

STRESS IN YOUR LIFE?

Answers to stress problems, help for finals week

With finals week less than two weeks away, the tension of getting assignments done is increasing. The last minute bombardment of deadlines sends the risk of migraines, ulcers, and late-nights at Jimmy Z's through the roof. In extreme cases, people have become burned-out from the relentless pressures.

Burning-out, in some cases, includes an alienation from goals one has originally set out to do, (i.e. get an education and a good grade in a class).

Now the questions are: Is all that stress really necessary? and What can one do to avoid becoming "burned out?"

If you ask the experts, they will say that most stress is caused from an irrationality of thought. This is an over-emphasis of a situation. Some irrational thoughts include:

1. You must have sincere love and approval almost all the time from all the people you find significant.

2. You must prove yourself thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving, or you must at least have real competence or talent at something important.

3. You have to view life as awful, terrible, horrible, or catastrophic when things do not go the way you would like them to.

4. People who harm you or commit misdeeds rate

as generally bad, wicked, or villainous individuals and you should severely blame, damn, and punish them for their sins.

5. If something seems dangerous or fearsome, you must become terribly pre-occupied and upset with it.

6. People and things should turn out better than they do and you have to view it as awful and horrible if you do not quickly find good solutions to life's hassles.

7. Emotional misery comes from external pressures and you have little ability to control your feelings or rid yourself of depression and hostility.

8. You will find it easier to avoid facing many of life's difficulties and self-responsibilities than to undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline.

9. Your past remains all-important and because something once strongly influenced your life, it has to keep determining your feeling and behavior today.

10. You can achieve happiness by inertia and inaction or by passively and uncommittedly "enjoying yourself."

So, contrary to popular belief, lying around and watching MTV does not cure stress; it merely puts a hold on it. Stress is something that can be cured kinetically rather than potentially.

What can one do to prevent stress from occurring or, probably more importantly, what can one do to ease stress?

From a Zen perspective, one can avoid becoming stressed-out/burned-out/fried/etc. by simply living in the present moment.

Much too often one worries about other assignments that are due rather than concentrating on the assignment he/she is working on in the present moment. The present moment is the right now.

Take this for example: Right now you are reading this (*hopefully*) and (*hopefully*) this article is the only thing you are thinking about, just like it's the only thing I'm thinking about while I am writing this.

(Actually, I'm saying hi to everyone I know walking down the hallway and singing "Hakuna Matata" to myself, but at least I'm practicing mindfulness (another zen practice) and I'm aware of my state of conscious unconsciousness.) Sorry, the parenthesis took over a little there.

Zen consists of being aware of one's self at all times. By this awareness, one can focus on the task they are working on and placing all of one's energy into the work.

By worrying about the other assignments, one takes away the essential energy from a particular assignment. The result is a neglect in both assignments.

Increased concentration during study will often remedy this situation. Loud music, despite popular belief among students, does not help one focus on the task at hand.

Soft music, something classical or light jazz tends to relax one's spirit.

For nature enthusiasts, compact discs are available that offer the "soothing" sounds of the environment.

Speaking of environments, if one is in a busy environment, there is not much possibility that the full potential of an assignment will be accomplished. By busy, I mean, loud dorm rooms,

obnoxious suites, and rowdy apartments.

Forget trying to get anything done in any place where there are a lot of people, it will just ruin one's concentration level.

The best bet is to seclude one's self in the library or set up a nice quiet area for study time.

I think Twain said it best with, "He who lies with dogs shall rise up with fleas." If one is in a bad environment, the productivity will suffer.



DOES your tummy often get tied in knots? Do you have to count sheep to go to sleep? Do you get frequent headaches?

If your answer is yes, chances are you're stressed out. But you can beat stress by following tips from top experts (featured above).

"We've developed some pointers to help people who suffer from tension headaches, but they apply across the board to anyone who faces a lot of stress every day," says Dr. Leonard Lovshin, president of the National Headache Foundation.

So kick back, relax, and find out how you can beat stress by reading the feature above.