

Stress Reduction Techniques and Stress Management

1. Try specific relaxation techniques.

- Deep breathing/Diaphragm breathing-provides extra oxygen to blood and causes body to release endorphins which promote relaxation and slow the heart rate.
- Alternate Nostril breathing-Good technique to slow the heart rate.
- Stretching/Progressive Muscle Relaxation-Causes the body to relax and reduces stress.
- Visualization-By concentrating on a quiet, relaxed, peaceful place, your mind is transported and your body relaxes.
- Passive Meditation-Reduces stress and provides a calming effect. Contact the ADEPT program (978)542-6148 for info on classes or look on the internet.
- Yoga-Relaxes the body and quiets the mind. Check to see if classes are being offered through Intramurals (978)542-7701, Non-Credit programs (978)542-6331, your local YMCA, health club, etc.
- Moderate Rhythmic Exercise-Produces endorphins and decreases stress – walking, jogging, swimming, biking, etc.
- Massage – Contact a massage school for the best rates.

2. Build relaxation into your everyday life.

- The body responds to anxiety through muscle tension. Forcing yourself to relax a little can loosen up your muscles and relieve some of your stress.
- Take an extra shower each day.
- Listen to a favorite tape for 10-15 minutes while fixing dinner or before bed.
- If you are at work, or studying in the library, even just leaving for a five minute walk can help ease tension.
- Give yourself a “treat” after a particularly stressful event or day.
- Use scented candles at home in the room where you are studying or working.
- Read a book or magazine for pleasure for 5 minutes before you go to bed.
- Whenever you start to get stressed, do 5 reps of deep breathing to slow your heart rate.
- Take at least 15 minutes each day for “me time” – early in the a.m., during your lunch break, or at night after family members are in bed.
- Break your routine-sometimes following it strictly can make you feel like you are in a rut. Build a little variety into your week and do something differently so you don’t feel trapped by your schedule.

3. Seek out assistance.

- Recognize when stress is "getting the better of you" and seek out help before it impacts on relationships with family, co-workers, friends, etc.
- Salem State College Counseling Services- 1st floor Ellison Campus Center
- Short-term counseling through your job
- Community counseling services
- Support Groups
- Stress management seminar

4. Take control over your reaction to stress.

- Write in a journal to help identify your stressors and some coping strategies.
- Spend a few minutes at the end of each day to reflect-so you can cope better next time.
- Voice your stressors aloud and how you can deal with them.
- Recognize which stressors you can decrease, eliminate, or change.
- You may not be able to control all of your stressors, but you can control how you react to them.

5. Use time management techniques to maximize the time you have and help manage your stress levels.

- Always have study materials with you so you can study whenever you have downtime: e.g. between classes at the CALL Center, on the shuttle bus, on the train to work, during your lunch break at work, at the doctor's office while you wait, etc.
- Avoid procrastination. Do not put off an assignment because it seems too overwhelming or too much – break it up into little pieces and work on it step by step.
- Set a series of deadlines for finishing different pieces of a larger project. Set the final deadline a few days before the actual deadline so you do not leave it for the last minute.
- Don't get bogged down thinking about how much work you have to do. Getting stressed out about work wastes valuable time you could be spending on the work itself.

6. Suggestions on balancing academics, family, and work

- If you have children, never discuss problems with your child when you are feeling overwhelmed. Wait until you have calmed down and can address the problem in a rational manner.
- When an immediate problem arises, focus only on that situation and learn to set other frustrations aside. Deal with problems independently, one at a time.

- If your child needs you, give your child attention, then ask for cooperation. For example, turn on your kids' favorite movie so they can watch while you study in the next room.
- If children are older, designate homework time and do it together.
- Plan study breaks with your kids.
- Set early bedtimes for younger kids so you can study before it gets too late.
- Spend time with other student-parents and take turns watching each other's kids.
- Make use of willing relatives or friends as babysitters, especially near exam time.
- Set up a master schedule with your family and make family members aware of "high stress" times for you- like midterm and final exam weeks.
- Ask family members/roommates to help out by taking care of things around the house. Making arrangements in advance of big project due dates or exams is always helpful.
- When you are home, allow extra time for studying, and plan for interruptions-do not let interruptions cause stress.
- Ask for help from coworkers and/or your supervisor during particularly stressful weeks.