

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from demanding circumstances. It is a person's response to the demand for change. College students are particularly vulnerable to stress.

Some stress can be helpful and stimulating (motivating), however ***too much*** stress can seriously affect your physical and emotional well-being. Regular physical and psychological stress can diminish self-esteem, decrease academic effectiveness, and create a cycle of self-blame and self-doubt.

Some Symptoms of Stress Include:

- **Feelings:** anxiety, irritability, fear, moodiness, embarrassment.
- **Thoughts:** self-criticism, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, forgetfulness, preoccupation with the future, repetitive thoughts, fear of failure.
- **Behaviors:** crying, increased or decreased appetite, "snapping" at friends, acting impulsively, alcohol or other drug use, nervous laughter, teeth grinding or jaw clenching, stuttering or other speech difficulties, being more accident-prone.
- **Physical:** sleep disturbances, tight muscles, headaches, fatigue, cold or sweaty hands, back or neck problems, stomach distress, more colds and infections, rapid breathing, pounding heart, trembling, dry mouth.

Short Term Ways to Handle Stress (good for an immediate reduction in your stress level):

- **Relax where you are.** Sitting in a comfortable position, place your left hand over your naval and rest your right hand on top of your left. Breathe deeply through your nose, feeling your hands rise as your abdomen fills with air. Still inhaling, count to three and feel your chest expand. Hold your breath momentarily then release it. Repeat four times, but stop if you become light headed.
- **Take a break.** Get some exercise or fresh air, or go somewhere private for a few minutes.
- **Ask yourself whether it is worth being upset over the situation.** You can choose to stay calm and overlook it. If this issue is important, confront it directly; talk it out with trusted friend, family member, teacher or counselor.

Resources

Dochan, C., & Hodges, R., Sellers, D. (2011). *Academic transformation; the road to college success*. (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Managing stress. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/stress>

Reducing anxiety; skills for success. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sru.edu/academics/enrollment/academicsservices/Documents/College Success Resources>