



Milwaukee School of Engineering Counseling Services Newsletter

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Stress and Health

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Stress – we all experience it. Stress is a normal and automatic response by the mind and body which tells us that there is a real or perceived threat to one's well being. It's an instinctual reaction alerting you to danger. Call it the brain and body's natural alarm system.

Interestingly, what some people find stressful may not bother other people. To some, stress = taking final exams. To others, stress means dealing with family members over the holidays. Yes, school and family are big sources of stress. But regardless of the source of your stress – such as being overworked, upcoming deadlines, lack of sleep, getting caught in traffic, or having an argument with a significant other – stress affects your brain and body in the same way. Initially, stress causes a biochemical reaction to prepare your body to deal with the stressor. However, prolonged (or chronic stress) has a multitude of negative effects on the mind and body. Chronic stress weakens the immune system and can lead to serious physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual consequences. The following are ways to recognize when you are experiencing chronic stress:

- **Physical Symptoms:** headaches, restlessness, insomnia, decreased sex drive
- **Mental Symptoms:** forgetfulness, poor concentration, negativity
- **Emotional Symptoms:** anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, impatience, worry
- **Social Symptoms:** isolation, loneliness, lack of intimacy, lashing out at people
- **Spiritual Symptoms:** loss of meaning, emptiness, lack of purpose, apathy

Chronic stress drains our physical and mental energy, affects our mood, and damages our social relationships and faith. However, there are numerous positive ways to manage stress:

- Become aware of your mind and body reactions caused by stress.
- Recognize and acknowledge your feelings.
- Maintain a healthy balanced diet.
- Exercise.
- Develop and utilize a support system (for example, friend, family members, and co-workers).
- Strike a balance between work and play.

- Reward yourself for completing a challenging work or school project.
- Learn to say *no* to requests of your time and energy, and say *yes* to yourself.
- Practice relaxation techniques.

How vulnerable are you to stress? Take this brief online quiz to find out:

http://www.miami.edu/counseling-center/pop_up/stress_test.htm

In addition, here are 10 quick and simple ways you can combat stress on a daily basis:

- Take a brisk walk
- Call a friend
- Write in a journal
- Play a game
- Go for a jog
- Take a hot bath
- Tell a joke (or have someone tell you one)
- Play some music
- Take a few deep breaths
- Get a massage

Sometimes, people need or want to work on more long-term stress reduction and stress prevention techniques. MSOE Counseling Services can help you with stress management and other related issues, such as anxiety and time-management. To meet with a counselor, call us at (414) 277-7590. Or, visit our office. We are located on the second floor of the Kern Center, in K-230. For more information, visit our website: http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns

Here are some links for more information regarding stress:

- Coping with the Stress of College Life: <http://www.counseling.txstate.edu/bro/stress.htm>
- Stress and College Students: <http://www.counsel.ufl.edu/selfHelp/studentStress.asp>
- Watch Out for Burnout: <http://www.shs.uwo.ca/publications/mindbody/burnout.htm>
- Dealing with Stress – Exercise: <http://pc.brooklyn.cuny.edu/EXERCIZ.HTM>
- Stress Reduction Using Thought Awareness, Rational Thinking, and Positive Thinking: <http://www.twu.edu/o-sl/counseling/SelfHelp057.html>
- Eliminate Stress from Your Environment: <http://www.twu.edu/o-sl/counseling/SelfHelp020.html>
- The College Stress Experience, from September to May: http://www.hsc.edu/counseling/selfhelp/stress_periods.html

MSOE Counseling Services is located on the Second Floor of the Kern Center (K-230). To Schedule an appointment with a Counselor, call (414) 277-7590. For more information, visit Counseling Services at: www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns