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Stress and College



According to the 2008 Mental Health Study by the Associated Press, eight out of ten college students say they have experienced pressure in their daily lives. Stress is an inevitable condition that occurs in all college students. The anxiety that accumulates from the beginning of the year to the closing days of Finals Week can lead to depression and anxiety.

Psychologists define stress in two ways, the perception of pressure, and the body's response to that burden. A person's natural hormonal system signals the brain to the awareness of danger, and it sets off an immediate reaction, known as fight-or-flight.

The stress response is a short-term mechanism meant only to solve current problems, not long-term difficulties. Excessive or continuous arousal of the stress response can lead to harmful physical and mental issues, including heart problem and depression.

However, some students desire the arousal of stress to obtain energy; thus, they reach for some sort of stimulant, such as an energy drink, to artificially achieve that liveliness. Yet, unbeknownst to most students, one energy drink will create the same hormone levels as a stressful episode and have the same dangerous results physically.

Thus, behavioral responses will vary depending on the person. Those experiencing a constant level of stress should determine what is causing their anxiety and look for ways to help relieve their situation.



Below are some tips to help manage stress:

1. **Rethink your expectations:** Many college students begin their first year with the desire to conquer. However, as assignments mount and reading schedules drone on, the pressure to perform can trigger anxiety and prompt fear. Make an appointment with a school counselor and ask them to provide resources to help you manage your goals.
2. **Have a support system in place:** Develop a support group of individuals that are reliable, trustworthy, and can provide advice when needed.
3. **Create a schedule to follow:** Plan your agenda and include additional time for interruptions or last-minute changes.
4. **Limit the task and activities that you have in one day:** Accept the fact that there are some days you will have to say no to friends and invitations that conflict with your schedule. Remember, that school is a brief season in life and you can enjoy social calls again later.
5. **Take time to rest and exercise:** The Mayo Clinic reports that *any* form of exercise can act as a stress reliever and improve your fitness level. Physical activity helps pump up the production of endorphins, which are feel-good neurotransmitters.

6. **Create a professional relationship with your professors:** By creating a specialized relationship, students will have a deeper understanding of the subject, and the department will establish concern for your welfare.
7. **Get involved in school activities:** College events are designed to create friendships with individuals that have the same interests and struggles. But also, provide an escape from the workload.
8. **Have the courage to ask for help:** Connect with a professional, a clergyman, or a school official and talk about your struggles.
9. **Keep a journal.** Mental Health professionals have reported that journaling helps people focus, problem solve, and facilitate relaxation.
10. **Give yourself a break:** Accept that are times when you will perform better than others. Unforeseen circumstances will derail your plans and challenge your goals. Use those times to learn how to navigate stressful times after graduation and throughout your professional and personal life.



Resources:

1. It's the Final Countdown-College Students Give Tips on How to Manage Stress during Finals. *Huff Post: The Blog*. (2017). https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kayla-hedman/its-the-final-countdown-c_b_4379538.html
2. Six Tools to Help Prevent Depression in College Freshman. *Michigan Health: Health Management*. (2017). <https://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/health-management/6-tools-to-help-fight-college-freshman-depression>
3. Stress: Understanding the Facts. *Anxiety and Depression Association of America*. (2018). <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/related-illnesses/stress#>
4. Why Stress Turns into Depression: How to Prevent Stress Causing Depression. *Psychology Today*. (2013). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-practice/201303/why-stress-turns-depression>
5. Student's Guide to Dealing with College Stress: <https://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/balancing-student-stress/>
6. Exercise and Stress: Get Moving to manage stress: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthylifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/exercise-and-stress/art-20044469>
7. The Health Benefits of Journaling: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling>
8. This is What Happens to Your Body After Just One Energy Drink: <http://www.health.com/stress/just-one-energy-drink-sends-young-adults-stress-hormone-levels-soaring>

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