



University of Brighton

STRESS MANAGEMENT

FOR LIVING AND WORKING TO YOUR POTENTIAL

CREATING A FRIENDLY, POSITIVE,

INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Student Wellbeing Team
www.brighton.ac.uk/wellbeing

HERE FOR
YOU



University of Brighton

Studying can be stressful, particularly during exams. If you're feeling under pressure, you aren't alone. We all deal with pressure in different ways. Learning how to manage it can help you reach your full potential, particularly during assessment periods where additional stress can prove counterproductive.

These stress management tips can help you learn how to stop and identify the things that might be making you feel stressed, and find ways to help you relieve it.

You may also find it useful to visit Study Skills at www.brighton.ac.uk/studyskills for a wide range of study resources to help you get motivated, stay on track and achieve your potential.

+ What is stress?

We can feel the stress response not just in relation to fear or being upset but also in relation to happier sensations - like the anticipation of going on holiday and exciting situations such as falling in love. Stress can therefore be associated with both negative and positive situations.

However, the majority of us tend to associate it with a more negative experience, particularly when we feel that we have too much of it. This can result in individuals suffering from physical and emotional symptoms.

Therefore, it is useful to try to understand your own levels of stress. What situations set these off? How can you best develop strategies to try to offer a greater understanding of them? Beyond this, is there anything that you can do to help control and keep stress at a manageable level?

+ Managing stress and staying mentally healthy

Below are some exercises and tips to help you manage stress.

- The following points provide a starting point for analysing how you feel about your stress levels and offer different perceptions of any difficulties you might encounter.
- Stop giving yourself a hard time - you don't need to be perfect. Mistakes are important because we learn from them.
- Stop saying yes - don't take on more than you can handle. Be assertive - it's OK to say no to other's demands.
- Stop to think - stand back and take a few minutes to weigh up your day and its pressures. Planning and time management can help you to avoid some stressors.
- Talk to others - express yourself. Communication with other people is a great way to beat stress.
- Stop rushing - most of us cannot work at breakneck pace every hour of the day. Build in time to unwind and reflect.
- Stop to eat - take a break. Make sure you eat regular healthy meals and if it's with friends even better.
- Stop to take exercise - physical exercise helps to chase the 'blues' and stress away giving your body and your mind a challenge.
- Stop to breathe - take a few minutes to relax during a busy day. Deep breathing exercises help relieve stress.
- Stop working late - staying healthy means keeping life in balance. Ensure you get a good night's sleep. Our bodies and minds function more efficiently after a good rest.
- Stop to check out reality - sometimes stress comes from unrealistic expectations about how difficult something is going to be or from an unwillingness to think about the issue in hand. Try looking at your situation with a friend, exploring different perspectives.
- If you're bored stop and do something more interesting - take time out to do things you are interested in and enjoy. Having hobbies or leisure interests stimulate us and can lead to meeting others.

+ More Quick Stress Tips

- Keep a pad and pen by the bed and write down any niggling thoughts you might have before you go to sleep. This also helps if you wake up in the middle of the night.
- If you spend time in traffic to and from university, try to reframe your thoughts. Don't dwell on your anxiety about being late, being held up etc. Use the time to plan or think about more positive things.
- If you often find yourself thinking about the past, constantly bringing up old memories or, alternatively, racing ahead, thinking about tomorrow and beyond, planning for the future, stop!... Try to be present, in the here and now and just focus on yourself. You'll find this helps.
- Text yourself messages, "things to do" particularly if you are inclined to forget things.
- Sprinkle lavender on your pillow at night - this helps to aid a good night's sleep.
- Think about something you might want to change. Take small steps towards achieving this - don't make it unmanageable.
- Exercise - anything will do - a walk, a swim - but remember your limitations and don't do too much. Make it enjoyable, not a task. Even using the stairs instead of the lift is a really positive move.
- Wherever you are studying here at University of Brighton, you can't be far away from the beauty of the South Downs or the sea views at the coast. Either will offer you the opportunity to breathe in some of that fresh air - a real stress buster.
- Breathing. Deep focused breathing can really help. Inhale right down into your tummy, push the stomach muscles out as you breathe in. Exhale slowly and through your mouth. Try to make the exit breath last longer. Do this twice and try to relax your mind as you do this.



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- Create a word in your mind that you associate with pleasant and calm feelings. Close your eyes until you can clearly see the word. Give yourself a little time with this.
- Bach Flower remedies are often used to help to relax people. Pop along to your local health food shop and enquire about what is available.
- Play some uptempo music. Try a dance with this – it could relax you and release tension.
- If you can afford to treat yourself try reflexology or Indian Head Massage.
- Do something you enjoyed as a child such as digging sand castles and moats on the beach or throwing stones into the sea. Go on a bouncy castle or trampoline. Try not to worry about what others might think, just try to enjoy it.
- Use a punch bag or a stress ball!
- Laugh. Find humour in things. A good giggle is often a really good way of just letting it out.
- Book out time just for you. Make a date for yourself and treat yourself to a bubble bath or anything that you enjoy and just don't get enough of!
- If you wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep, get up. Don't lie tossing and turning, actually get up, make a hot drink (that doesn't contain caffeine). This process often helps and actually means you'll be quicker to get back to sleep than if you did nothing.

+ Additional Reading

Ebooks on mindfulness, addiction (drugs, alcohol and gambling), CBT, depression, eating disorders and stress and anxiety are available via the online library and a recommended reading list at www.brighton.ac.uk/wellbeingresources.