

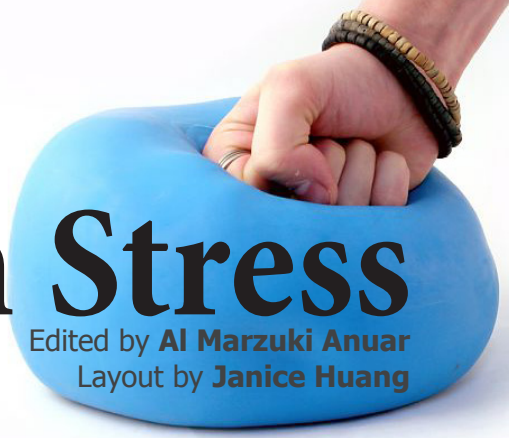
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Coping With Stress

Be in Control

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Photo: gaj-it.com



Exams are just around the corner. You've been clocking in the late nights, burning the midnight oil and trying your best to remember everything that you've read. However, try as you may, nothing seems to be going in. You get tired much more easily than before, and you start to feel an overwhelming sense of helplessness.

Sounds familiar? If it does, you could well be experiencing from the effects of stress. Stress is the physiological and behavioural responses of your body to events that are perceived to be threatening your general well-being.

Contrary to popular belief, a moderate amount of stress can actually be beneficial for you. When faced with a stressful event, your body releases the hormones adrenaline and cortisol which help to keep you alert, increasing concentration and energy levels. Prolonged stress can be harmful due to excess cortisol in your system.

Harmful symptoms of stress include:

- Memory shortage
- Anxiety and moodiness
- Depression
- Loss of sleep and/or appetite
- Frequent headaches and fatigue spells
- Frequent fevers and colds

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Stress that is not kept in check will greatly hamper your preparation process for the coming exams. The following are...

The top ten ways to reduce stress:

10. Meditation

Meditation has been around for more than five thousand years (!), in various teachings and forms. Common emphasis includes balancing mental and emotional states through breathing techniques and/or heightened spirituality. It can help you relax and increase your body's resistance to harmful symptoms of stress.



Photo: mummymug.com

9. Avoid Excessive Caffeine, Alcohol and/or Narcotic Intake

There is a tendency for most to rely on mental stimulants of chemical nature when piling in the daily hours on revisions. Be it coffee, Red Bull, ice-cold beer or cigarettes, one should be mindful of over-consumption. When taken in excess, caffeine can bring forth high fatigue when it wears off, and may cause anxiety in some cases.

Disorientation is a risk inherent in excessive alcohol intake, while chain addiction to nicotine is harmful to the body. Even if they do help to temporarily calm your nerves, be mindful of the negative side-effects.

8. Positive Thinking

Being stressed can make one depressed and overly negative. Thinking positively and appreciating your strengths help boost morale. Remind yourself that life is never void of challenges, and humans are seldom free from errors. A trick to overall well-being is to learn from mistakes and realise that negativity hinders your potential.

7. Get Enough Sleep

Burning the midnight oil and depriving yourself of sleep is not a sure-fire way to improve your chances to be successful in the exams. Prolonged lack of sleep can cause various harmful effects, which includes reducing absorption rate. Try to get between 5 to 8 hours of sleep daily to maintain an optimum physical and mental state for consistent study sessions.

Photo: images.google.com



6. Exercise Regularly

Exercise is a great way to de-stress and keep fit at the same time. When you exercise, your brain release chemicals that help you feel calm, relaxed and happy. Moreover, physical fitness has spill-over effects to improve mental abilities. Be it a daily jog or weekly football match, you will likely feel less stressful with leisure work-outs that without.

5. Consume a Healthy and Balanced Diet

A well-nourished body will be much better prepared to handle stress than one that is sustained by eating excessive junk food and sugary snacks. Choose fruits to appease your sweet tooth cravings, as it provides both essential vitamins and minerals. Adequate protein intake is crucial for cell regeneration whilst low G.I. carbohydrates generally lengthen periods of 'fullness'.

Photo: edetoxify.com



4. Engage in Music Therapy

Everyone has differing tastes in music, but generally instrumentally-soothing music works best to reduce tension levels. Music with sounds of nature could be explored as an avenue to diminish stress. At the end of the day, choose the type of music that is fastest to calm your senses and put a smile on your face.

Photo: wikipedia.org



3. Embrace Laughter

The saying "Laughter is the Best Medicine" has its merit when dealing with stress. Having a good laugh for the right reasons help to reduce tension, hence keeping stress levels low and manageable.

2. Give Yourself Some Daily 'Me-Time'

Set aside some time away from revisions to do things that you enjoy. It could be a hobby, taking a slow walk in the park or shopping. When you engage in 'down-time' activities, temporarily put aside thoughts pertaining to your studies in order to fully rest and relax. The bottom line is to prevent a build-up of stress.



Photo: kabircare.org

1. Things Can Be Better Together!

Scientific studies show that laughter and physical contact (like hugs) are excellent ways to relieve stress. There's also proof that some social distractions help put you back in a positive mood so you're better able to focus when you do return to studying. So, surround yourself with family or close friends during break times to just goof around or have your meals together. It can be more fun to go through a tough period together with friends and family!