



**S**tress is...in the eye of the beholder. What is stressful for one person may not be for another.

Stress is...necessary for normal human functioning. The nervous system requires a certain amount of stimulation to function properly. However, stress that is too intense or prolonged can be destructive.

# Stress Management

## STRESS IS...

Stress is...not simply the result of an undesirable event. The way we interpret a situation, and perceive our ability to cope with it, will contribute to how stressed we feel. The way we think and behave can maintain, increase or reduce stress.

Stress is better managed by

- being aware of stress symptoms
- learning to identify sources of stress
- developing strategies to cope with stress

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS?

Do not ignore the signs of stress. Frequent or long-term problems with stress can have serious effects on your emotional and physical health.

Some common symptoms of stress include:

### PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- fatigue
- back pain
- chest pain
- headaches
- upset stomach
- weight loss or gain
- frequent colds or flu

### BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

- disturbed sleep
- frequent crying
- hurried behavior
- social withdrawal
- not attending classes
- increased alcohol use
- increased caffeine use

### EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

- anger
- worry
- anxiety
- sadness
- irritability
- confusion
- frustration

## WHAT ARE SOME SOURCES OF STRESS?

Certain life events or experiences, whether positive or negative, are times of stress for many people. Some examples:

### Major Life Events

- getting married
- starting university
- death of a loved one
- recent employment
- ending a relationship
- moving

### Long-term Worries

- chronic illness
- financial concerns
- academic difficulties
- conflict in a relationship
- conflict with family members
- children with school problems

### Daily Hassles

- traffic jam
- parking ticket
- no clean socks
- missing the bus
- computer break down
- line up at ATM

## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Student Counselling Services  
(966-4920)

Student Health Services  
(966-5768)

## WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE TO COPE WITH STRESS?

Many people find the following strategies helpful in reducing their level of stress:

- Take care of your physical health. Try to eat nutritious meals, reduce your caffeine intake, exercise moderately, get enough rest and stop smoking.
- Schedule pleasant activities. When you are busy and most stressed it is especially important to give yourself permission to take time out. Develop a hobby, see a movie, listen to music or read a favorite book.
- Examine your stressors. Ask yourself whether or not you have control over a problem. Take action when you can. If you don't have control over a problem, try not to assume responsibility for solving it. When you stop worrying about problems beyond your control you'll have more energy.
- Enhance your problem-solving skills. Set realistic goals and work toward them step-by-step. Prioritize. Deal with issues as they arise. Pace yourself. Look for choices. Ask for help when you need it.
- Maintain supportive relationships. Don't neglect your friends, family members, social club, church attendance, etc.
- Adopt proper breathing techniques. Slow, abdominal breathing promotes relaxation.
- Practise a specific relaxation technique such as meditation or positive imagery.
- Seek assistance with drug and alcohol problems. You may feel that these substances help to numb your feelings of stress. However, any relief you might experience is temporary. Drugs and alcohol cannot cure the underlying causes of stress, and can contribute to further problems.
- Maintain your sense of humor.
- Develop assertiveness skills. Try to take more responsibility for attending to your own needs. Learning to delegate and to say "no" are important steps in reducing your level of stress.
- Learn more about stress management. There are many helpful books that can give you more information about coping with stress. Check the public library or a local bookstore.
- Remember that it is impossible to have a completely stress-free life. Focus on using the stress management strategies that work best for you.
- Pay attention to the ways you do manage. Give yourself credit.