

College Students and Stress

Signs of Stress:

- Physiological responses: immediate responses include muscle tension, heart racing, nervous tics, sweating, strong startle response, and restlessness. Chronic stress can cause frequent colds, insomnia or sleeping too much, tiredness and a general lack of energy, as well as pain, skin problems, headaches, and heart disease.
- Behavioral signs: hyperactivity, cursing, walking or talking faster, irritation with delays, panicky, avoiding people, nervous habits (overeating, smoking, drinking, compulsive acts) or a change in habits (becoming less or more organized), poor memory, confusion, stumbling over words.
- Emotional signs: general lack of motivation, boredom, inattentiveness, excessive worrying, holding a grudge, irritability, and anger, easily losing your temper, anxiety and crying.
- Cognitive signs: excessive preoccupation with a situation, repeatedly obsessing about an upsetting event, unstoppable negative thoughts and self defeating beliefs.

Consequences of stress:

- Bad Habits: smoking or drinking alcohol, and much time wasted spent worrying and obsessing are attempts at handling anxiety. They may help relieve anxiety temporarily, but you pay a high price in the long run.
- Low Performance: either at school or on the job, poor decision-making, accidents and problems with relationships are some common consequences of stress. Also, students with high test anxiety do not perform as well on exams.
- Anxiety and Fear: cause us to avoid many things in life that we would otherwise benefit from doing. People avoid approaching others, trying out for plays or sports teams, trying for a promotion, or taking other risks because they are afraid.

Reducing Stress:

- Become aware of your own reactions and triggers to stress
- Reinforce positive self-statements. Tell yourself statements that help motivate you and help you cope. Post these statements around your room.
- Talk with friends or someone you can trust about your worries/problems.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet daily.
- Learn to use your time wisely, such as making a weekly schedule and trying to follow it.
- Set realistic goals and priorities for yourself.

Brandi Gibson LMFT, LADC
Director of University Counseling
Walker Hall, Bottom West Wing
bgibson@okcu.edu
405/208-7902