

Defining Stress

The American Medical Association defines stress as any interference that disturbs a person's mental or physical well-being. However, most of us know stress simply as the "wear and tear" that our minds and bodies experience as we attempt to cope with the challenges of life. Much of our stress comes from worrying about past events, agonizing about present challenges, and fretting about future changes. Instead of stress hormones being active in our bodies for only minutes, they may persist for months or even years. For many of us, then, stress is a constant and toxic companion.



Location: Lile Hall, Suite 122

Phone: 870-245-5381

Email: academicsuccesscenter@obu.edu

Website: www.obu.edu/success

What is Stress?



Actions to Take Against Stress

Choose new behaviors: Here are some actions you can take when you feel that your life is stretched a mile wide and an inch thin.

⇒ **Separate from an external stressor.** Perhaps the external stressor is a neighbor's loud music or a demanding job. You can choose to study in the library where it's quiet and find a new job with fewer demands.

⇒ **List and prioritize everything you need to do.** Record all of your incomplete tasks according to life roles. Assign priorities to each task: A = Important & Urgent actions. B = Important & Not Urgent actions. C = All Unimportant actions.

⇒ **Delete C's.** Identify where you are wasting time and cross them off your list.



⇒ **Delegate A's and B's.** Where possible, get another person to complete some of your important tasks. Ask a friend to pick up your dry cleaning. Pay someone to clean your apartment. This choice frees up time to do the tasks that only you can do, like your math homework.

⇒ **Complete remaining A's and B's yourself.** Start with your priorities, such as a looming term paper or a broken refrigerator. Handle them immediately: Visit the library and take out three books to begin researching your term paper topic. Call an appliance repair shop and schedule a service call. Spend time doing only A and B priorities and watch your overwhelming feelings subside.

⇒ **Discover time-savers.** Consciously make better use of your time. For example, keep an errand list so you can do them all in one trip. Or study flash cards during the hour between classes.

⇒ **Eliminate time-wasters.** For example, reduce the time you spend on Facebook. Cut down on watching television. Stop playing video games.

⇒ **Say "no."** Admit that your

plate is full, and politely refuse requests that add to your commitments. If you agree to take on something new, say "no" to something already on your plate. If saying "no" is difficult for you, do role plays with a friend to practice. Or put it in writing.

⇒ **Keep your finances organized.** A survey of 11,000 adults by Prevention magazine revealed that their number one source of stress is worry over personal finances. So curtail unnecessary spending, pay bills when due, and balance your checkbook.

⇒ **Exercise.** Aerobic exercise increases the blood levels of endorphins, and these hormones block pain, create a feeling of euphoria (the exercise high), and reduce stress. Consult your doctor before dramatically changing your level of exercise.

⇒ **Get enough sleep.** If sleep is a problem, don't eat after seven o'clock and go to bed by ten. If thoughts keep running through your mind, write them down. Breathe deeply and relax. Clear your mind. If sleep eludes you, consider seeing a doctor. You can't learn effectively when deprived of sleep.

Source:

From DOWNING, *On Course*, 6E.

© 2011 Cengage Learning