) that work for you. Biofeedback instruments are available to measure and substantiate the effect.