MANAGING STRESS

Can stress be good?
Stress can be used to your advantage – by helping you feel alert and focused. However, at some time or other, most of us will feel ‘stressed out’. Studying can add to that stressed out feeling.

Whether you are starting uni, trying to get through Honours or juggling a postgraduate degree, the key to not being overwhelmed by stress is to find effective ways to manage your stress.

Reducing stress
In addition to study, stress can come from work, family and personal relationships.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce your stress.

• **Do things you enjoy.** Do you like listening to music, walking along the beach, playing team sports, reading (for pleasure), gardening? Allocate time to do things you enjoy at least a few times each week.

• **Exercise regularly.** Physical exercise, e.g. swimming, dancing, surfboard riding, cycling, dancing, going to the gym can relieve tension in your muscles and relax your mind. Try to do some exercise every day.

• **Get enough sleep.** Don’t kid yourself that you can function at your optimal best on a few hours sleep a night.

• **Find a balance** between study commitments and other aspects of your life. Learn to say ‘No’ so that you don’t become overwhelmed with new things to do.

• **Be realistic about what you can accomplish.** Set yourself goals that are achievable and reassess those goals frequently.

• **Talk to someone you trust.** Family members, partners and friends can often provide you with a new perspective. They may help you re-negotiate some of your responsibilities. If support from family and friends isn’t an option, consider making an appointment to see a Student Support counsellor. [http://www.student.uwa.edu.au/life/health/counselling](http://www.student.uwa.edu.au/life/health/counselling)

• **Resolve personal conflicts.** Sorting out conflicts you have with colleagues, family and friends will free up your head space and help you study more effectively. If you need professional help, a Student Support counsellor may be able to help. Phone 6488 2423 for more information.
Tips

- **Postpone making major decisions or changes if you feel stressed or very anxious.** You are more likely to make better decisions when you are feeling relaxed and positive about your life.

- **Some people find the following activities effective de-stressors.** Find out what works for you.

  - Yoga
  - Meditation
  - Tai Chi
  - Kicking a ball

- **Develop effective time and study management techniques.**
  - Using semester, monthly and weekly planners, from the beginning of semester (or from whenever you read this) will help you organise your life in a balanced way.
  - Having a purpose for each study session, means you can check frequently if you have achieved your study session objectives.

- **Know when you have done enough.** Whether it’s research, reading or writing, allocate a specific amount of time to do each assignment or study task and then move on to the next stage.

- **Hand in all your assignments on time** and then reward yourself for achieving your goal.

- **Learn some muscle relaxation exercises and practise them daily.**

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