

The College Student's Guide to Stress Management

Take an already-busy life that may include work and family obligations, add college classes and studying, sprinkle in exams, budgeting, and other interests, and then try to have a social life on top of it all...However, it's not all bleak. Let's look at some ways college students can alleviate stress, succeed in college, and live healthy, balanced lives.

Eat Well

Did you know that an unhealthy diet can increase your stress levels? When you eat healthy, you equip your body with the nutrition it needs to fight stress. Avoid high-fat, high-sugar foods and go easy on the caffeine.

Exercise

This is one of the best things you can do to reduce stress. Exercise produces endorphins, the feel-good chemicals that act as natural painkillers, and it also improves sleep, which in turn reduces stress. Try walking, jogging, or yoga.

Have an Outlet

You need a break most when you believe you don't have time to take a break. Find a new hobby, play sports, paint, draw, garden—do something that gives you an outlet from the tension of everyday life.

Build a Support System

Having a strong support system is vital to weathering stressful times and living a joyful life. Surround yourself with family and/or friends who lift you up, encourage you, listen without judgment, and provide sound perspective.

Make a Plan

Get organized, make a plan, and stick to it. Prioritize your obligations each week and then schedule time for each—time for studying, working, family and friends, and yourself.

Think Positively

Your thoughts create your reality, and it's time to turn negative thinking around. Try saying positive affirmations such as, "I am relaxed and calm; I can handle this situation with ease" or "I will rise to the challenge, no matter the obstacles."

Meditate

Meditation is a simple way to lower stress that you can do anywhere, at any time. Begin with a simple technique such as deep breathing, do a guided meditation (find these on YouTube), or repeat a mantra.

Try Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the use of aromatic essential oils to improve one's physical and emotional well-being. Lavender, lemon, jasmine, bergamot, and ylang-ylang are all reported to lower stress and anxiety.

Journal

You may already know that journaling helps you process life's problems and deal with everyday stress, but did you know it may also strengthen immune cells and decrease the symptoms of asthma and arthritis? Give it a shot.

If Stress Gets Too High

Everybody needs help from time to time. If you're experiencing depression or anxiety, if you're unable to sleep or enjoy life, or if you're turning to alcohol or drugs to cope with stress, it's time to ask for help. Reach out to:

- counseling services
- Your student advisor, academic life coach or a resident assistant
- Doctor or therapist
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline 1-800-662-HELP
- The American Institute of Stress
- 211.org