



***Enhanced Learning
Educational Services***
“the study skills specialist”

MANAGING STRESS



Stress is a part of modern life. Stress can actually be very motivating. It only becomes a problem when it impacts negatively on your thoughts or actions.

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.

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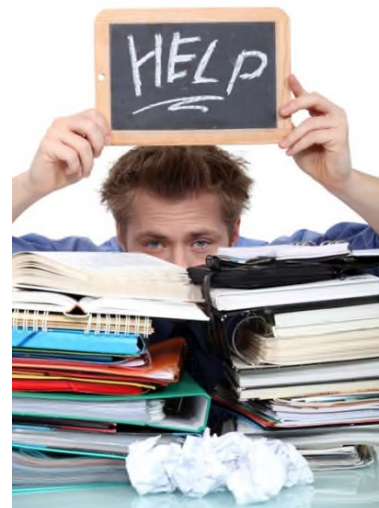
1. WHAT IS STRESS?

Some definitions could be:

- a state of extreme difficulty, pressure or strain
- the feeling of suffering from mental tension
- a physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes worry

Stress begins in your mind when you are worried or frightened about a situation.

You start to imagine everything that could go wrong and think about all the negative worst case scenarios. The disaster pictures are crystal clear in your mind as though you were watching a movie of all the bad things you feared coming true. These thoughts trigger chemical reactions in your brain that then engender physical responses such as elevated heart rate, rising body temperature, increased production of sweat by your pores and a general unpleasant feeling of panic and loss of control. The first step in managing stress is learning to recognise how you (and your body) currently deal with stress.



a. How do you define stress? Has this been something you have thought much about? What sorts of things cause you to feel stress?

2. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF STRESS?

The signs of stress can be grouped into either physical or non-physical. Tick which of these you experience when you feel stressed.

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF STRESS:



- headaches
- sweaty palms or increased sweating
- shallow breathing
- dry throat
- getting lots of colds
- your skin breaks out in pimples etc
- feeling physically ill in the pit of your stomach
- fluttery feeling in your stomach
- indigestion
- racing heart, increased heart rate
- muscle aches and pains
- feeling tired but not being able to sleep
- clenching your jaw or fists or muscles

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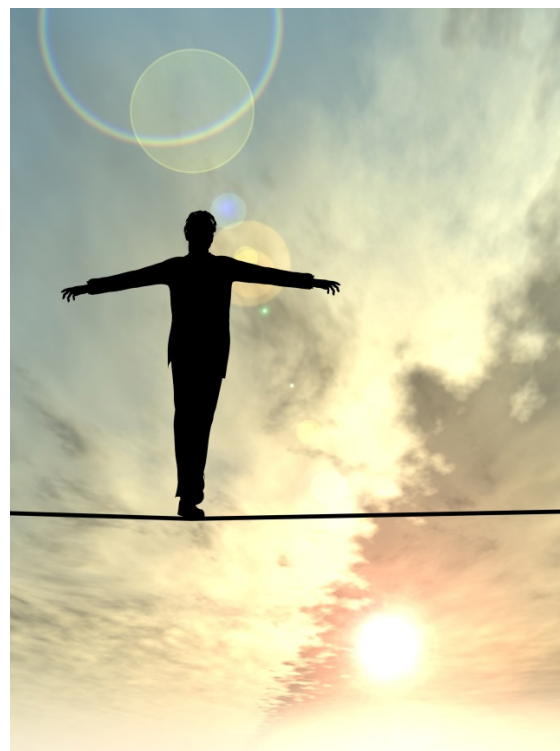
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- sleeping too much
- difficulty getting to sleep
- interrupted sleep



NON-PHYSICAL SIGNS OF STRESS:

- feeling worried or tense
- becoming cranky, irritable at friends and family
- becoming moody and easily upset
- feeling like you could cry at any moment
- difficulty concentrating in class and at home
- not being able to sit still
- not being able to work
- feeling unhappy or depressed for no obvious reason
- feeling less confidence about yourself
- feeling indecisive and not able to make decisions
- getting upset or anxious over trivial things
- not feeling hungry
- experiencing bad dreams and nightmares
- overeating
- eating much more junk food than usual
- stopping talking to people about how you are feeling
- doing silly/self-destructive things (alcohol, drugs etc)
- feeling negative about yourself and your abilities
- losing pleasure in the things you normally do
- lots of negative thoughts
- becoming forgetful
- not being able to relax
- feeling no enthusiasm for anything, listlessness, lack of motivation
- feeling like you want to thump someone for no reason at all!



b. Can you think of any other signs of stress either physical or non-physical? Which do you think are most common?

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