

Natural remedies in stress for college students

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Abstract

Stress among college students is a common phenomenon and is part and parcel of their life. Many social scientists have researched the topic to determine the sources of stress. If this task is completed, it would probably be easy to manage and control stress. Furthermore, students could be informed about the campus resources available to help them address these problems. A better approach may be the use of a stress management workshop, specifically geared to the stressors encountered by college students. Certainly, stress in the college setting cannot be eliminated but we can and should do a better job preparing our students to manage it.

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Introduction

Stress is a fact of life, wherever you are and whatever you are doing. You cannot avoid stress, but you can learn to manage it so it doesn't manage you. Changes in our lives — such as going to college, getting married, changing jobs, or illness — are frequent sources of stress. Keep in mind that changes that cause stress can also benefit you. Moving away from home to attend college, for example, creates personal-development opportunities — new challenges, friends, and living arrangements. That is why it's important to know you and carefully consider the causes of stress. Learning to do this takes time, and although you cannot avoid stress, the good news is that you can minimize the harmful effects of stress, such as depression or hypertension. The key is to develop an awareness of how you interpret, and react to, circumstances. This awareness will help you develop coping techniques for school stress.

Stress is the way human beings react both physically and mentally to changes, events, and Situations in their lives. Students experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on your perception of an event or situation. If you view a situation negatively, you will likely feel *distressed*—overwhelmed, oppressed, or out of control. Distress is the more familiar form of stress.

The other form, *eusters*, results from a "positive" view of an event or situation, which is why it is also called "good stress." *Eusters* helps you rise to a challenge and can be an antidote to boredom because it engages focused energy. That energy can easily turn to *distress*, however, if something causes you to view the situation as unmanageable or out of control. Many people regard public Speaking or airplane flights as very stressful—causing physical reactions such as an increased heart rate and a loss of appetite—while others look forward to the event. It's often a question of perception: A positive stressor for one person can be a negative stressor for another.

Causes of stress

The most frequent reasons for "stressing out" fall into three main categories:

1. The unsettling effects of change

2. The feeling that an outside force is challenging or threatening you

3. The feeling that you have lost personal control.

Life events such as marriage, changing jobs, divorce, or the death of a relative or friend are the most common causes of stress. Although life-threatening events are less common, they can be the most physiologically and psychologically acute. They are usually associated with public service career fields in which people experience intense stress levels because of imminent danger and a high degree of uncertainty—police officer, fire and rescue worker, emergency relief worker, and the military.

You may not plan to enter a high-stress career, but as a college student, you may find that the demands of college life can create stressful situations. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) notes some of the more common stressors for college students:

- Increased academic demands
- Being on your own in a new environment
- Changes in family relations
- Financial responsibilities
- Changes in your social life
- Exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations
- Awareness of your sexual identity and orientation
- Preparing for life after graduation.

Symptoms of stress

Symptoms of stress fall into three general, but interrelated, categories—physical, mental, and emotional. Review this list carefully. If you find yourself frequently experiencing these symptoms, you are likely feeling *distressed*:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart problems, such as palpitations
- Inability to focus/lack of concentration
- Sleep disturbances, whether it's sleeping too much or an inability to sleep

- Sweating palms/shaking hands
- Anxiety
- Sexual problems.

Even when you don't realize it, stress can cause or contribute to serious physical Disorders. It increases hormones such as adrenaline and corticosterone, which affect your metabolism, immune reactions, and other stress responses. That can lead to increases in your heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, and physical demands on your internal organs. Behavioural changes are also expressions of stress. They can include:

- Irritability
- Disruptive eating patterns (overeating or under eating)
- Harsh treatment of others
- Increased smoking or alcohol consumption
- Isolation
- Compulsive shopping.

A sustained high level of stress is no laughing matter. It can affect every area of your life—Productivity in the workplace and classroom, increased health risks, and relationships.

Some natural remedies for stress

Winter and the accompanying bad weather can be a stressful time for anybody, especially in today's day and age, with all the problems Americans are facing in this difficult economy. More and more people are suffering from negative stress. Negative stress takes a toll on our daily lives and our health and can lead to high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, anxiety and depression, among other problems, so I feel this question is very appropriate.

Rest assured, there are many things you can do before you run out to get a pill. Here's a list of some of the most effective natural stress reducers.

1. Passionflower

While passionflower has long been considered a "folk remedy" for anxiety and insomnia, a few studies have shown that the herb may actually be comparable in effectiveness to benzodiazepine drugs, which are used to treat stress. Passionflower is available in a variety of forms, including infusions, teas, liquid extracts and tinctures. It is not recommended for children or for women who are pregnant or nursing. Consult your doctor before adding it to your diet, especially if you are taking other medications.

2. Massage

This is kind of a no-brainer, right? Everybody loves a massage. But did you know that it's been used as a stress reliever for thousands of years? Historically, the Chinese used massage to open blocked energy channels in order to improve health and Hippocrates, the "father of western medicine," used friction for physical healing treatments. Today, we use massage to relax tense muscles, reduce pain and improve circulation, which can all do wonders for the mind.

3. Meditation

Meditation, or mindfulness, only takes 15 to 30 minutes a day, which is possible even in a packed schedule. It's also incredibly affordable, considering the only tool you need is your own mind. Just give yourself some silent time to let your thoughts run free or just focus on your breathing. That small amount of peace in your day can help you deal with or even release stress.

4. Exercise

Whether it's yoga, Tai Chi or running, exercise works much in the same way as meditation because it gives you the time to be alone with your thoughts (or an opportunity to let them go). However, exercise also has the added benefit of releasing endorphins into the brain, which improves your mood. It also prevents obesity and other health problems, giving you less to be stressed a

5. Organize your life

Organization offers a sense of control and peace of mind, and there's a number of ways you can improve in this regard. If you're the kind of person who's always running around, it can help to make lists so that you remember everything. If you're the kind of person who feels edgy in their own house, tidy up. Studies have shown the mere sight of clutter can put us on edge.

6. Eat healthy

It's actually been proven that junk food can make us depressed (not to mention fat) so clean up your diet. Healthy foods like whole grains and protein can improve your mood and give you long-lasting energy to tackle everything that comes your way during the day. Foods that are especially effective for stress-busting include blueberries, salmon and almonds, according to scientists.

7. Limit Internet and cell phone use

Disconnect, disconnect, disconnect. Part of the problem with reducing stress in today's world is that we are never truly able to shield ourselves from it. By turning away from the Internet and shutting off our cell phones, we can at least block some of the channels from which stress can reach us. Doing this also allows us to live in the moment and appreciate it. It is particularly important to cut off electronic use before sleep, which can cut down on insomnia-related problems.

8. B Vitamins

B vitamins are known to promote proper functioning of the brain and nervous system, as well as help induce relaxation and fight fatigue. In fact, indicators of B deficiency include irritability, depression and apathy, so to stave off those symptoms, increase your intake of foods rich in B vitamins. B vitamins are typically found in the germ and bran of cereal grains, as well as beans, peas, nuts, liver, eggs and dairy products.

9. Aromatherapy

In some cases, inhaling certain scents has been shown to have immediate stress relief effects by raising mood, reducing anxiety and aiding focus and concentration. Experts say it's because the smells can stimulate the limbic system, which in turn releases chemicals that affect the brain, promoting feelings of relaxation, calmness, love and excitement. Popular oils for stress relief and mental fatigue include lavender, cypress and rosemary.

10. Sleep

Sleep is the most important natural stress reducer of them all. Too little sleep leaves us cranky, irritable and on edge. Too much sleep can leave us sluggish and depressed. Try to find the right balance that allows you to feel well-rested and ready for the day. Promote better sleep by establishing bedtime rituals

that signal to your brain that it's time to fall asleep, avoid exercise in the three hours before sleep or take a warm bath. Certain foods can also promote sleep, such as carbohydrates, bananas, peanuts, and figs, dairy and - of course, a certain holiday favourite - turkey.

Conclusion

Stress can have consequences far beyond temporary feelings of pressure. While you can't avoid stress, you can learn to manage it and develop skills to cope with the events or situations you find stressful. By learning to cope with stress, and by recognizing the symptoms of depression and the warning signs of suicide, you'll be better prepared to help not only yourself, but also friends, fellow students, and the Soldiers you will someday lead. Stress can have consequences far beyond temporary feelings of pressure. While you can't avoid stress, you can learn to manage it and develop skills to cope with the events or situations you find stressful. By learning to cope with stress, and by recognizing the symptoms of depression and the warning signs of suicide, you'll be better prepared to help not only yourself, but also friends, fellow students, and the Soldiers you will someday lead.

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