Managing Your Stress

Introduction

Stress is nondiscriminatory. It affects people of all ages and cultures. There are no exceptions. If stress is not addressed properly, the results can produce physical, mental and emotional consequences. Therefore, it is a good idea to learn the signs of stress in an effort to detect it early. By doing so with proper care, you can control how you react to the stressors in our lives.

In this module, you will learn:

1. Definition of Stress
2. Causes of Stress
3. Symptoms of Stress
4. Strategies for coping with stress

What is Stress

Stress is tension encountered as a result of our response to various challenges. These challenges might come from either external or internal forces. An internal challenge is one that is self-imposed, such as worrying over an exam. On the other hand, an external challenge is a challenge generated from others. An example of an external stressor might be as a result of a weather storm that floods your home. Whether challenges are internal or external, they are nonetheless overwhelming; therefore, it is important to find a way to cope successfully with these demands.

Exercise One

• Make a list of 10 external and 10 internal challenges that many college students may face during a semester.
Exercise Two

Change is a part of life. However, it is not always easy to deal with. Sometimes we are unable to understand or accept the change presented. We are accustomed to doing things a certain way and any other unfamiliarity brings discomfort. There are times when we are able to adjust and then there are times when it’s just too hard. These are the things we must monitor and be aware of the fact that they have the potential to become large stressors in our lives.

- Review the following list, choose one challenge from the list that you might have had to face, and describe how you dealt with it.

  • New School  
  • Poor Grades  
  • Death of a family member  
  • Broken relationship  
  • Registration  
  • Job search  
  • Fired from job  
  • Marriage  
  • Pregnancy  
  • Car problem  
  • Test  
  • Sickness  
  • Illness of a family member

Signs of Stress

Here are a few symptoms you might experience as a result of stress.

• Appetite increase or decrease  
• Listlessness  
• Headache  
• Shoulder pain  
• Backache  
• Insomnia  
• Tire easily  
• Diarrhea  
• Indigestion  
• Sweaty hands
• Crying for no apparent reason
• Forgetfulness
• Lack of concentration
• Fear of failure
• Increase of alcohol and drug intake
• Loss of sex drive
• Feelings of helplessness
• Desire to die

Coping with Stress

Your Physical Wellness

Your physical wellness is very important to your mental and emotional health. Being physically fit can have very positive affects on your ability to cope with the things that produce stress in your life. Eating properly, exercising regularly and getting sufficient sleep are the cornerstones of physical wellness.

Exercise # 3
Wellness Activity

Identify several resources in your community or on your college campus that will Help you with a wellness program. Design a flier that highlights these resources.

Exercise # 4
Research the four food groups and design a menu for one week that will provide healthy and nutritious meals.

Emotional Wellness

• Laugh and play
• Adjust attitude
• Set Priorities
• Control negative self-talk
• Say no
• Read a book
• Listen to music
• Learn tools for problem-solving
• Be flexible
• Apologize
• Support yourself with people
• Forgive
• Create positive self-talk
• “A sound mind in a sound body is happiness.” John Locke

Exercise # 5
Use one of the challenges from exercise # 2 and discuss what you could have done to better manage the stress in that situation.