

Coping With Stress: College Counselling Blog #13

What causes stress?

Lots of lifestyle factors can cause stress. Some examples:

- Relationships
- Finances
- Family
- Work
- Illness/ Bereavement

Can you think of anymore?

Who does stress affect?

Stress can affect anyone, from a tiny baby to an elderly person. We all have different ways of coping with stress and some are more resilient to certain factors than others. What may stress one person out, may not affect another at all: stress varies from person to person.

How to recognise stress?

Again, this depends on the person. If you notice any of the below, it may be worth having a chat with them to see what they need and to offer support. Likewise, if you notice any of these factors in yourself, it might be time to reach out for support.

- Agitated (quick tempered or can't sit still)
- Withdrawn
- Always busy
- Tired
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Generally, not taking care of themselves (hygiene, personal appearance)
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Biting nails/ self-harm

Can you think of anything else?

Take time to reflect, can you recognise what happens to you, when your stressed?

We all experience stress from time to time, it can help us to prepare for things in life, such as an interview or an exam. However, if we are finding that stress is lasting longer than a six-week period or is often reoccurring, this can become unhealthy. If we remain highly stressed over a long period of time, this can begin to impact our physical and mental health.

How to avoid 'burn out' and find a work-life balance:

- Being aware of your stress levels. You may find keeping a journal is handy, so you can reflect daily on your thoughts and feelings. Allow time to focus inward on yourself, how are you? What's going on? What do I need?
- Balance: Organising your time to make sure that you are able to have fun and time for yourself, in amongst your responsibilities/ work. If you are not ok, you are unable to be your best self and this will reflect in all other areas of your life. Prioritise you!
- Support- reach out to people when you need help. Ask for what you need, whether it's more time, a friendly chat, help around the house ...
- Sleep – is vital to your physical and mental health. You need to be getting between 6-8 hours per night. Try going to bed at roughly the same time and setting a similar alarm each morning, this will help your circadian rhythm to sync.
- Nutrition – You are what you eat! You can't expect a car to run without fuel, water and oil and you are no different! We need plenty of fluids and food to allow our minds to work effectively and for our bodies to have energy. This involves plenty of water, so we stay hydrated and energised and a balanced diet. If we eat lots of junk food, we will feel groggy and sluggish, try to eat 7 fruit/ vegetables a day!
- Exercise- Getting your body moving will help you to destress, it allows a release of built up tension and an increase in endorphins. Including Dopamine, which creates a feeling of accomplishment and makes us feel good.
- Find something that helps you cope – Similar to stress affecting us all differently, what may help one person, may not help another. Experiment! Find what works for you, here are some suggestions.
- Mindfulness (Videos on Youtube to help)
- Sporting activity: Hiking, Swimming, Boxing, Climbing ETC.
- Being in nature
- Arts & crafts
- Cooking/ Baking
- Music
- Singing/ Dancing
- Journalling
- Relaxing
- Talk to a counsellor or well being officer
- Talk to friends or family

Sometimes people will pick up unhealthy habits to help them cope, such as smoking, drinking or drugs. These can lead to other physical and mental issues and are best avoided.

Who can you speak to for help with stress?

- Well Being Officer – wellbeing@nptcgroup.ac.uk

- Counsellor- counsellorreferral@nptcgroup.ac.uk