How to manage stress

STUDENT HEALTH CENTRE, LUND UNIVERSITY
Stress is something that we must constantly relate to and something we could not do without. Stress exists for us to be able to face various challenges and changes, and to help us survive different types of threats – real as well as imaginary.

The occurrence of stress can be seen as a reaction to an imbalance between the demands we experience and the resources we have to meet them. An important factor is a good and supportive social context, which can mitigate the effects of stress. However, the problem is often not the actual stress, but that we spend too little time on recovering.

**BALANCE BETWEEN ACTIVITY AND REST**
A good way to protect yourself against stress is to try and stimulate the body’s parasympathetic nervous system, that is, our calming and rebalancing system. This can be done by maintaining balance between activity and rest:
- keep studies and spare time clearly separate
- in your spare time, do things that do not impose any demands
- spend time with people with whom you feel you can be yourself
- reflect on what you want and use the word NO
- eat and exercise regularly, and get about 6–8 hours of sleep per day.

**STUDIES**
As a student, it is important that you create a structure for how much and when you will be studying:
- Set aside an appropriate amount of time for independent study. Decide how long you will be studying, and remember to take regular breaks, at least once an hour.
- By taking control over your time you will become clear on what you spend your time doing – in other words, plan according to your time rather than the number of assignments you have.
- Try to specify what you will be doing while studying.
- The Pomodoro Technique can be used to structure your studies. Read more on pomodirotechnique.com.

**PROCRASTINATION**
Not doing things is more stressful than doing them. Decipher what it is you are trying to avoid. Many times, it has to do with a lack of concrete instructions, which can trigger anxiety/stress and make us do something else instead. To procrastinate reduces anxiety/stress for the moment, but often makes it worse in the long run.
More information about procrastination can be found on our website.

**BREATHING AND MINDFULNESS EXERCISES FOR ABOUT 1–3 MINUTES**
1. Take a seat in your chair. Make sure that you and your feet are firmly in contact with the surface underneath, and feel the support from the floor and your chair.
2. Let your shoulders and arms become heavy, and imagine that they are supported by your chest.
3. Let your lower jaw become heavy and/or relax your tongue and notice what happens to your breathing.
4. Continue to focus on your inhalation and exhalation for a while, without placing any value or judgement on how you breathe. Simply take in the present moment.
5. Let your mind wander for a bit between the various parts of your body and your breathing.
6. If you lose focus because of a thought that pops into your mind, simply let it. Be happy that you noticed your thought and can then choose to return your mind to your body and breathing.
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