



Leadership Handouts

Personal Development Series

Activities Resource Center
Department of Campus Activities
University of Houston

Stress Reduction

WHAT IS STRESS?

By definition, stress is a pressure, a force, or a strain placed on something. Stress is caused by how we respond to certain events in our lives, not by the events themselves. Each individual may respond differently to the same event.

Some stress is inescapable. Avoidance is a responsive defense mechanism to stress, and trying to avoid stress will in turn create more.

Not all stress can and needs to be controlled. We need positive, high-energy stress to keep us going. We need to learn to control that negative emotional and physical stress that can be harmful.

False perceptions are often stress producing. Find out all the facts before you get “stressed out” over a situation.

Stress could arise from:

- Having a long, important meeting the night before a major exam
- Juggling multiple priorities as a student, like classes, work, activities, relationships, family
- Being away from your family support network and finding a new one
- Having a reputation as an outstanding student or leader
- Leaving your security behind and heading out into the “real world”

Coping with Stress

There are three ways that most people deal with stress: avoidance, suffering or managing. The first two will only cause more stress.

Managing stress is the best way to deal with it. Since stress is a holistic concept involving the entire self, it might be managed by using the following techniques:

1. **Defining Stress**
Recognize what aspects of your life cause the stress. If we recognize stressful situations, we can then see them differently and better analyze our reactions and feelings.
2. **Time Management**
Prioritize your time so that you can take personal time to relax and socialize
3. **Relaxation**
Slow your body down, both mentally and physically. This includes such techniques as meditation, mental imagery, and deep breathing.
4. **Physical Wellness**
Good nutrition and exercise are important and help to reduce tension.
5. **Sleep**
Sleep lets your body reenergize. Completion of dreams is also important.
6. **Rewards**
Give yourself a pat on the back for following these stress reduction techniques.

Remember the learning how to deal with stress is a very important life skill. In order to lead a healthy, happy life, you must learn to accept, define, and cope with the stress in your life. Practice is the key.