

Coping with Stress

The end of the semester is approaching and your stress level may be increasing. College students have to deal with a lot of stress. As an international student, you will often have even more stress! Keys to cope with stress are 1) noticing your stress, and 2) finding coping strategies that work for you!

1) Notice Signs of Stress

- Physical: Sleep problem (too much and too little), Muscle tension (especially neck and shoulder), Headaches, Fatigue, Stomach problem, Frequent colds, Shallow breathing, Pounding heart, Dry mouth, etc...
- Behaviors: Change in appetite, Crying, Nervous laughter, Teeth grinding, Loss of interest, Not nice to friends and family, Impulsive behaviors, Drinking & smoking, Careless behaviors...
- Thoughts: Self-criticism, Hard to concentrate or make decisions, Forgetfulness, Preoccupation with particular thoughts, Racing mind...
- Feelings: Low mood, Anxiety, Irritability, Fear, Moodiness, Low self-esteem...

2) Do Coping Strategies that Work for You!

- Do Relaxation Techniques.
 - Take deep breaths from your belly.
 - Do meditation.
 - Take a 5 minutes vacation by imagining peaceful scenes.
- Manage Your Time.
 - Plan ahead. Make a reasonable plan. Do not plan too much.
 - Make a to-do list. Prioritize your tasks.
 - Include relaxing or fun times in your plan.
- Take Care of Your Body.
 - Eat well and sleep well.
 - Exercise regularly! Walking is a great exercise, too.
 - Avoid self-medication with alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Manage the amount of caffeine and sugar.
- Connect with Others.

- Talk with your family and friends.
- Make friends in the US.
- Develop a support system in the US.

- Express Yourself. Talk It Out.
 - Talk and share your stress, concerns, thoughts and feelings. This helps you organize your mind and work on solving problems.
 - Write down or journal your thoughts and feelings.
 - Have a good cry.

- Monitor Your Physical Comfort.
 - Create comfortable room temperature.
 - Adjust comfortable brightness in your room and on your computer.
 - Create a comfortable environment.

- Know Your Limits.
 - Distinguish what you can do and what you cannot do.
 - Learn to accept what you cannot change.

- Look for the positive.
 - Create a small fun time.
 - Laugh with humor, comedy TV, etc.
 - Explore alternative perspectives.

If you have any questions or would like to talk to Yuka (a graduate assistant at CIE) about your stress and stress coping strategies, you are welcome to contact her at the Coffee Hour on Fridays or at her email: ykato@siu.edu