



Managing Stress

☞ We all experience stress at one time or another. Stress is a normal reaction to any type of change. It affects our bodies, emotions, thoughts and behaviors. The effects of stress can be positive, negative, or a combination of the two. For example, stress can motivate you and improve your concentration, or it can paralyze your ability to accomplish anything at all.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress Ñ

☞ The following are common signs and symptoms of stress. Identify those that you are experiencing now or have experienced in the past.

- fatigue
- headaches or dizziness
- rapid heart beat
- stomach aches or nausea
- teeth grinding
- loneliness
- helplessness
- dread of going to work
- getting easily overwhelmed, frustrated, upset, or angry
- feeling pressures or pressed for time
- feeling incompetent, inadequate, unappreciated, or trapped
- increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- thinking of the same thing over and over again
- anxiety, apprehensiveness, guilt
- sadness or depression
- loss of interest in people and things
- mood swings
- trouble concentrating
- confusion and forgetfulness
- increased aggression
- changes in eating or sleeping habits

If you have several of these symptoms and they linger or keep recurring, it may be a sign that stress is affecting you negatively. Get to know your own reactor to stress so you can notice it early and work to reduce it before it gets worse.

Stress in the Office Ñ

Below are some common causes of stress in the office.

JOB DEMANDS

- ☞ unrealistic or unclear expectations
- ☞ too much to do or too little time to complete assignments
- ☞ lack of challenge or job burn-out
- ☞ lack of input on how you do your job
- ☞ difficulty juggling work and family responsibilities

JOB SECURITY

- ☞ performance evaluation, raise, or salary cut
- ☞ financial cutbacks, reorganizations, hiring freezes, and lay-offs
- ☞ change in job responsibilities or classification

RELATIONS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR AND CO-WORKERS

- ☞ poor communication or conflicts among staff
- ☞ inadequate support from supervisor or co-workers
- ☞ favoritism, differential treatment, or insensitivity
- ☞ loss of staff or staff turnover

Some of these things you may be able to change; others are not under your control. Below are tips on developing a stress reduction plan that works for you.

Stress-Reducing Strategies ▽

Here are some ways you might take action to change or handle situations that are causing you stress in your office environment.

- ☞ Identify the cause(s) of your stress. Figure out if there is anything you can do to change the situation. Is it in your control to change any or all of it?
- ☞ Don't try to make too many changes or accomplish too much at once. Make a list of priorities. Break things down into manageable pieces. Set limits.
- ☞ Participate actively in staff meetings. Ask questions and make suggestions that may help the office run more smoothly. Try to communicate clearly and treat others respectfully. Share your ideas and take responsibility for group decisions.
- ☞ Make sure you understand your job tasks and performance standards. Consult with your supervisor about possible solutions to workload difficulties. Enroll in a skills training class to make your job easier for you.
- ☞ Assess whether your job is a good match for your skills and values. Investigate career development resources available on campus. Consider an alternative work schedule for more time with your family or to return to school.
- ☞ Take a workshop on communication, conflict resolution, and/or stress management skills to increase your personal and interpersonal effectiveness in stressful situations.

Coping Techniques ▽

Sometimes you may not be able to change the situation that is causing your stress. Here are some ways you might try coping with stress in situations beyond your control until the situation changes.

- ☞ Get support. Identify co-workers, friends, and family you trust and can talk to. Make social plans with them. Join departmental or campus-wide social activities and staff organizations to meet new friends and build social support among others on campus with common interests.
- ☞ Practice deep breathing, visualization, meditation, yoga, stretching or some other techniques that helps you relax. When you are feeling more relaxed you will have an easier time finding concrete solutions to your problems.
- ☞ Take a break from whatever is causing your stress. Don't forget to laugh, play, and have fun.
- ☞ Take care of yourself. Maintain a healthy diet. Exercise moderately at least two to three times a week. Get enough sleep. Remember that caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes and drugs do not help solve your problems and actually contribute to stress.
- ☞ Take a brief wellness break for a brisk, rejuvenating walk on campus with a friend. The change of scenery and social support can make a difference!

Campus Resources ▽

- ☞ Free confidential problem assessment, referral and consultation, contact CARE Services at 643-7754.
- ☞ Information on free stress management workshops and written materials on stress, contact CARE Services at 643-7754
- ☞ Free consultation and workshops on conflict resolution, call Staff Ombuds Office at 642-STAF.
- ☞ Health*Matters Walking Group meets every MWF at 12:10 at the south side of the Campanile.
- ☞ Fitness and exercise programs, call Cal FIT at 643-5151.
- ☞ Massage appointments are available at the Recreational Sports Facility. For an appointment call 643-8030.



Health*Matters is an interdepartmental program designed to support and promote the health of Berkeley faculty and staff. Sponsors include: Office of Human Resources; Department of Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreational Sports; Office of Environment, Health & Safety; Physical Education Program; UC Police; Office of Emergency Preparedness; University Health Services: CARE Services, Occupational Health Clinic, Ergonomics@Work, and Workers' Compensation & Vocational Rehabilitation. 643-4646