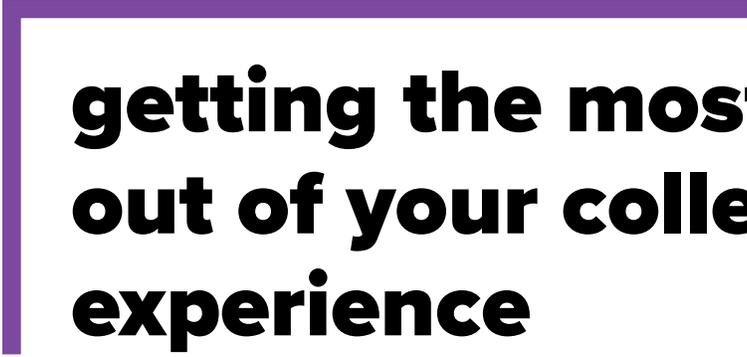
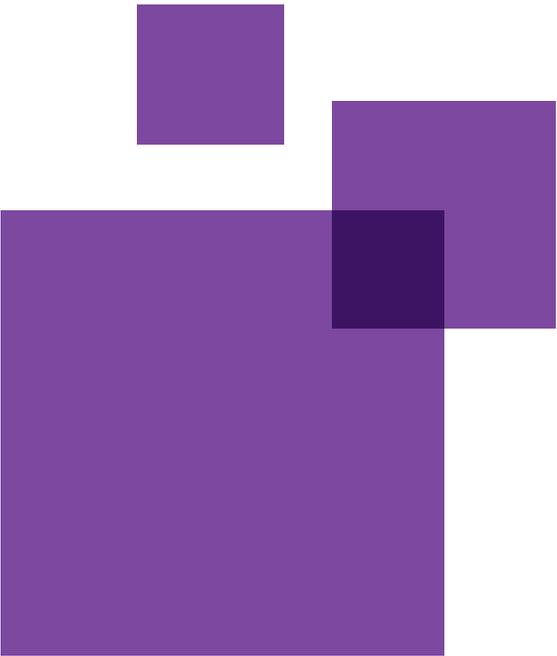


STRESS SURVIVAL TIPS





getting the most out of your college experience



College life is the first big step toward independence in a young person's life. It's a time of newfound freedom, excitement, and optimism. College is a chance to live away from home for the first time, build friendships that can last a lifetime, and learn the skills necessary to pursue a fulfilling career.

Unfortunately, transitioning from childhood to adulthood doesn't always go smoothly. After all, college is rife with heavy workloads, high financial costs, social adjustments, and health concerns, all of which contribute to stress and anxiety. It also doesn't help that COVID-19 fatigue has set in for many students as the pandemic rages on.

If you're anticipating going to school in the fall, use this guide to help lower your stress level and get the most out of your college experience.

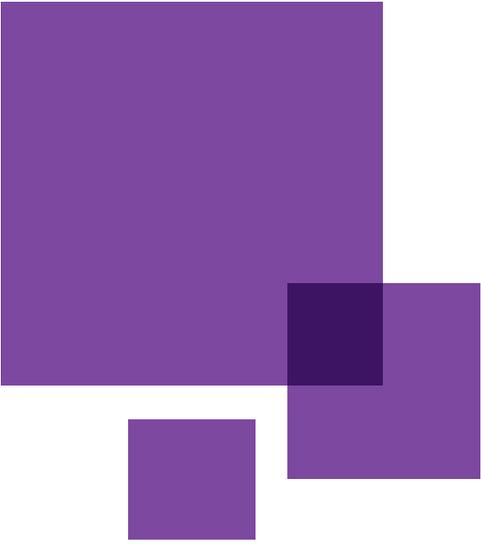
WHAT IS STRESS?

The first step to successfully managing stress is to understand where it comes from.

Stress is a natural, even necessary part of life. It's an element of your instinctive fight-or-flight response, a survival mechanism that your body employs to help you deal with life's challenges. When you feel stressed, your heart rate elevates, blood circulation increases, and pupils dilate, empowering you to defend yourself or run away from danger.

Unfortunately, the fight-or-flight response is somewhat archaic in modern society. The biochemical, physiological, and behavioral changes the body undergoes aren't helpful in most of the stressful scenarios you are likely to face while attending college.





TYPES OF STRESS

Everyone feels stress at some point. It's a universal human experience, but it can take on different forms depending on the situation. Consider the three main types of stress as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA).



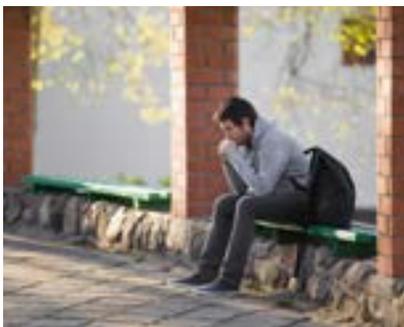
ACUTE STRESS

The most common type of stress arises quickly in response to an unexpected or alarming event. The feeling also usually fades quickly once the stressful event is over. Acute stress is considered healthy and normal and is generally easy to manage. The thrill of riding a rollercoaster is an example of how acute stress can even be fun at times. Symptoms of acute stress include stomachache, fast heart rate, shortness of breath, headache, and jaw pain.



EPISODIC STRESS

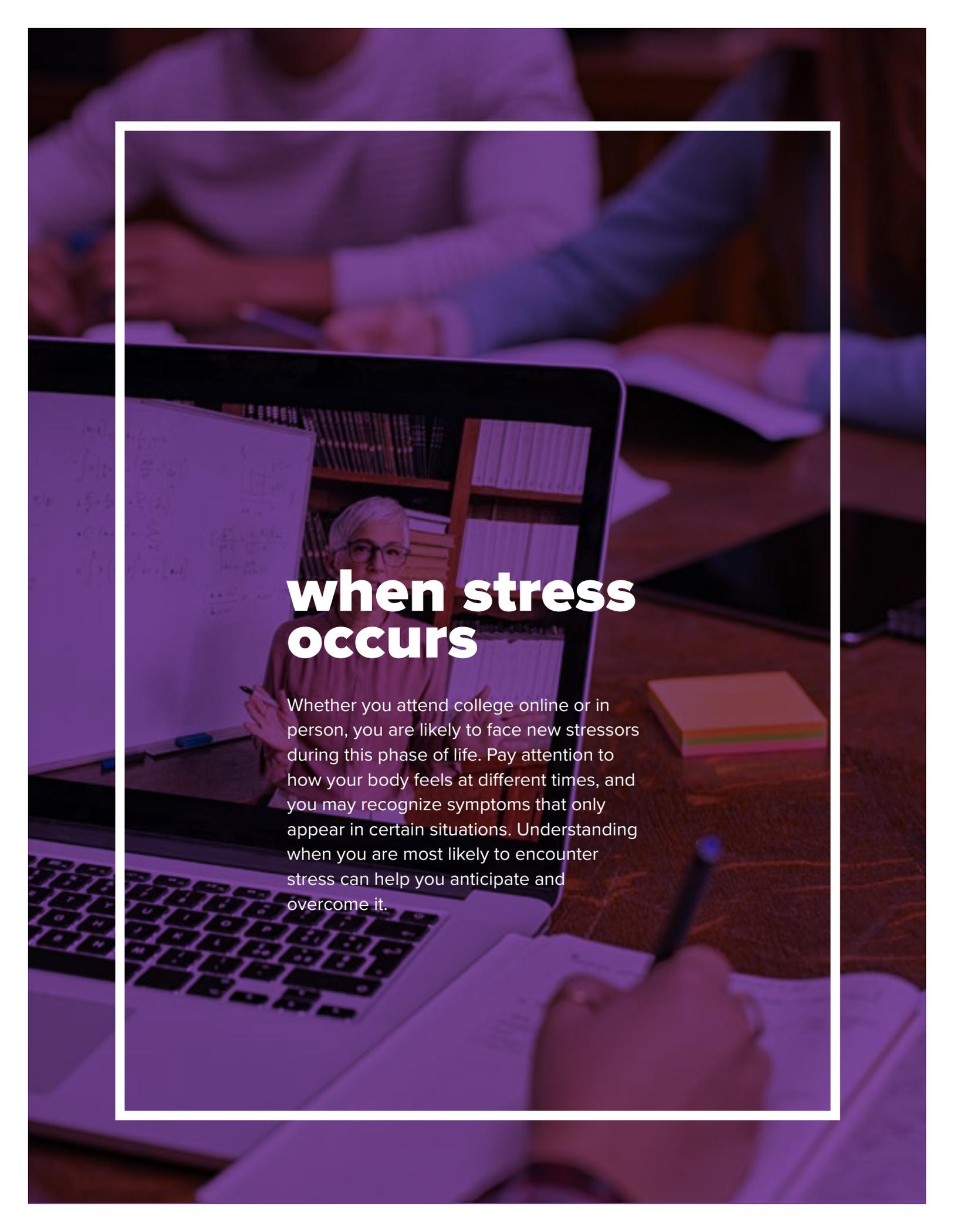
When acute stress occurs frequently, this is known as episodic stress. People who continuously face stressful situations are almost constantly in “crisis mode,” making them anxious, irritable, and prone to excessive worrying. Episodic stress can create an overwhelming feeling, making it difficult to manage. Long-term symptoms include recurrent headaches and migraines, high blood pressure, and heart disease.



CHRONIC STRESS

Unlike acute stress, which can feel exhilarating for the short time it's there, chronic stress is dull and constant. It may arise in response to a long-term situation that feels hopeless or unmanageable, such as a toxic job, abusive marriage, or poverty.

Chronic stress is dangerous because it can sometimes lead to complicated or life-threatening health problems such as heart attack, stroke, depression, substance abuse, and suicidality. Other symptoms include irritability, low self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, and responsibility avoidance.



when stress occurs

Whether you attend college online or in person, you are likely to face new stressors during this phase of life. Pay attention to how your body feels at different times, and you may recognize symptoms that only appear in certain situations. Understanding when you are most likely to encounter stress can help you anticipate and overcome it.

KNOWING THE SIGNS



TIME STRESS

When you're worried you don't have enough time to accomplish your tasks, you may experience time stress. College students may feel this when cramming for an exam, working on multiple homework assignments, or trying to make it to class on time.



ANTICIPATORY STRESS

This type of stress comes from feeling anxious about the future. As a college student, you may stress about an upcoming presentation or test, or you may have a general sense of uncertainty about what life has in store after graduation.



SITUATIONAL STRESS

A form of acute stress, situational stress arises suddenly in response to an alarming or upsetting situation. There's little or no warning that the situation is about to occur, so you can't anticipate it.

College presents numerous opportunities for this type of stress. Realizing you forgot an assignment at home, getting a poor grade on a test, having an argument with your roommate, or nearly getting in a car accident are all examples of situational stress that college students may face.



ENCOUNTER STRESS

Feeling nervous about seeing a certain person or people is called encounter stress. You may not enjoy being in that person's company, or you might have argued with them the last time you spoke, and now you dread seeing them again. You might also be nervous about meeting new classmates or approaching an intimidating professor. Often, the stress dissipates once the encounter occurs and you resolve the issue.



THE PREVALENCE OF STRESS, ANXIETY & SUICIDALITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Stress is pervasive among college students, which shouldn't come as a surprise. After all, relentless demands on their time and emotions leave students with few chances to relax and recover each day.

“Relax and recover each day.”

A national research survey conducted by the American College Health Association (ACHA) in 2018 found that only 1.6 percent of undergraduates felt “no stress” in the past 12 months. On the other hand, figures compiled by Statista found that nearly three out of four students have experienced a sense of “overwhelming anxiety” at some point during their college experience. Almost 30 percent of these students reported having such feelings in the previous two weeks.

Such overwhelming stress has catastrophic implications for physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive health. For instance, a Harvard Medical School study revealed that one in five students report thoughts of suicide, with nearly 20 percent reporting self-injury and 9 percent reporting suicide attempts. Of course, due to the sensitivity of these topics, mental health experts estimate that the actual rates of suicidal ideation are much higher.

Depression and anxiety were already on the rise among college students between 2010 and 2020. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and mental health concerns escalated like never before. According to a study by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the prevalence of moderate to severe anxiety in first-year students increased by 40 percent four months into the pandemic. Moderate to severe depression increased by 48 percent within the same timeframe.

what causes stress during college?

College students have a unique vulnerability to stress because mental illness often appears while transitioning to adulthood. This means academic demands and the pressures of everyday college life are particularly difficult for young adults to cope with. Consider these top causes of stress during college before exploring ways to manage them.

01 Academic Workload

For about half of all students, keeping up with schoolwork is the most stressful part of attending college. Several factors contribute to academic stress, including:

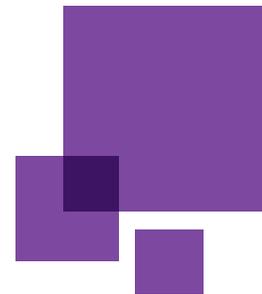
- **Finals week:** Stress levels rise during finals week, when students are expected to study for cumulative tests, complete projects, and give presentations for all their classes within a single week. Many times, professors weigh these assignments more heavily than those from earlier in the semester, increasing the pressure to do well.
- **Expectations:** Students often have an innate desire to do their best in school, but stress becomes more prevalent when parents impart unrealistic expectations. Receiving financial support, graduation gifts, and even affection may hinge on a student's grades.
- **Competitiveness:** Being accepted into a prestigious college is stressful enough, but the competition between peers doesn't end there. Students who aspire to graduate as the valedictorian must constantly work to outdo their classmates. Plus, particular programs within the school may only admit a select number of students, creating uncertainty around what will happen to a student's academic goals if they aren't admitted.
- **Double majors:** 30 to 40 percent of college students pursue double majors to maximize their time in college and make themselves more competitive when entering the job market. This increases the workload and overall stress level of students who go this route.

02

Health/Chronic Illness

Whether it's a simple cold, a mental health condition, or a chronic illness, being sick can make keeping up with your studies more difficult. According to ACHA, physical ailments impacted the performance of nearly one in three students in 2018. The most common complaints included allergies, sinus infections, and urinary tract infections.

Along with managing acute and chronic illnesses, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a new health-related fear. At the start of the Fall 2020 semester, 91 percent of students said they feared for their own health or the health of their loved ones, exacerbating already high stress levels.



03

Pandemic Fatigue

Attending college in 2020 or 2021 has been a uniquely challenging and stressful experience. The public health actions implemented to help control the pandemic have included shutting down schools and switching to remote learning. Freshmen excited about leaving home for the first time have experienced intense isolation, sadness, frustration, and grief over the past few semesters.

After more than a year of lockdowns and shifting restrictions, pandemic fatigue has set in. Students, teachers, and staff are ready to return to normal, but making the shift too soon could cause infections, hospitalizations, and fatalities to spike. Until the pandemic is well and truly contained, college students will continue to be affected.

04

Social Adjustments

Moving away from home to attend college results in a change of surroundings and lifestyle. Building a new social circle, dating, and living with a roommate can cause culture shock for many freshmen. First-generation college students typically have it the hardest because they lack parental advice about what to expect from college life.

05

Managing Relationships from Back Home

Living in a different city from your family and high school friends can cause homesickness. You may also find that you have less energy to devote to relationships from back home as you prioritize your schoolwork. Drifting away from your old support system can cause feelings of loss, disappointment, tension, and stress for the people on both sides.

06

Self-Identity Conflicts

College is a rite of passage for many, a time to solidify a sense of self. You may struggle with picking a field of study that could define what you do for the rest of your life. Your parents may also pressure you to select a particular major, which can cause friction. Even being presented with new ideas and opportunities—and having the freedom to explore them—can cause you to question things about yourself. Navigating such self-identity conflicts can be very stressful.

07

Safety Concerns

Fears surrounding college bullying, sexual assault, gun violence, and other safety concerns can be stressful distractions. The ACHA reports that less than one-quarter of female college students and less than one-third of male students feel safe on campus at night. Fearing that something bad will happen is stressful enough, but being a victim adds trauma to the mix. More than 28 percent of surveyed students reported being victims of college bullying; 25 percent reported nonconsensual sexual contact; and 2.5 million were exposed to gun violence between 2001 and 2016.

08

Finances

According to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) at Penn State University, 13 percent of college students in 2019 considered finances to be “always stressful.” A further 21 percent considered finances to be “often stressful,” and 36 percent said money concerns are “sometimes stressful.”

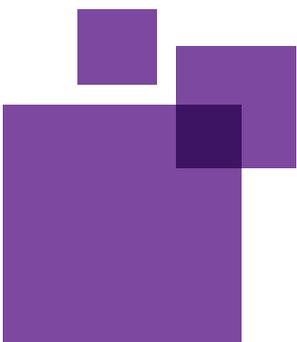
Student loans have an enormous impact on college student stress. Roughly one-quarter of Americans take out student loans, and in 2018, the average borrower had over \$37,000 in student loan debt. That’s a \$20,000 increase compared to students in 2005.

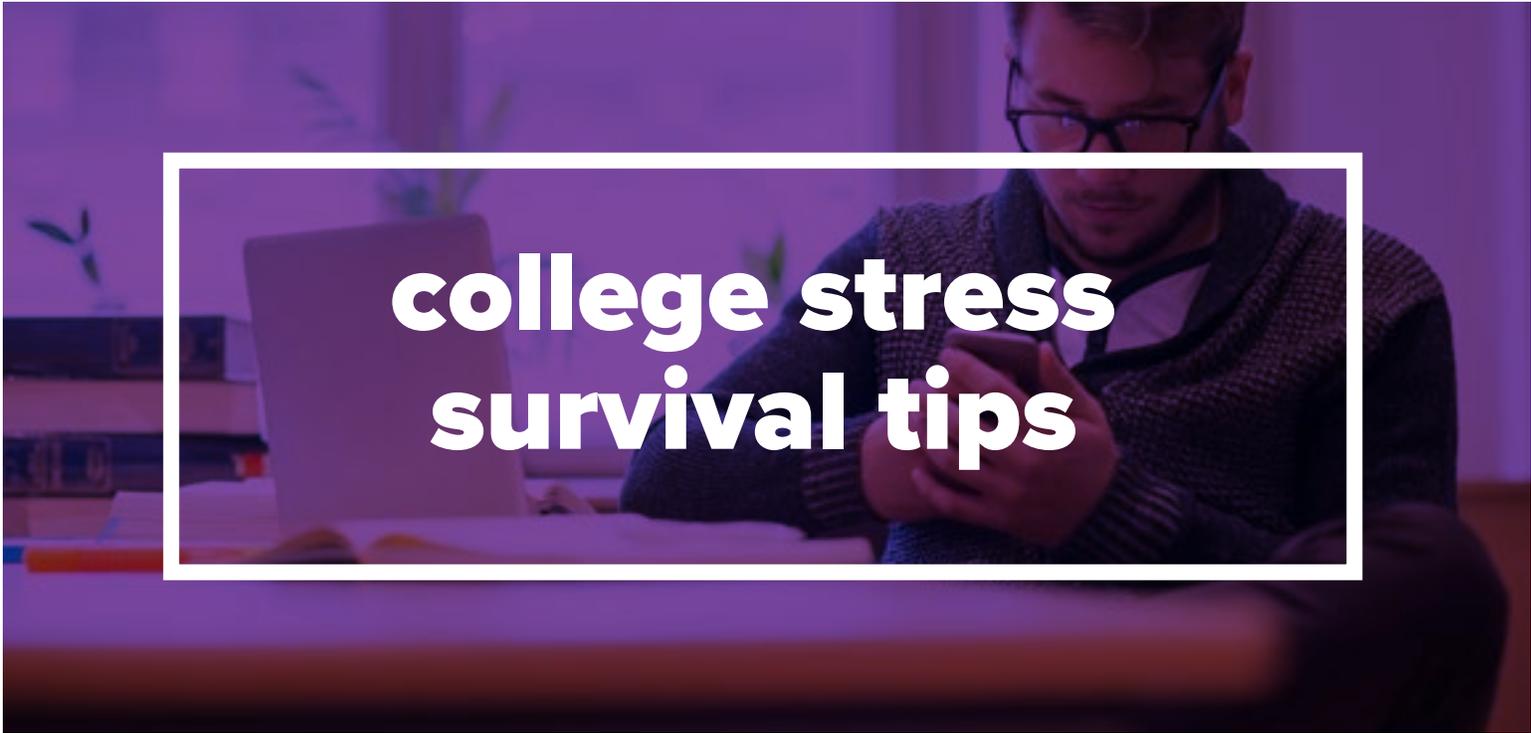
To help pay off student debt or avoid taking out loans in the first place, 25 percent of college students work full-time while also enrolled in school full-time, and 40 percent work at least 30 hours per week. This demand on a student’s time adds significantly to the overall stress of attending college.

09

Preparing for Life After College

Despite the underlying stressors, the relative predictability of college is comfortable for many students. On the other hand, thinking about and preparing to enter a tough job market after graduation can be anxiety-inducing. Your stress level may further increase if it seems like all of your friends and classmates are confident about post-college life. You may also second-guess the decisions you’ve already made about your future.



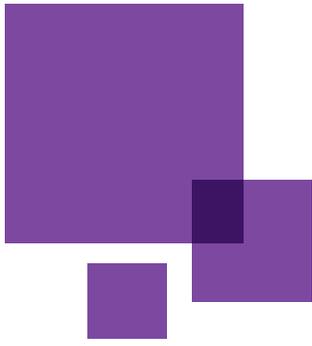


college stress survival tips

Avoid Unhealthy Ways to Manage Stress

Just as everyone experiences stress uniquely, you may have your preferred methods of handling it. However, not all coping mechanisms are healthy or effective. Some may even leave you feeling worse than before. Here's what to avoid if you hope to manage stress effectively during college:

- **Procrastinating:** With academic pressure acting as the number one stressor for college students, it's no surprise that procrastinating increases stress. It's prudent to balance your workload with relaxation time, but putting off assignments for too long can lead to unhealthy all-nighters.
- **Ignoring the stressor:** It's okay to step away from a stressful situation to calm down or think of a new solution. However, neglecting to fix the issue will likely trigger more stress as it nags at the back of your mind. Confront the stressor sooner rather than later to help put your mind at ease.
- **Compulsive spending:** When you're feeling down, your instinct may be to buy yourself a treat to boost your mood. Rewarding yourself every once in a while is fine, but you could be a compulsive spender if this is your go-to method of relief. If your finances already cause stress, don't add to it by spending money on things you don't really need.
- **Under or overeating:** Changes in appetite are a common symptom of stress. You may crave comfort food or not feel hungry at all. However, to avoid lasting adverse health effects, strive to maintain your regular eating habits, even when stressed.
- **Smoking, drinking, and drug use:** It's tempting to reach for a cigarette or can of beer after a long day, but the stress relief you feel from smoking, drinking, and using drugs is short-lived. Once the effects wear off, you're likely to feel even more stressed. Prevent a downward spiral by avoiding substance use.



Manage Stress in Healthy Ways

To successfully overcome stress during college, you must learn productive stress management strategies. After all, you can't control the stressors in your life, but you can choose how you respond to them. Here are some tips to help you manage stress in healthy ways.

Get Organized

Without your parents looking over your shoulder, it's your job to create an educational structure that works for you. Expect the constant temptation to put off your studies, and then overcome distractions with these tips:

- **Create a quiet study space:** Help yourself focus on the task at hand by setting up a place to study in peace. Ideally, you need a comfortable desk in your room where you can work uninterrupted. If your roommate is noisy or ever-present, you might need to start frequenting the library or a local coffee shop.
- **Set a schedule:** As the semester gets underway, you should get a sense of how long it takes you to complete certain tasks. Before scheduling social activities and downtime, make sure you've left yourself enough time to meet your obligations—with a little room to spare to reduce stress.
- **Minimize clutter:** There's nothing more stressful than being unable to find a lost school assignment, flashcards, or study guide. Keeping everything in its place is an easy way to stop losing things—and stop wasting time and energy looking for them.

Take Care of Your Body

It pays to take good care of yourself. Even if you feel short on time, prioritize each of these things every day:

- **Exercise:** Physical activity reduces muscle tension and releases endorphins into the brain, both of which are great for improving your mood and relieving stress. It's easier than you think to make time for exercise. Ride your bike to class, take a 10-minute walk during a study break, or take yoga classes on the weekend.
- **Eat well:** Junk food is fast, cheap, and readily available, but it doesn't help you feel your best. Keep your dorm room or apartment stocked with fresh produce, whole grains, and low-sugar snacks so you always have something healthy to reach for at mealtimes.
- **Get enough sleep:** Whether you stay up late partying or cramming for an upcoming exam, lack of sleep will catch up with you before long. To help boost your energy levels and avoid getting sick, aim to get eight hours of sleep as often as you can.
- **Think positively:** Your thoughts shape your reality, making them more powerful than you might realize. Instead of being negative when you feel your stress level rising, try repeating positive affirmations, such as, "I am calm and relaxed," "I can handle this," and "I will rise to the challenge."
- **Meditate:** Meditation comes in many varieties. In its simplest form, meditation is closing your eyes and taking slow, deep breaths. To help keep your mind from wandering, try a guided meditation session (available online) or repeat one of your positive affirmations.
- **Relax with aromatherapy:** Certain scented oils—including lavender, lemon, jasmine, bergamot, and ylang-ylang—are reported to lower stress and anxiety. Run a diffuser filled with your favorite scent while studying or sleeping to help you relax.

Build a Support System

If you attend college out of town, you must leave your close friends and family behind. The resulting loneliness and sense of loss can be stressful until you develop a new support system. These tips should help:

- **Stay connected with loved ones back home:** Call, text, email, and video chat with friends and family as often as you want to. This is especially beneficial early in your college experience when you haven't made many new friends yet, but there's no reason to ever stop communicating with the people back home if you enjoy doing so.
- **Branch out at school:** Some people make friends without even trying. For others, it's a much greater challenge. Along with meeting people in class, branch out to help you connect with like-minded people at your school. You might join a club, participate in social activities on campus, or ask your roommate to introduce you to their friends. Before long, you'll have a group of people to study with, party with, and empathize with when things get stressful.

Confront Your Stressors

Sometimes, the best way to manage stress is to tackle it head-on. Consider these examples:

- If you're stressed because you're always late to work after class, ask your boss to adjust your hours.
- If you realize your credit load is too much to handle, reach out to an academic advisor for assistance.
- If you're struggling with finances, consider cutting back to part-time enrollment so you can work full-time to pay for school without spreading yourself too thin.
- If you're falling behind in class and can't keep your grades up, hire a tutor.
- If you and your roommate aren't a good match, speak with your housing coordinator about switching with someone else.
- If you're stressed about an upcoming social engagement, you can always say "no."

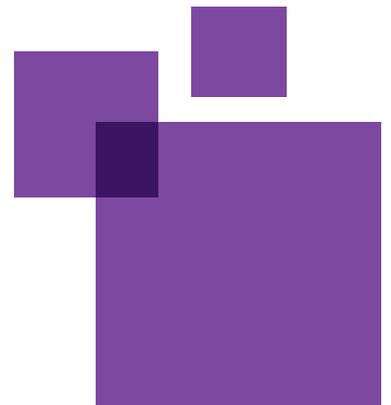
Set Aside Some Social Time

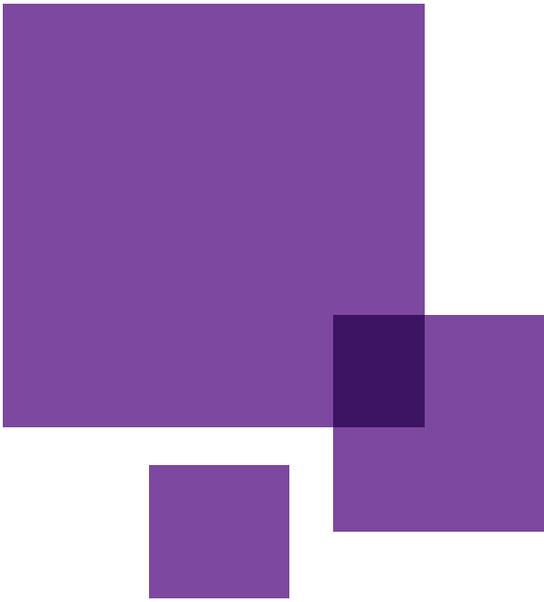
Have you been diligently working on that English paper for three days straight? Is your chemistry homework starting to look like gibberish? Like any muscle, your brain needs a break every so often. Step away from your studies and enjoy some time with friends, especially on the weekends. Having a social life is an important aspect of the college experience, and letting loose could be exactly what you need to de-stress.

Just remember to continue following COVID-19 recommendations from health professionals while you're out and about. If you're fully vaccinated, you can resume your normal activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing—unless state laws or local businesses require these precautions. If you're not vaccinated, continue wearing a mask in public, washing your hands often, and reaching out to friends virtually rather than gathering in person when possible.

Make Homework More Fun

School assignments can be tedious and tiresome, but you can make studying more fun with a few modifications. Are all your friends writing research papers? Agree to work together for a couple of hours and order pizza for dinner afterward. Do you feel more productive when you work alone? Play your favorite instrumental music in the background to enjoy while you work. Then, reward yourself with a social outing once you're finished.





Take a Break from it All

Between school, work, and your social life, you may find that your days are booked solid, with little time left for yourself. If you feel overwhelmed and notice symptoms of stress emerging, give yourself a break.

You might set aside an evening to make popcorn and watch a movie by yourself, read a good fantasy novel, or write in your journal to get your feelings out on paper. Some self-care could be the right way to recharge your batteries so you can tackle your to-do list more effectively tomorrow.

Keep Up with COVID-19 Guidelines

Many colleges and universities began the Fall 2020 semester in person, only to close abruptly due to virus outbreaks on campus. This caused frustration, inconvenience, and stress for students and staff alike.

To avoid a similar situation in Fall 2021, stay up-to-date with the latest CDC guidelines. Also, learn what operating parameters your school follows so you know what to expect if a classmate tests positive or a college-wide outbreak occurs. A little knowledge goes a long way toward helping you feel more in control and less stressed.

Ask for Help

You may find it difficult to reach out for help, but no one will know how stressed you are unless you speak up. Chances are your college friends are going through some of the same things, so commiserating over a cup of coffee can be incredibly therapeutic. By bouncing ideas off each other, you just might find that some of your stressors are more manageable than you realized. If you're afraid of dumping too much on a friend, you can seek professional help with your anxiety and stress. Some resources include:

- **On-campus services:** Many schools recognize the importance of helping students manage stress and other mental health challenges. Look into academic advising, tutoring programs, peer counseling, and mental health services on campus before you spend time researching other options.
- **External health clinics:** If your college or university doesn't offer what you're looking for, consider finding a mental health clinic in the area that provides psychotherapy, medication, or lifestyle coaching designed to treat chronic stress and anxiety.
- **Support groups:** Having easygoing friends can often help you unwind, but you may find additional relief by discussing your struggles with people who feel the way you do. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) has an extensive directory of support groups for students with anxiety. Explore it to find a group near you.



Attending ASA College in New York City can be an exciting, life-changing experience.



We also understand that college can be stressful and challenging for many. For those times when your stress level gets too high, feel free to access our Student Support Services at no expense to you.

We provide everything from mental health services to bullying prevention to food and nutrition programs. To find out more about our student support services or inquire about our academic programs, please visit our website or call 877.679.8798 today.

“An exciting, life-changing experience.”



ASA College

www.asa.edu

www.miami.asa.edu

Locations

NEW YORK

Brooklyn, NY

151 Lawrence Street,
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(347) 309-4783

Manhattan, NY

1293 Broadway
(One Herald Sq)
New York, NY 10001
(332) 255-8626

FLORIDA

Hialeah, FL

530 West 49th ST
Hialeah Fl. 33012
(786) 279-2643

