**Managing Stress: A Guide for College Students**

**What Exactly Is Stress?**

There is no doubt that many college students feel stress. We may know we have stress when we experience it, but what is it exactly?

Stress is defined as a response to a demand that is placed upon you. Without some stress, people would not get a lot done. That extra burst of adrenaline that helps you finish your final paper, perform well in sports, or meet any challenge is positive stress. It is a short-term physiological tension and added mental alertness that subsides when the challenge has been met, enabling you to relax and carry on. Responses to stress can be physical, such as a headache; emotional, such as fear or sadness; and mental, such as increased anxiety. If you cannot return to a relaxed state, then the stress becomes negative. The changes in your body (increased heart rate, higher blood pressure and muscle tension) start to take their toll, often leading to mental and physical exhaustion and illness. Too much stress can cause problems and affect our health, productivity and relationships.

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**Stress Management: A Wellness Lifestyle Approach**

Stress is a part of life, but the healthier you are, the better able you are to manage stress when it happens. Chronic stress can impact your immune system, which lowers your resistance to getting sick. Approaching stress management from a wellness lifestyle approach can give you "money in the bank" when it comes to preventing stress, and can give you the energy you need to handle stress when it happens. The following components are part of a wellness lifestyle approach.

[**Attitude:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/attitude.html)
"Attitude is everything." What does that mean? The way you think about things can make all the difference in how you react to events. In this section, we explore how you can change the way you think in order to reduce stress.

[**Healthy Eating:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/nutrition.html)
Good nutrition and healthy eating habits can help you through your stressful times now, not just prevent a heart attack 30 years down the road. Eating well will increase your physical, mental, and emotional stamina. Fueling yourself with nutrient dense foods can boost your immune system, help you maintain a healthy weight and help you feel better about yourself. Check out the Healthy Eating section for a quick diet assessment and ideas on how to fuel yourself better.

[**Physical Activity:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/exercise.html)
Physical activity provides immediate stress relief as well as long-term stress management. Just 20-30 minutes of walking a day, for example, can give you more energy, help you put things in perspective, improve your sleep, sharpen your mental productivity, and boost your self-confidence. Our bodies are made to move and everyone can find some type of activity that is enjoyable.

[**Relaxing Your Mind and Body:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/relax.html)
There are a number of relaxation techniques that can help you manage stress and also improve your concentration, productivity and overall well-being.

[**Sleep:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/sleep.html)
Consistent sleep is critical for a healthy life. Although we all need varying amounts of sleep, if we do not get enough sleep, everything from our immune system to our ability to learn and remember information will be negatively affected. Sleep is as important as nutrition and exercise when preparing for peak performance.

[**Healthy Relationships:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/relationships.html)
Changes in relationships can be a source of stress for many students, as can feeling socially isolated. At the same time, talking with a supportive friend or family member can be helpful in coping with stress. This section emphasizes conflict resolution for stress management.

[**Time Management:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/timemanagement.html)
Sometimes all the things we have to do can seem overwhelming and impossible to accomplish. Learning how to be a good time manager is a skill that you can use throughout your life, which can make work, play and studying more manageable, more productive and less stressful. Learn about the ABCs of time management.

[**Alcohol and Other Drugs:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/alcoholanddrugs.html)
Alcohol and other drug use can lead to many problems that can add stress to our lives. High-risk use can lead to poor decision-making, impaired abstract thinking, injury and legal problems. By understanding your overall risks, you can make healthier choices.

[**Tobacco:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/tobacco.html)
Tobacco can impact your sleep, ability to fight infection and overall health. These issues can create stressful situations. Tobacco use by some, however, is seen as a stress reducer. In order to achieve a healthy lifestyle, it is important to learn strategies to deal with stressors and to understand that quitting tobacco use takes time and practice.

[**Money Management:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/moneymanagement.html)
When you consider that the average credit card debt of an undergrad is $2,748, it's no wonder why finances are a common stressor for college students. This section offers tips on money management and credit card use.

[**Spirituality:**](https://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/spirituality.html)
Spirituality means finding personal meaning in your life; it doesn't mean just following a particular religious dogma. This section describes how exploring spirituality may be helpful in managing stress.