



Recognizing and Combating Stress

Warning Signs of Unhealthy Stress

- Changes in sleep patterns; taking longer to fall asleep, waking up often and early
- Changes in eating patterns; eating more or eating less
- Recurring colds and minor illness; more frequent headaches
- Frequent muscle aches and/or tightness
- Increased difficulty in task completion and more disorganization
- Frequent worrying and feeling overwhelmed
- Increased generalized frustration and anger and/or shorter temper

How to Combat Stress

- **Exercise at least every other day.** Doing things like jogging, walking, or swimming can keep your stress level lower. Also, exercise increases your endorphins, also known as the body's natural painkillers, which make you feel better!
- **Manage your time.** Create long-term and short-term goals, and write them down. When coming up with a time management plan, be sure to provide for academic, social, and physical time. Make sure you follow your schedule!
- **Work at least twenty minutes into your schedule for "you" time.** Read a book, meditate, take a walk, or just sit and relax.
- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** Ask yourself if the issue at hand is really worth getting upset about. If it doesn't affect your goal setting and achievement, it's probably not worth fretting over.
- **Have a sense of humor and think positively.** Try to look on the bright side as much as you can!
- **Communicate!** Talk to someone you trust, whether it's a friend or family member, your roommate, a professor, a co-worker, or a counselor if you have any issues of concern. Sometimes all we need is someone to listen to us.

Meredith College
Counseling Center
202 Carroll
3800 Hillsborough Street
Raleigh, NC 27607

Phone: 919-760-8427
Fax: 919-760-2383
E-mail:
counselingcenter@meredith.edu

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Healthy Sleep Habits

- Develop a regular sleep schedule– go to sleep and get up at the same time each day and avoid daytime naps.
- Retrain from stimulating activities and drugs, such as caffeine or nicotine, just before bedtime.
- Try to exercise at regular times each day (but not late in the evening.)
- Refrain from drinking alcohol close to bedtime in an effort to help you sleep. Drinking even small amounts of alcohol can make it harder to sleep.
- If you are unable to fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and “do something boring” until you begin feeling sleepy. Don’t try to force yourself to sleep.
- Do something pleasurable before bed to help you unwind. Take a relaxing shower or bath and, if you like to use fragrances, consider using lavender scented soaps, lotions, or oils for a naturally calming effect.
- Minimize light and noise when trying to sleep and avoid heavy meals before bedtime. If hungry, eat a light carbohydrate snack.
- Keep paper and pencil by the bed to record worries and reminders so you don’t have to keep thinking about them.
- Try using a relaxation visualization. (See back of sheet for example.)

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