

Coping With Stress

What is Stress?

The demands of everyday life often are accompanied by stress, especially as individuals attempt to balance responsibilities at school, work, and home. Stress is a state of tension that is often felt both physically and emotionally. Stress may be a normal part of one's day or it can become overwhelming and felt more intensely.

How Will I Know that I am Stressed Out?

Stress affects everyone differently and may even be experienced by the same person differently throughout his/her life based on the underlying causes. Some symptoms of stress that you may experience could include:

- Problems sleeping (insomnia, frequently waking up during the night, etc.)
- Concentration difficulties (shorten attention span, racing thoughts, etc.)
- Excessive feelings of tiredness or exhaustion
- Increased worry or excessive anxiety
- Increased feelings of depression or sadness
- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches, upset stomach, hot and cold flashes, or ulcers
- Loss of appetite
- Increased difficulty with decision-making
- Increased blood pressure
- Tightness in your chest, chest pain, or shortness of breath
- Frequent headaches and migraines
- Desire to withdrawal socially
- Increased feelings of irritability or anger towards people around you (this may be experienced as "road rage" or having a "short fuse")
- Decreased performance academically or at work

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Since stress is likely to be present from time to time, it is important to learn how to cope with stress. One way to do so is to make sure you are leading a balanced lifestyle. For example, when the demands placed on us begin to outweigh our time, abilities, desires, or energies, stress can persist and become unmanageable. Ask yourself if you are having your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs met. Think about what the primary sources of stress are in your life and the potential adjustments that can be made to address them. For instance, you might ask yourself some of the following questions: Am I stressed at certain times of the day? Is my stress related to a specific event, relationship, or even thought?

Often times we are so busy attending to everyone and everything else that we forget to attend to ourselves. Employing the following self-care strategies may assist an individual in coping with stress:

- Try to relax by taking a (hot) bath
- If your schedule permits, take a short (20 minutes) nap
- Get some exercise
- Reach out to friends or family
- Do some household chores you've been avoiding
- Get a massage or go to a spa
- Start reading a book you've been wanting to
- Ask a friend to go see a movie
- Practice deep breathing techniques
- Attend a Yoga class or complete a Yoga/workout video
- Make sure you're eating healthily

Additional Resources

If you would like additional information or would like assistance in learning to cope with your stress please call (312 - 996-3490) or come into the Counseling Center and make an appointment.

Other Campus Offices that you might find helpful -

For Personal Health and Wellness:

The Wellness Center (<http://www.uic.edu/depts/wellctr/index.shtml>)
Room 237 Student Center East (MC 894)
750 South Halsted Street
Chicago, Illinois 60607
Phone: (312) 413-2120

For Academic Related Concerns:

The Academic Center For Excellence (<http://studentsatisfaction.vcsa.uic.edu>)
Student Services Building
1200 W Harrison Street
Suite 2900 (M/C 237)
Chicago, IL 60607
Phone: (312) 413-0031

Online Informational Resource:

American Psychological Association's Help Topics – Stress:
<http://www.apa.org/topics/stress/index.aspx>

