MANAGING STRESS

Stress is anything that alters your natural balance. When stress is present, your body and mind must attend to it in order to return you to balance. Your body reacts to stress by releasing hormones that help you cope with the situation. That in turn takes energy away from other functions of your brain like concentrating or taking action. There are two different sources of stress: external triggers like getting a poor grade or breaking up with your boyfriend/girlfriend, and internal triggers like placing high expectations on yourself.

Stress is part of life and there are many instances when stress is helpful. The stress created by a deadline to finish a paper can motivate you to finish the assignment on time. But when experienced in excess, stress can harm your physical and emotional health and limit your ability to function at your best in school, at home and in relationships. The good news is that there are many things you can do to manage your stress and control how you respond to stressors.

Tips for managing stress

- Avoid procrastination. Putting off assignments or responsibilities can create mental & physical stress that is avoidable by staying on top of them.
- Practice good time management skills. A feeling of control and balance in your life is a necessary part of managing stress (many online resources teach time mgmt.-do a google search).
- Recognize the role your own thoughts can play in causing stress. When our minds continuously feed us messages about what we "should" achieve, "ought" to be or "mustn't" do, we are setting ourselves up to fall short of goals that are unrealistic.
- Limit screen time. Your brain needs rest to form the pathways necessary for learning & creating memories and new insights.
- Find humor in life. Laughter can be a great tension reducer.
- Seek the support of people you trust & respect. Talking about stressful situations can help you "vent" and reduce some of the tension. Be careful not to focus only on the negative. Try to also think of at least 3 things that are going well and share those experiences.
- Pace yourself throughout the day. Take regular breaks from class, studying and work calm your mind. Listen to music, take a walk outdoors or just sit quietly and relax to calm your mind.
- Exercise regularly. Physical activity helps burn off the stress.
- Practice good sleep habits. Sleep deprivation can cause many physical & mental problems and can increase stress.
- Practice good nutrition. Avoid sugar and processed foods. Get plenty of the nutrient dense foods like fruits, vegetable and whole grains so your body can function at its best.

Are you experiencing too much stress? Here are a few common indicators:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased worry , tension & anxiety
- Tight muscles, headaches
- Trouble completing assignments or not going to class

If you feel your stress level is interfering with your ability to function, your mood or behavior call the Student Health Center for an appointment at 503-352-2269.