

Features

Don't Let Final Exams Stress You Out!

By Arnetta Hauser, RN

With only a few weeks left until the end of the semester, stress related health problems appear to be on the increase. Preparing those special projects and term papers, gearing up for senior recitals, pledging, and seeing just how much you'll need to make on your final exam to pass the course, are only a few sources of stress. Do I even need to mention the fact that so many of you are holding down full time jobs as well?

Stress is an automatic physical reaction to a danger or demand. The methods your body uses to deal with stress may vary from headache to stomach pain, from hyperventilation to asthma attacks. Stress can lower your resistance to illnesses: when you are under stress, most nutritious eating habits are abandoned, if you eat at all. How many times have you gotten a pack of Nabs and a soda while trying to meet a deadline, rather than fixing food or going to the dining hall? An improperly nourished body can't fight off the germs and viruses that attack it. The "run down" body also causes the recovery process to take longer.

Over a long period of time, a stress-filled life can lead to high blood pressure, anxiety attacks and a wide range of physical disorders.

We've discussed many of the negative aspects of stress, now let's talk about something positive. Contrary to popular belief, stress can be good for you. Our bodies react in the same way to stress, whether that stress is welcome or unwelcome. Our hearts beat faster, our bodies produce a natural stimulant called adrenaline, we breathe

more rapidly, we are more alert, and we may perspire more. This is what gets you "pumped up" before the big game, and keeps you alert and concentrated for an exam. All of these responses can be good for you when followed by periods of relaxation.

The key to bringing the stress in your life to a manageable level is to try to avoid or eliminate unnecessary stressful situations. If you hate to spend long hours writing a paper, then work on it well enough in advance so you can write at your pace. Don't over commit yourself! There are only twenty-four hours in a day, don't ask more of yourself than you can reasonably do. Take time for your basic health needs. Adequate sleep (at least six hours per night) and proper nutrition are essential in managing stress. Eat at least one balanced meal per day. Limit the amount of caffeine (tea, soda, and coffee) and alcohol you drink.

You can break the cycle of continuous stress by planning time for relaxation: 5 minutes of stretching, deep breathing, a warm bath or shower, uninterrupted silence may be all you need to break the pattern of tension and fatigue.

When you set aside some time to relax, you'll feel refreshed, revived and able to handle the situations and challenges you face at this point in the semester.

THE GOOD

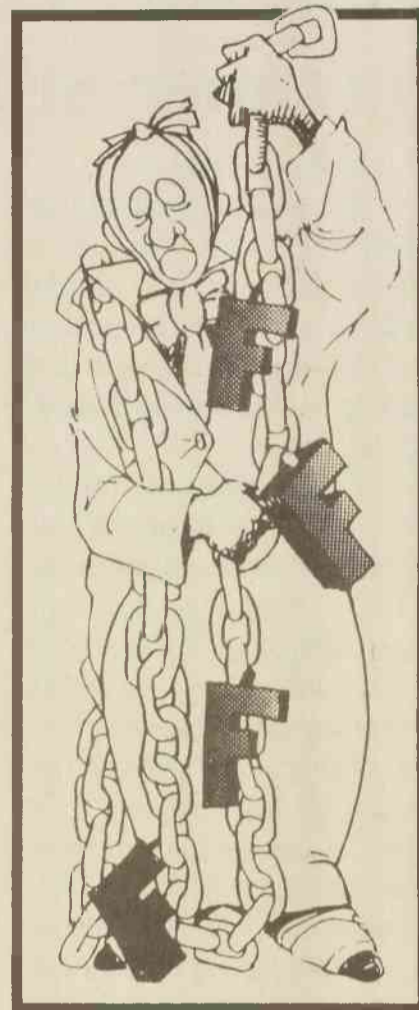
- Ask a friend
- Run
- Dance
- Read A Book
- Write A Letter
- Go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Talk to someone
- Yell at your pillow
- Scream in the shower

THE BAD

- Eat something
- Have a cigarette
- Go to sleep
- Watch t.v.
- Make an excuse
- Withdraw
- Pout
- Pretend
- Hurt someone

THE UGLY

- Take a drink
- Take a pill
- Steal something
- Try to kill yourself
- Try to kill anything
- Lie
- Drive too fast
- Yell at people you care about



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